



Abilities Centre Policies

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1 POLICY

- 1.01 Abilities Centre believes in providing and maintaining a work environment in which all employees are free from workplace harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination. Such actions are not tolerated and, where possible, are to be redressed.
- 1.02 Retaliation or reprisals are prohibited against any employee who has complained under this Statement of Policy and Procedure, or has provided information regarding a complaint. Any retaliation or reprisals are subject to immediate corrective action, up to and including termination. Alleged retaliation or reprisals are subject to the same complaint procedures and penalties as complaints of discrimination and harassment.
- 1.03 Abilities Centre recognizes that individuals may find it difficult to come forward with a complaint under this Statement of Policy and Procedure because of concerns of confidentiality. Therefore, all complaints concerning workplace or sexual harassment or discrimination, as well as the names of parties involved, shall be treated as confidential. Abilities Centre's obligation to conduct an investigation into the alleged complaint may require limited disclosure. No record of the complaint will be maintained on the personnel file of the complainant. If there is a finding of improper conduct that results in disciplinary action, it will be reflected only on the file of the person who engaged in such conduct, in the same way as any other disciplinary action.

2 PURPOSE

- 2.01 This policy outlines the procedures to be followed regarding workplace and sexual harassment and discrimination so that employees reporting alleged incidents will know the matter will be treated confidentially and may be reported without fear of retaliation or reprisal.

3 SCOPE

- 3.01 This policy applies to all employees and volunteers of Abilities Centre.
- 3.02 This policy applies not only during working time, but to any activities on or off Abilities Centre premises which could be reasonably associated with the workplace (e.g., social events).

4 RESPONSIBILITY

- 4.01 Employees and volunteers, and particularly employees in management positions, are responsible for ensuring discrimination and harassment are not tolerated and, where

possible, are redressed.

- 4.02 Employees are requested to report promptly when they become aware of, or hear of, alleged actions or complaints of discrimination or harassment.
- 4.03 Managers are responsible for providing a work environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. This responsibility includes actively promoting a positive, harassment-free work environment and intervening when problems occur. Additionally, managers are responsible for dealing with inappropriate actions of others, that come to their attention.

5 DEFINITIONS

- 5.01 **"Workplace"** means any place where business or work-related activities are conducted. It includes, but is not limited to, the physical work premises (offices or plants), work-related social functions (parties, golf games, etc.), work assignments outside Abilities Centre's offices or plants, work-related travel, and work-related conferences or training sessions.
- 5.02 **"Harassment"** means engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker that is known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome. It may include unwelcome, unwanted, offensive, or objectionable conduct that may have the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment; interfering with an individual's work performance; adversely affecting an individual's employment relationship; and/or denying an individual dignity and respect. Harassment may result from one incident or a series of incidents. It may be directed at specific individuals or groups.
- 5.03 **"Sexual harassment"** is any unsolicited conduct, comment, or physical contact of a sexual nature that is unwelcome by the recipient. It includes, but is not limited to, any unwelcome sexual advances (oral, written or physical), requests for sexual favours, sexual and sexist jokes, racial, homophobic, sexist or ethnic slurs; written or verbal abuse or threats; unwelcome remarks, jokes, taunts, or suggestions about a person's body, a person's physical or mental disabilities, attire, or on other prohibited grounds of discrimination; unnecessary physical contact such as patting, touching, pinching or hitting; patronizing or condescending behaviour; displays of degrading, offensive or derogatory material such as graffiti or pictures; physical or sexual assault.

6 REFERENCES

- 6.01 *Occupational Health and Safety Act (Ontario)*
Ontario Human Rights Code

7 PROCEDURE

7.01 Step 1 - Self-help

Employees are encouraged to attempt to resolve their concerns by direct communication with the person(s) engaging in the unwelcome conduct. Where employees feel confident or comfortable in doing so, communicate disapproval in clear terms to the person(s) whose conduct or comments are offensive. Keep a written record of the date, time, details of the conduct, and witnesses, if any.

Step 2 - Management Support and Intervention

Employees who are not confident or comfortable with Step 1 and who believe they are victims of discrimination or harassment, or become aware of situations where such conduct may be occurring, are encouraged to report these matters to any of the following: the employee's manager, Executive Director, or any person designated to deal with harassment complaints from time to time by Abilities Centre.

Step 3 - Formal Complaint

If informal attempts at resolving the issue are not appropriate, or proving to be ineffective, a formal complaint may be filed. To file a formal complaint:

- (i) Provide a letter of complaint that contains a brief account of the offensive incident (i.e. when it occurred, the persons involved, names of witnesses, if any). The letter shall also include the remedy sought and be signed and dated by the person complaining;
- (ii) File the complaint with your manager, to the Executive Director, or to any person designated by Abilities Centre to deal with harassment complaints;
- (iii) Cooperate with those responsible for investigating the complaint.

- 7.02 An employee who becomes aware of situations where discrimination or harassment may be occurring is requested to notify his or her manager, the [General Manager] or to any person designated by Abilities Centre to deal with harassment complaints.
- 7.03 Formal complaints shall be investigated. The investigation process shall involve interviews of the complainant, the respondent and any witnesses named by either. Within fourteen (14) working days of the incident or notice thereof, that manager shall investigate the incident and prepare a written report of the investigation findings. The report shall be provided along with recommendations, if any, to the Executive Director for action.
- 7.04 All complaints shall be handled in a confidential manner. Information concerning a complaint, or action taken as a result of the investigation, will not be released to anyone who is not involved with the investigation.
- 7.05 Disciplinary action for violations of this Statement of Policy and Procedure will take into consideration the nature and impact of the violations, and may include a verbal or written reprimand, suspension (with or without pay) or termination (with or without notice). Similarly, deliberate false accusations are of equally serious nature and will also result in disciplinary action up to and including termination without notice for just cause. Note, however, that an unproven allegation does not mean that harassment did not occur or that there was a deliberate false allegation. It simply means that there is insufficient evidentiary basis to proceed or that while the complainant may have genuinely had reason to believe that there was harassment, investigation has not borne out the complaint.

8 ATTACHMENTS

None.