

Sexual Harassment Policy of the Town of Halifax, Massachusetts

I. Introduction

It is the goal of the Town of Halifax to promote a workplace which is professional and which treats all of those who work here with dignity and respect. Sexual harassment is unlawful and will not be tolerated by this organization. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment or retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is similarly unlawful and will also not be tolerated.

Because the Town of Halifax takes allegations of sexual harassment seriously, we will respond promptly to complaints of sexual harassment and where it is demonstrated to our satisfaction that such harassment occurred, we will act promptly to eliminate the harassment and impose such corrective action as is necessary, including disciplinary action where appropriate.

II. Definition of Sexual Harassment

In Massachusetts, the legal definition for sexual harassment is this:

“sexual harassment” means sexual advance, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- (a) submission to or rejection of such advances, requests or conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or as a basis for employment decisions; or
- (b) such advances, requests or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or sexually offensive work environment.

These definitions are broad and include any sexually oriented conduct, whether it is intended or not, that is unwelcome and has the effect of creating a work place environment this is hostile, offensive, intimidating, or humiliating to male or female workers. While it is not possible for the Town of Halifax to list all those circumstances which we would consider to be sexual harassment, the following are some examples:

- Unwelcome sexual advances, whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Request for sexual favors in exchange for actual or promised job benefits such as favorable reviews, salary increases, promotions, increased benefits, or continued employment;
- Assault or coerced sexual acts;

The following conduct may also constitute sexual harassment:

- Use of sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one’s sex life; comment on an individual’s body, comment about an individual’s sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, picture, cartoons;
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments;

- Inquiries into one's sexual experiences; and.
- Discussion of one's sexual activities

III. Complaints of Sexual Harassment

If any of our employees believes that they have been subjected to sexual harassment, it is our policy to provide the employee with the right to file a complaint with our organization. This may be done in writing or orally. When we receive the complaint, we will then investigate the allegation in a fair and expeditious manner. Our investigation would include a private interview with the person filing the complaint and with witnesses. We will also interview the person alleged to have committed sexual harassment.

If our investigation reveals that sexual harassment did occur, we will act promptly to eliminate the offending conduct, and where it is appropriate we will also impose disciplinary action which could include termination from employment. When we have completed our investigation, we will inform the person filing the complaint of the results of that investigation.

If you would like to file a complaint, you may do so by writing to either your supervisor or to Charles Seelig, Town Administrator, Halifax Town Hall, 499 Plymouth Street, Halifax, MA 02338. The phone number is (781) 294-1316.

IV. Disciplinary Action

If sexual harassment has been committed by one of our employees, we will take such action as is appropriate under the circumstances. Such actions may include: counseling, informal or formal reprimands, written or verbal warnings, suspension, reduction in pay, reduction in duties, transfers, and other formal sanctions including termination from employment.

V. State and Federal Remedies

In addition to the above, if you believe you have been subjected to sexual harassment, you may file a complaint with either or both of the following government agencies:

1. The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
10 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02180
(617) 565-3200
2. The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination

Boston Office: One Ashburton Place — Room 601, Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-3990

Springfield Office: 424 Dwight Street, Springfield, MA 01103
(413) 739-2145