

## Rule # 3-47

### Maintaining a Professional and Respectful Workplace

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#### § 3-47-010 Purpose

This policy affirms the county's commitment to providing a work environment that is respectful, professional, safe, accepting of cultural differences, and free from inappropriate and abusive workplace behavior. Volunteers and interns (paid or unpaid) are also covered by this policy.

#### § 3-47-020 Definitions

**Professional Workplace Behavior:** Action and conduct that supports the values and mission of the county and builds positive relationships with others, including respectful communications and accountability for maintaining a professional workplace.

**Inappropriate and/or Abusive Workplace Behavior:** Unwelcome or unwanted conduct or behavior that objectively causes a negative impact or disruption to the workplace or the business of the county, or results in the erosion of employee morale and that is-not associated with an employee's protected class status under federal, state or county laws or regulations. Protected classes are enumerated in MCPR § 3-40-020.

1. Examples of inappropriate workplace behavior include, but are not limited to, comments or behaviors to or from an individual or group that disparage, demean, threaten, intimidate, humiliate, abuse authority, sabotage work, or show disrespect for another employee, supervisor/manager, subordinate, customer, contractor or visitor in the workplace, unless otherwise protected by law. The reasonable person standard shall be applied when determining whether this policy has been violated.
2. Inappropriate workplace behavior *does not* include:
  - a. Counseling, disciplinary discussions or job performance evaluations, including constructive critique, coaching and feedback regarding an employee's conduct or work performance [whether between supervisor(s), managers(s) and/or co-workers(s)]; and/or
  - b. A direct or assertive style, including high workplace expectations; and/or

- c. Legitimate responses to situations that require immediate action and may require a stern and frank conversation;
- d. Differences of opinion and non-aggressive conflicts and problems in working relations; and/or
- e. Legitimate law enforcement activities.

### **§ 3-47-030 Policy**

A. Employees at every level of the county are personally responsible for creating and maintaining a work environment that is respectful, professional and free from inappropriate and abusive workplace behavior.

#### **B. Conduct**

Employees at every level of the county should foster an environment that encourages professionalism and does not tolerate disrespectful and abusive behavior. All employees are expected to behave respectfully and professionally.

#### **C. Addressing Inappropriate Workplace Behavior**

1. Managers or supervisors should address inappropriate behavior that they observe, experience, or become aware of, and should do so as close to the time of the occurrence as possible and appropriate.
2. If an employee observes or experiences inappropriate workplace behavior and the employee feels comfortable in doing so, they should directly address the behavior by:
  - a. Redirecting inappropriate conversations or behavior to workplace business; and/or
  - b. In a private setting, telling an offending employee his/her behavior is offensive and asking him/her to stop.
3. If an employee observes or experiences inappropriate workplace behavior and does not feel comfortable addressing the issue directly with the person who is exhibiting the behavior, he/she should report the situation as outlined in MCPR § 3-47-040.

#### **D. Responding to a Report of Inappropriate Workplace Behavior**

Inappropriate workplace behavior must be addressed and corrected before it becomes pervasive, causes further workplace disruption or lowers employee morale. Unless the county decides it is not necessary, the inappropriate workplace behavior must be investigated as soon as possible by the supervisor, Human Resources or a county designee.

## E. Consequences

1. Any employee found to have engaged in workplace behavior that violates this policy will be counseled, or depending on the severity or frequency of the behavior, may be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal.
2. A supervisor who fails to address inappropriate behavior will be counseled, or, depending on the severity or frequency of the behavior, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.
3. Any volunteer or intern (paid or unpaid) found to have engaged in workplace behavior that violates this policy will be coached, or depending on the severity and/or frequency of the behavior, may be dismissed from their volunteer assignment or internship.

### **§ 3-47-040 Reporting**

- A. All employees who experience, observe or are aware of a potential situation that violates this policy are strongly encouraged to (1) raise the issue with the person(s) involved in a private setting as close to the time of the occurrence as possible and appropriate and/or (2) report the situation to their supervisor as soon as practicable. If the employee's immediate supervisor is the one engaging in the inappropriate behavior, the employee may report the behavior to the manager's supervisor, Human Resources, or the Office of Diversity and Equity. The report may be made orally or in writing, and should include the specific incident(s) that gave rise to the complaint, the impact of the incident(s), and provide enough information to investigate the alleged violation(s) properly.
- B. Reporting behavior or conduct directed toward an employee because of his/her protected class status is addressed in MCPR § 3-40, Discrimination and Harassment-Free Workplace.

### **§ 3-47-050 Retaliation**

- A. The county will not tolerate retaliation against any employee who reports known or suspected violations of this policy or who participates in any investigation of a complaint.
- B. Employees who believe they are being retaliated against in violation of this policy should report the complaint as outlined in MCPR § 3-47-040.
- C. The county will investigate reports of retaliation. Any employee found to have engaged in retaliation may be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal