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Postal Service's Policy on Workplace Harassment

The United States Postal Service® (Postal Service™) is committed to providing a work environment free of harassment based upon race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity including transgender status), national origin, age (40 or over), mental or physical disability, genetic information, uniformed (military) service, or in reprisal for an employee's or applicant's complaint about or opposition to discrimination or participation in any process or proceeding designed to remedy discrimination. The Postal Service's workplace must be one in which all employees are treated with dignity and respect by supervisors, subordinates, and coworkers. Supervisors and managers will take prompt action to prevent, address, and remedy workplace conduct that is contrary to this policy.

Prohibited Activities

Harassment is unwelcome verbal or physical conduct, which is so severe or pervasive that it interferes with or changes the conditions of one's employment by creating a hostile, intimidating, or abusive working environment. Examples may include, but are not limited to, making offensive or derogatory comments or engaging in physically threatening, intimidating, or humiliating behavior based upon race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity including transgender status), national origin, age (40 or over), mental or physical disability, genetic information, past, present, or future uniformed (military) service, or in reprisal for an employee's or applicant's complaint about or opposition to discrimination or participation in any process or proceeding designed to remedy discrimination. These activities are prohibited by the Postal Service's policy and may amount to harassment in violation of federal anti-discrimination laws. Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. The Postal Service is committed to providing its employees a safe, productive, and inclusive workplace and will tolerate nothing less.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature such as, but not limited to: making or threatening to make employment decisions based on an employee's submission to, or rejection of, sexual advances or requests for sexual favors; deliberate or repeated unsolicited remarks with a sexual connotation or physical contact of a sexual nature that is unwelcome to the recipient; or behavior that creates a sustained hostile or abusive work environment so severe or pervasive that it unreasonably interferes with or changes the conditions of one's employment.

Although not every instance of inappropriate behavior may fit the legal definition of harassment, such behavior in the workplace undermines morale and violates the Postal Service's standards of conduct. Disciplinary action may result even if the conduct does not constitute harassment under the law.

Management Responsibility

All managers and supervisors are responsible for preventing harassment and inappropriate behavior that could lead to illegal harassment, and must respond promptly when they learn of any such conduct.

Any manager or supervisor who receives a complaint must see that a prompt and thorough investigation is conducted. Investigations of all forms of harassment must be done in accordance with the “Initial Management Inquiry Process (IMIP).” Materials are available in Publication 552, Manager’s Guide to Understanding, Investigating, and Preventing Harassment. When harassment or inappropriate conduct is found, managers must take prompt and effective corrective action.

Employees’ Rights and Responsibilities

Postal Service employees who believe that they are the victims of harassment prohibited under this policy (i.e., harassment based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity including transgender status), national origin, age (40 or over), mental or physical disability, genetic information, uniformed (military) service, or in reprisal for an employee’s or applicant’s complaint about or opposition to discrimination or participation in any process or proceeding designed to remedy discrimination) or who have witnessed such harassment or inappropriate conduct, which could lead to illegal harassment, should bring the situation to the attention of a supervisor, a manager, or the manager of Human Resources to address most forms of harassment described above. Refer to Publication 553, Employee’s Guide to Understanding, Preventing, and Reporting Harassment for further information. In accordance with this policy, supervisors, managers, managers of Human Resources, or the next higher level manager (HQ and HQ-field units) are responsible for ensuring that direct and prompt action is taken to investigate and, where appropriate, remedy such misconduct when brought to their attention. The Postal Service will protect the confidentiality of harassment complainants to the fullest extent possible.

Federal law requires the Postal Service to prevent discrimination against employees and applicants for employment based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity including transgender status), age (40 or over), physical or mental disability, and genetic identification. Employment discrimination or reprisal for engaging in an EEO-protected activity is prohibited. Employees pursuing an EEO complaint should contact the Postal Service’s EEO centralized intake center within 45 days of the conduct giving rise to the claim in order to preserve their rights under federal law. Employees making a complaint can call toll-free 1-888-EEO-USPS (1-888-336-8777). Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees can call 1-888-325-2914 (Federal Relay Service). In addition, bargaining unit employees may seek relief through the grievance-arbitration procedures, and if applicable, non-bargaining unit employees may use the grievance procedures described in Section 652.4, Employee and Labor Relations Manual.

Allegations involving any possible criminal misconduct should be reported to the appropriate law enforcement authorities as follows: any physical misconduct relating to workplace harassment (i.e., any physical assault, threat of a physical assault, or stalking) should be reported to the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS); use of any electronic device, computer, or Internet to transmit threatening or harassing communications, obscene or indecent images and materials, should be reported to the Office of Inspector General (OIG).

Reprisal against employees who raise a claim of harassment, report inappropriate conduct, or provide evidence in any investigation is illegal and can result in disciplinary action, and should be referred to the USPIS or OIG as appropriate.

The Postal Service does not tolerate any type of harassment, inappropriate conduct, or reprisal in the workplace.

Megan J. Brennan