

Sexual/Workplace Harassment Policy

Adopted by the Pulaski Public Library's Board of Trustees on April 13, 2021.

Pulaski Public Library is committed to maintaining a workplace free from sexual/workplace harassment. Sexual/Workplace harassment is a form of workplace discrimination. All employees are required to work in a manner that prevents sexual or other forms of harassment in the workplace. This Policy is one component of Pulaski Public Library's commitment to a discrimination-free work environment. Sexual/Workplace harassment is against the law and all employees have a legal right to a workplace free from sexual harassment and employees are urged to report sexual/workplace harassment by filing a complaint internally with OELS or Pulaski Public Library. Employees can also file a complaint with a government agency or in court under federal, state or local antidiscrimination laws.

Policy:

1. Pulaski Public Library's policy applies to all employees, applicants for employment, interns, whether paid or unpaid, contractors and persons conducting business, regardless of immigration status, with Pulaski Public Library. In the remainder of this document, the term "employees" refers to this collective group.
2. Sexual/Workplace harassment will not be tolerated. Any employee or individual covered by this policy who engages in sexual/workplace harassment or retaliation will be subject to remedial and/or disciplinary action (e.g., counseling, suspension, termination).
3. Retaliation Prohibition: No person covered by this Policy shall be subject to adverse action because the employee reports an incident of sexual harassment, provides information, or otherwise assists in any investigation of a sexual/workplace harassment complaint. Pulaski Public Library will not tolerate such retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports or provides information about suspected sexual/workplace harassment. Any employee of Pulaski Public Library who retaliates against anyone involved in a sexual harassment investigation will be subjected to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. All employees, paid or unpaid interns, or non-employees [1] working in the workplace who believe they have been subject to such retaliation should inform a supervisor, manager, or OELS. All employees, paid or unpaid interns or non-employees who believe they have been a target of such retaliation may also seek relief in other available forums, as explained below in the section on Legal Protections.
4. Sexual/Workplace harassment is offensive, is a violation of our policies, is unlawful, and may subject Pulaski Public Library to liability for harm to targets of sexual/workplace harassment. Harassers may also be individually subject to liability. Employees of every level who engage in sexual/workplace harassment, including managers and supervisors who engage in sexual/workplace harassment or who allow such behavior to continue, will be penalized for such misconduct.
5. Pulaski Public Library will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation that ensures due process for all parties, whenever management receives a complaint about sexual/workplace harassment, or otherwise knows of possible sexual/workplace harassment occurring. Pulaski Public Library will keep the investigation confidential to the extent possible. Effective corrective action will be taken whenever sexual/workplace harassment is found to have occurred. All employees, including managers and supervisors, are required to cooperate with any internal investigation of sexual/workplace harassment.

6. All employees are encouraged to report any harassment or behaviors that violate this policy. Pulaski Public Library will provide all employees a complaint form for employees to report harassment and file complaints.
7. Managers and supervisors are **required** to report any complaint that they receive, or any harassment that they observe or become aware of, to OELS.
8. This policy applies to all employees, paid or unpaid interns, and non-employees and all must follow and uphold this policy. This policy is provided to all employees and posted prominently in all work locations to the extent practicable (for example, in a main office, not an offsite work location) and provided to employees upon hiring.

What Is “Sexual/Workplace Harassment”?

Sexual/Workplace harassment is a form of discrimination and is unlawful under federal, state, and (where applicable) local law. Sexual/Workplace harassment includes harassment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, self-identified or perceived sex, gender expression, gender identity and the status of being transgender, as well as race, age, religion, national origin, disability, veteran status and all other categories of individuals protected from unfair treatment under federal, state and/or local law.

A. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome conduct which is either of a sexual nature, or which is directed at an individual because of that individual’s sex when:

- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, even if the reporting individual is not the intended target of the sexual harassment;
- Such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment; or
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting an individual’s employment.

A sexually harassing hostile work environment includes, but is not limited to, words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation or physical violence which are of a sexual nature, or which are directed at an individual because of that individual’s sex or done so in reckless disregard of the fact that the act could be offensive on that basis. Sexual harassment also consists of any unwanted verbal or physical advances, sexually explicit derogatory statements or sexually discriminatory remarks made by someone which are offensive or objectionable to the recipient, which cause the recipient discomfort or humiliation, which interfere with the recipient’s job performance.

Sexual harassment also occurs when a person in authority tries to trade job benefits for sexual favors. This can include hiring, promotion, continued employment or any other terms, conditions or privileges of employment. This is also called “quid pro quo” harassment.

Any employee who feels harassed should report so that any violation of this policy can be corrected promptly. Any harassing conduct, even a single incident, can be addressed under this policy.

Examples of sexual harassment:

The following describes some of the types of acts that may be unlawful sexual harassment and that are strictly prohibited:

- Physical acts of a sexual nature, such as:
 - Touching, pinching, patting, kissing, hugging, grabbing, brushing against another employee's body or poking another employee's body;
 - Rape, sexual battery, molestation or attempts to commit these assaults.
- Unwanted sexual advances or propositions, such as:
 - Requests for sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning the target's job performance evaluation, a promotion or other job benefits or detriments;
 - Subtle or obvious pressure for unwelcome sexual activities.
- Sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks or jokes, or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience, which create a hostile work environment.
- Sex stereotyping occurs when conduct or personality traits are considered inappropriate simply because they may not conform to other people's ideas or perceptions about how individuals of a particular sex should act or look.
- Sexual or discriminatory displays or publications anywhere in the workplace, such as:
 - Displaying pictures, posters, calendars, graffiti, objects, promotional material, reading materials or other materials that are sexually demeaning or pornographic. This includes such sexual displays on workplace computers or cell phones and sharing such displays while in the workplace.
 - It is understood that displays of library materials as part of routine operations (including responding to requests for assistance, creating exhibits, checking out and processing books), are consistent with the library's mission and are not a violation of this policy. As an example: routine operations involving a book containing nude pictures would not violate this policy. That said, deliberately placing that same book in the locker or workspace of a colleague or patron, with no operational basis, could be considered harassing. This policy will always be applied with the mission of the library and the ALA Freedom to Read and Freedom to View Statements in mind, while that mission and freedom will never be miss-applied to excuse or disregard complaints of harassing behavior.
- Hostile actions taken against an individual because of that individual's sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and the status of being transgender, such as:
 - Interfering with, destroying or damaging a person's workstation, tools or equipment, or otherwise interfering with the individual's ability to perform the job;
 - Sabotaging an individual's work;
 - Bullying, yelling, name-calling.

Who can be a target of sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment can occur between any individuals, regardless of their sex or gender. New York Law protects employees, paid or unpaid interns, and non-employees, including independent contractors, and those employed by companies contracting to provide services in the workplace. Harassers can be a superior,

a subordinate, a coworker or anyone in the workplace including an independent contractor, contract worker, vendor, client, customer or visitor.

Where can sexual harassment occur?

Unlawful sexual harassment is not limited to the physical workplace itself. It can occur while employees are traveling for business or at employer sponsored events or parties. Calls, texts, emails, and social media usage by employees can constitute unlawful workplace harassment, even if they occur away from the workplace premises, on personal devices or during non-work hours.

Other Forms of Harassment

Other forms of prohibited workplace discrimination and harassment include unfair treatment on the basis of an employee's membership in a category of people protected by federal, state and/or local law. In other words, decisions which significantly affect the employment status of an individual cannot be based on the individual race, age, religion, national origin, disability, marital status, veteran status, etc. These include decisions to hire, fire, promote, demote, alter compensation/benefits, give undesirable reassignments, etc.

This unfair treatment also extends to hostile work environment harassment. A harassing hostile work environment consists of words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation or physical violence which are directed at an individual because of that individual's protected category or done so in reckless disregard of the fact that the act could be offensive on that basis. This type of harassment also consists of any derogatory statements or discriminatory remarks made by someone which are offensive or objectionable to the recipient, which cause the recipient discomfort or humiliation, which interfere with the recipient's job performance.

As with sexual harassment, any employee who feels harassed should complain so that any violation of this policy can be corrected promptly. Any harassing conduct, even a single incident, can be addressed under this policy.

Examples of Other Forms of Harassment

The following describes some of the types of acts that may be unlawful workplace harassment and that are strictly prohibited:

- Racial slurs, insults, jokes or related degrading comments;
- Intolerance toward religious holidays, traditions and customs; cruel religious jokes;
- Degrading stereotypical comments about national origin, age, disability, race, religion, etc.;
- Teasing about an individual's disability, patronizing comments, refusals to reasonably accommodate a disability or isolation of such individual;
- Teasing or patronizing comments, jokes, etc. about an individual's age or any other protected category;
- Display of intimidating, demeaning, insulting or sexually suggestive objects, pictures, as well as written, recorded, or electronically transmitted messages.

Likewise, any of the following prohibited actions which are motivated by the recipient's membership in a protected category will also violate this policy (as well as other work rules against workplace violence).

- Direct threats of intent to inflict harm

- Physical attacks (hitting, shoving, kicking)
- Threatening behavior (shaking fists angrily)
- Destroying property to intimidate

Who can be a target of these types of harassment?

Workplace harassment can occur between any individuals in the workplace setting. A perpetrator of harassment can be a superior, a subordinate, a coworker or anyone in the workplace including an independent contractor, contract worker, vendor, client, customer or visitor.

Where can this harassment occur?

Unlawful workplace harassment is not limited to the physical workplace itself. It can occur while employees are traveling for business or at employer sponsored events or parties. Calls, texts, emails, and social media usage by employees can constitute unlawful workplace harassment, even if they occur away from the workplace premises or not during work hours.

Retaliation

Unlawful retaliation can be any action that could discourage a worker from coming forward to make or support a sexual/workplace harassment claim. Adverse action need not be job-related or occur in the workplace to constitute unlawful retaliation (e.g., threats of physical violence outside of work hours).

Such retaliation is unlawful under federal, state, and (where applicable) local law. The New York State Human Rights Law protects any individual who has engaged in “protected activity.” Protected activity occurs when a person has:

- made a complaint of sexual/workplace harassment, either internally or with any anti-discrimination agency;
- testified or assisted in a proceeding involving sexual/workplace harassment under the Human Rights Law or other anti-discrimination law;
- opposed sexual/workplace harassment by making a verbal or informal complaint to management, or by simply informing a supervisor or manager of harassment;
- reported that another employee has been harassed; or
- encouraged a fellow employee to report harassment.

Even if the alleged harassment does not turn out to rise to the level of a violation of law, the individual is protected from retaliation if the person had a good faith belief that the practices were unlawful. However, the retaliation provision is not intended to protect persons making intentionally false charges of harassment.

Reporting Sexual/Workplace Harassment

Preventing sexual/workplace harassment is everyone’s responsibility. Pulaski Public Library cannot prevent or remedy sexual/workplace harassment unless it knows about it. Any employee, paid or unpaid intern or non-employee who has been subjected to behavior that may constitute sexual/workplace harassment is encouraged to report such behavior to a supervisor, manager or OELS. Anyone who witnesses or becomes

aware of potential instances of sexual harassment should report such behavior to a supervisor, manager or OELS.

Reports of sexual/workplace harassment may be made verbally or in writing. A form for submission of a written complaint is attached to this Policy, and all employees are encouraged to use this complaint form. Employees who are reporting sexual/workplace harassment on behalf of other employees should use the complaint form and note that it is on another employee's behalf.

Employees, paid or unpaid interns or non-employees who believe they have been a target of sexual/workplace harassment may also seek assistance in other available forums, as explained below in the section on Legal Protections.

Supervisory Responsibilities

All supervisors and managers who receive a complaint or information about suspected sexual/workplace harassment, observe what may be harassing behavior or for any reason suspect that sexual/workplace harassment is occurring, **are required** to report such suspected harassment to OELS.

In addition to being subject to discipline if they engaged in harassing conduct themselves, supervisors and managers will be subject to discipline for failing to report suspected sexual/workplace harassment or otherwise knowingly allowing sexual harassment to continue.

Supervisors and managers will also be subject to discipline for engaging in any retaliation.

Complaint and Investigation of Sexual/Workplace Harassment

All complaints or information about sexual/workplace harassment will be investigated, whether that information was reported in verbal or written form. Investigations will be conducted in a timely manner, and will be confidential to the extent possible.

An investigation of any complaint, information or knowledge of suspected sexual/workplace harassment will be prompt and thorough, commenced immediately and completed as soon as possible. The investigation will be kept confidential to the extent possible. All persons involved, including complainants, witnesses and alleged harassers will be accorded due process, as outlined below, to protect their rights to a fair and impartial investigation.

Any employee may be required to cooperate as needed in an investigation of suspected sexual/workplace harassment. Pulaski Public Library will not tolerate retaliation against employees who file complaints, support another's complaint or participate in an investigation regarding a violation of this policy.

While the process may vary from case to case, investigations should be done in accordance with the following steps:

- Upon receipt of complaint, OELS will conduct an immediate review of the allegations, and take any interim actions (e.g., instructing the respondent to refrain from communications with the complainant), as appropriate. If complaint is verbal, encourage the individual to complete the "Complaint Form" in writing. If he or she refuses, prepare a Complaint Form based on the verbal reporting.
- If documents, emails or phone records are relevant to the investigation, take steps to obtain and preserve them.
- Request and review all relevant documents, including all electronic communications.

- Interview all parties involved, including any relevant witnesses;
- Create a written documentation of the investigation (such as a letter, memo or email), which contains the following:
 - A list of all documents reviewed, along with a detailed summary of relevant documents;
 - A list of names of those interviewed, along with a detailed summary of their statements;
 - A timeline of events;
 - A summary of prior relevant incidents, reported or unreported; and
 - The basis for the decision and final resolution of the complaint, together with any corrective action(s).
- Keep the written documentation and associated documents in a secure and confidential location.
- Promptly notify the individual who reported and the individual(s) about whom the complaint was made of the final determination and implement any corrective actions identified in the written document.
- Inform the individual who reported of the right to file a complaint or charge externally as outlined in the next section.

Legal Protections and External Remedies

Sexual/workplace harassment is not only prohibited by Pulaski Public Library but is also prohibited by state, federal, and, where applicable, local law.

Aside from the internal process at Pulaski Public Library, employees may also choose to pursue legal remedies with the following governmental entities. While a private attorney is not required to file a complaint with a governmental agency, you may seek the legal advice of an attorney.

In addition to those outlined below, employees in certain industries may have additional legal protections.

State Human Rights Law (HRL)

The Human Rights Law (HRL), codified as N.Y. Executive Law, art. 15, § 290 et seq., applies to all employers in New York State with regard to sexual harassment, and protects employees, paid or unpaid interns and non-employees, regardless of immigration status. This law also prohibits other forms of workplace discrimination and harassment against employees on the basis of age, race, religion, etc. A complaint alleging violation of the Human Rights Law may be filed either with the Division of Human Rights (DHR) or in New York State Supreme Court.

Complaints with DHR may be filed any time **within one year** of the alleged harassment. If an individual did not file at DHR, they can sue directly in state court under the HRL, **within three years** of the alleged sexual harassment. An individual may not file with DHR if they have already filed a HRL complaint in state court.

Complaining internally to Pulaski Public Library does not extend your time to file with DHR or in court. The one year or three years is counted from date of the most recent incident of harassment.

You do not need an attorney to file a complaint with DHR, and there is no cost to file with DHR.

DHR will investigate your complaint and determine whether there is probable cause to believe that sexual harassment has occurred. Probable cause cases are forwarded to a public hearing before an administrative law judge. If sexual harassment is found after a hearing, DHR has the power to award relief, which varies but may include requiring your employer to take action to stop the harassment, or redress the damage caused, including paying of monetary damages, attorney's fees and civil fines.

DHR's main office contact information is: NYS Division of Human Rights, One Fordham Plaza, Fourth Floor, Bronx, New York 10458. You may call (718) 741-8400 or visit: www.dhr.ny.gov.

Contact DHR at (888) 392-3644 or visit dhr.ny.gov/complaint for more information about filing a complaint. The website has a complaint form that can be downloaded, filled out, notarized and mailed to DHR. The website also contains contact information for DHR's regional offices across New York State.

Civil Rights Act of 1964

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces federal anti-discrimination laws, including Title VII of the 1964 federal Civil Rights Act (codified as 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.). An individual can file a complaint with the EEOC anytime within 300 days from the harassment. There is no cost to file a complaint with the EEOC. The EEOC will investigate the complaint, and determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that discrimination has occurred, at which point the EEOC will issue a Right to Sue letter permitting the individual to file a complaint in federal court.

The EEOC does not hold hearings or award relief, but may take other action including pursuing cases in federal court on behalf of complaining parties. Federal courts may award remedies if discrimination is found to have occurred. In general, private employers must have at least 15 employees to come within the jurisdiction of the EEOC.

An employee alleging discrimination at work can file a "Charge of Discrimination." The EEOC has district, area, and field offices where complaints can be filed. Contact the EEOC by calling 1-800-669-4000 (TTY: 1-800-669-6820), visiting their website at www.eeoc.gov or via email at info@eeoc.gov.

If an individual filed an administrative complaint with DHR, DHR will file the complaint with the EEOC to preserve the right to proceed in federal court.

Local Protections

Many localities enforce laws protecting individuals from sexual harassment and discrimination. An individual should contact the county, city or town in which they live to find out if such a law exists. For example, employees who work in New York City may file complaints of sexual harassment with the New York City Commission on Human Rights. Contact their main office at Law Enforcement Bureau of the NYC Commission on Human Rights, 40 Rector Street, 10th Floor, New York, New York; call 311 or (212) 306-7450; or visit www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/html/home/home.shtml.

Contact the Local Police Department

If the harassment involves unwanted physical touching, threats of violence, destruction of property, coerced physical confinement or coerced sex acts, the conduct may constitute a crime. Contact the local police department.

[1] A non-employee is someone who is (or is employed by) a contractor, subcontractor, vendor, consultant, or anyone providing services in the workplace. Protected non-employees include persons commonly referred to as independent contractors, “gig” workers and temporary workers. Also included are persons providing equipment repair, cleaning services or any other services provided pursuant to a contract with the employer.