

ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY FOR HARRASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, AND BULLYING

HARRASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, AND BULLYING

A. DEFINITION & SCOPE

Harassment, discrimination, and bullying include, but are not limited to, verbal abuse, intimidation, exclusion, offensive jokes, unwelcome advances, and any behavior that makes a colleague feel unsafe, disrespected, or demeaned.

B. POLICY STATEMENT

Harassment, discrimination, and bullying include, but are not limited to, verbal abuse, intimidation, exclusion, offensive jokes, unwelcome advances, and any behavior that makes a colleague feel unsafe, disrespected, or demeaned.

C. EXPECTATIONS

- All employees are expected to complete annual training on bullying and harassment.
- These policies will be **clearly written**, made **accessible to everyone**, and **reinforced regularly through training**.
- **Violations will be investigated and addressed consistently**, regardless of job title, seniority, or past performance.
- Managers have an added responsibility to model respectful behavior and report issues immediately.

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BUILDING ACCOUNTABILITY & REINFORCEMENT

A. WHY GOSSIP MATTERS

Workplace gossip is more than casual chatter, it can:

- Undermine trust
- Damage reputations
- Create a toxic culture
- Lead to unnecessary conflict and turnover

B. CULTURE MINDSET SHIFT

We define gossip as speaking **negatively** about someone **without their presence or permission**. Rather than just labeling it as bad behavior, we treat gossip as a culture issue that must be addressed across the organization.

C. PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

- Encourage the phrase **“Talk TO People, not ABOUT People.”**
- Create safe spaces for feedback and open communication.
- Train employees on how to redirect gossip:
 - “Have you had this conversation with them directly?”
 - “Lets bring them into the conversation if this affects them.”

A. Manager’s Role

- Lead by example: avoid venting about others to team members.
- Intervene gently but clearly when gossip occurs.
- Praise those who demonstrate respectful, direct communication.

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING & SUPPORT

A. THE GOAL

Conflict is inevitable, but how we handle it defines our culture. The goal is to equip every employee with tools to resolve disagreements respectfully and productively.

B. CORE CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

All employees will be trained in:

- **Active Listening** - Letting others finish, showing empathy, and phrasing for clarity.
- **“I” Statement** - Speaking from your own perspective rather than placing blame.
- **Staying Solution-Oriented** - Focusing on fixing the issue rather than assigning fault.
- **Body Language Awareness** - Maintaining open, respectful posture and tone.

C. WHEN CONFLICT ESCALATES

If a disagreement can not be resolved informally:

- Supervisors can offer guided mediation or bring in HR.
- Confidentiality and neutrality must be maintained through the process.
- If a resolution is not possible, a formal review or reassignment may be considered.

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CULTURE REINFORCEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

A. ONGOING TRAINING

- Mandatory refresher courses every 12 months.
- Interactive workshops with real-world examples and roleplay.

B. ANONYMOUS REPORTING

- Offer a confidential reporting system for harassment, gossip, and unresolved conflict.
- Encourage early reporting before problems escalate.

C. POSITIVE RECOGNITION

- Celebrate employees who foster inclusivity and resolve issues respectfully.
- Include communication and respect as part of performance evaluations.

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DISCRIMINATION POLICY

A. Definition

Discrimination is any unfair or unequal treatment of an individual or group based on legally protected characteristics. These include but are not limited to:

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- Gender or Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation
- National Origin or Ancestry
- Age
- Disability
- Marital Status
- Veteran Status
- Pregnancy or Parental Status

Discrimination may occur through actions, policies, or comments, whether intentional or not, that result in exclusion, disadvantage, or unequal opportunity.

B. Examples of Discrimination

- Denying a promotion or opportunity due to someone's gender or age
- Making derogatory comments about someone's religion or ethnicity
- Assigning undesirable tasks only to certain employees based on bias
- Making hiring or firing decisions influenced by race, appearance, or sexual orientation
- Ignoring accommodation requests (e.g., for disability or religious needs) without valid cause

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C. Our Commitment

- We will not tolerate discrimination in any form, including verbal, behavioral, policy-driven, or systemic.
- All employees have the right to fair treatment, access to opportunities, and a safe, inclusive work environment.
- We provide reasonable accommodations as required by law and guided by compassion and equity.

D. What you should do

- Speak up if you experience or witness discriminatory behavior.
- Report it promptly to HR, your supervisor, or through the anonymous reporting system.
- Support coworkers who may be affected, especially those from marginalized communities.

E. Reporting and Resolution

- Discrimination reports will be taken seriously, investigated promptly, and handled confidentially.
- Retaliation will not be tolerated against anyone who reports discrimination in good faith.
- Disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate based on the findings of the investigation.

F. Reinforcement through Training

- Employees will receive ongoing **anti-discrimination and bias awareness training**, including microaggressions, intersectionality, and inclusive practices.

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EXAMPLES OF GOSSIP, HARASSMENT, & MICROAGGRESSIONS

A. Examples of Gossip

- "I heard she only got promoted because she's friends with the manager."
- "Don't tell him anything, he's going through a divorce."

B. Examples of Harassment

- Repeatedly commenting on someone's appearance
- Sending unwanted DMs outside of work topics
- Jokes about race, gender, or religion

C. Examples of Microaggressions

- "You don't act gay."
- "You're surprisingly articulate for someone your age."

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CLEAR CONSEQUENCES & ESCALATION PROCESS

We believe in fostering a respectful and inclusive workplace where everyone is held to the same standard, regardless of role or tenure. Addressing violations of this policy is not about punishment, it's about accountability, education, and protecting the integrity of our workplace culture.

A. Types of Violations

Violations of this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Harassment or bullying (verbal, digital, physical, or psychological)
- Discrimination or unequal treatment based on protected characteristics
- Gossip or toxic behavior that creates a hostile work environment
- Retaliation against an individual who reports or witnesses misconduct
- Failure to report known or suspected violations (for supervisors or managers)

B. Investigation & Decision-Making

When a report is made, the process includes:

- Initial Review
 - HR or leadership will assess if the concern warrants investigation.
 - The employee may be placed on temporary leave (with or without pay) in serious cases.
- Investigation
 - All parties involved are interviewed.
 - Evidence is reviewed (messages, emails, witness accounts, etc.).
 - All investigations are confidential, neutral, and timely.
- Resolution
 - Based on findings, HR and leadership determine an appropriate consequence.
 - Outcomes are communicated respectfully and privately to those involved.

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C. Factors Considered in Discipline

We assess each case fairly and thoroughly by considering:

- Nature and severity of the violation
- Whether the behavior was intentional or accidental
- The employee's disciplinary history
- Impact on individuals, the team, and the workplace
- Willingness to take responsibility and change behavior

D. Zero-Tolerance Situations

Certain behaviors will result in immediate disciplinary action, including potential termination:

- Sexual harassment or physical threats
- Use of hate speech, slurs, or discriminatory language
- Retaliation against a complainant or witness
- Violent or intimidating conduct
- Repeated, intentional violations of this policy

E. Appeals Process

Employees may request a review of disciplinary actions if they believe the outcome was unfair or based on inaccurate information. This appeal should be submitted in writing to HR within 5 business days of the decision. A designated review panel will assess and respond within a reasonable timeframe.

F. Commitment to Fairness

Our goal is not just to enforce rules, but to uphold respect, dignity, and learning across the organization. Every employee deserves:

- A clear understanding of expectations
- A chance to improve
- A safe workplace free from fear of harassment or gossip

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VIOLATIONS & COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

A. Formal Complaints Required

Violations of this policy will only be documented and addressed through the formal complaint process. It is the **EMPLOYEE’S RESPONSIBILITY** to file a formal complaint if they believe a violation has occurred. **Without a formal complaint, NO violation will be recorded.**

B. Options Without Formal Complaint

If an employee DOES NOT wish to submit a formal complaint, they may:

- Request an informal meeting with the other party and a manager/HR present to discuss and resolve the issue.
- Step away from work for the remainder of the day and return the following work day.
- Request a mediation session with management to “hash things out” in a structured, respectful manner.

C. Company Commitment

The company will respect employee choices in handling workplace issues, but for legal and accountability purposes, **ONLY formal complaints will initiate an official violation review.**

Employees will not face retaliation for choosing any of the above options.

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G. Progressive Discipline Model

Levels	Action Taken	Examples of Behavior
1st Violation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal written warning & required re-training• Private meeting with employee & HR/manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inappropriate or off-color joke• Dismissive or disrespectful tone• Minor gossip or workplace tension caused by careless remark
2nd Violation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final written warning issued and documented• Performance monitoring or behavioral improvement plan initiated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeated gossip after being addressed• Disregard for feedback or warning• Behavior that creates discomfort or hostility on the team
3rd Violation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Immediate termination of employment• Exit documentation completed• HR conducts a final review & notifies affected parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing harassment or bullying• Retaliation against a peer or supervisor• Any action that clearly violates zero-tolerance policy

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POLICY ACKNOWLEDGMENT STATEMENT

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understood the [Company Name]
Non-Harassment, Gossip, and Conflict Resolution Policy.

By signing below, I confirm the following:

1. **I understand what constitutes harassment, discrimination, bullying, and gossip** in the workplace, including both overt and subtle forms, and I recognize how these behaviors negatively impact team culture and individual well-being.
2. I understand that **this organization maintains a zero-tolerance policy** for harassment, discrimination, bullying, and retaliatory behavior, and that violations may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
3. I understand my **responsibility to create a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment**, and that I am expected to communicate respectfully, report concerns in a timely manner, and support others in doing the same.
4. I understand that I may report violations or concerns **confidentially**, and that I will be protected from retaliation when I do so in good faith.
5. I understand that **gossip and unresolved conflict are cultural issues**, not just behavioral ones, and I will strive to engage in direct, constructive communication when issues arise.
6. I understand that **this policy will be reinforced through ongoing training**, and I agree to complete all required courses, workshops, or refreshers as assigned.
7. I agree to uphold the values and expectations outlined in this policy and to **lead by example** in contributing to a culture of respect, professionalism, and accountability.

Name (printed): _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____