

<b>HALIFAX FIRE DEPARTMENT R&amp;R ARTICLE 31</b>	<b>Personal and Family Relationships in the Workplace</b>
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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines governing personal and family relationships in the workplace.

### **Background**

The expectation for professionalism in personal and family relationships is necessary in order for the Halifax Fire Department (HFD) to maintain order and discipline, promote relationships of mutual respect and confidence between supervisors and subordinates and between employees who work together, and to minimize the possible adverse impact on the well-being of our employees. HFD understands that a spirit of camaraderie and familial ties among its members is beneficial to morale, and that it cannot dictate a member's off-duty relationships. However, a paramilitary organization also lends itself to creating power structures that have the potential to affect proper professional and personal relationships while on-duty, resulting in uncomfortable strain or hostility, as well as perceived and/or actual favoritism, potential misconduct, allegations of sexual harassment and other workplace distractions. Specifically, supervisor/subordinate relationships create an environment that may negatively impact the work performance of the subordinate and/or others. As such, it may have the same influence as harassment.

### **Definitions**

- "Family" refers to all relatives, including but not limited to: past and present spouses, past and present domestic partners, relatives by marriage, children (including biological, foster and step-children), parents, step-parents, grandparents, grandchildren, in-laws, siblings (including adoptive or step-siblings), cousins, nieces, nephews, aunts and uncles.
- "Personal Relationship" refers to an intimate, sexual or dating relationship.

## **Policy**

- A. Due to the tenuous nature of initial employment and the necessary deference to the existing rank structure, members are strictly prohibited from initiating any type of personal relationship with any Cadet or Probationary Firefighter.

Furthermore, HFD prohibits personal relationships between a supervisor and their subordinate employees from working on the same shift because such relationships, even when they are consensual, can create compromising conflicts of interest or the appearance of such conflicts.

- B. Personal and family relationships shall constitute neither an advantage nor a disadvantage to selection, promotion, salary or other conditions of employment.

- 1. Members who are family members or in a personal relationship:

- a. cannot work on the same shift.
    - b. cannot be directly supervised by the family member or the other person in the relationship.
    - c. should not work in the direct chain of command unless authorized by the Fire Chief or their designee.

- 2. Should a prohibited relationship exist or develop; affected Fire Department personnel shall notify the Fire Chief immediately in writing. The information will be treated as confidential and disclosed on a need-to-know basis only. The Fire Chief or a designee will make alternate arrangements for supervision.

- 3. Exceptions exist for temporary assignments including but not limited to training evolutions, emergency scene operations, station coverage, overtime or other emergency situations as determined by the Fire Chief.

- C. The Fire Chief or his designee shall be notified immediately If a personal or family relationship becomes abusive or obscene and/or involves threatening conduct or communication that is intended to harass, annoy, alarm, torment, embarrass or injure another.

- D. Fire Department personnel who fail to disclose their involvement in a prohibited relationship or any supervisor who becomes aware of such a relationship and fails to report it to the Fire Chief will be subject to discipline.