



DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY
7700 ARLINGTON BOULEVARD, SUITE 5101
FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA 22042-5101

DEC 18 2017

**MEMORANDUM FOR ALL DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY DIRECTORATES AND
SPECIAL STAFF**

SUBJECT: Anti-Harassment Policy

The Defense Health Agency (DHA) is committed to a workplace free of discriminatory harassment. In this effort, I will not tolerate any harassment, based on sex (including pregnancy, gender, lesbian, gay bisexual, transgender), race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability (mental or physical), genetic information, reprisal and/or participating in the complaint process as a complainant or witness, marital status, parental status or political affiliation, by anyone in the workplace – supervisors, co-workers or non-employees.

Everyone is encouraged to report harassment before it becomes severe or pervasive. While isolated incidents of harassment generally do not violate Federal law, a pattern of such incidents may be unlawful. Therefore, to discharge our duty of preventing discriminatory harassment in the DHA workplace, I want to make it clear to our employees that we will make every effort to prevent and stop any discriminatory harassment regardless of whether it raises to the level of a violation of Federal law.

Harassment can be verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual; actions or conduct which has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment; unreasonably interferes with work performance; or otherwise adversely affects employment opportunities for an employee or applicant. Harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to use of epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping, threatening, intimidating, hostile acts, written or verbal comments, or graphic material to denigrate or show hostility or aversion toward an individual or group based upon any protected status, or directed toward an employee or applicant because of his or her membership within a protected category.

Sexual harassment is a form of gender based discrimination that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment is present when such conduct is made a condition of a person's job, or used for employment decisions affecting that person, or when it creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment, or interferes with the performance of an employee's duties.

When an employee complains to management about alleged harassment, the Agency is obligated to investigate the allegation regardless of whether it conforms to a particular format or is made in writing. Allowing an employee to bypass his or her chain of supervision, under this policy, provides additional assurance that the harassment complaint will be handled in an impartial manner, since an employee who reports alleged harassment by his or her supervisor may feel that officials within the chain of supervision will more readily believe the supervisor's version of events. Retaliating or discriminating against an employee or applicant for reporting or cooperating with an investigation of allegations of harassment, is known as reprisal, which is strictly prohibited and may result in appropriate disciplinary action. Management should undertake whatever measures necessary to ensure that reprisal and retaliation does not occur.

The Agency will protect the confidentiality of the employee or applicant making the harassment allegations to the extent possible. The Agency cannot guarantee complete confidentiality, since it cannot conduct an effective investigation without revealing certain

information to the alleged harasser and potential witnesses. Information about the allegation of harassment will be shared only with those who need to know about it. A conflict between an employee's desire for confidentiality and the agency's duty to investigate may arise if an employee informs a supervisor about alleged harassment, but asks him or her to keep the matter confidential and take no action. Inaction by the supervisor in such circumstances could lead to Agency liability. While it may seem reasonable to let the employee determine whether to pursue a complaint, the employer must discharge its duty to prevent and stop all discriminatory harassment regardless of whether it rises to the level of a violation of law.

The Agency will undertake immediate and appropriate corrective action, including when warranted, disciplinary action up to and including removal of the harasser, whenever it determines that harassment has occurred in violation of this policy. Remedial measures will be designed to prevent and stop the harassment, correct its effects on the employee, and ensure that the harassment does not recur. These remedial measures may not be those that the employee requests or prefers, as long as they are effective. Individuals who perceive they are being harassed or who witness any form of harassment are encouraged to take immediate action to stop the unacceptable harassing behavior. Employees should promptly report incidents of harassment to their supervisor or someone in their chain of supervision.

You may also contact Mrs. Dorin Connelly-Gordon, Chief, Diversity Management Branch, at (703) 681-1504, or at Dorin.l.connellygordon.civ@mail.mil, either to report the incident or to pursue a discrimination complaint, if the harassment is within the scope of the laws and regulations enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). If you are alleging discrimination based on marital status, parental status or political affiliation, you may file a written complaint with the United States Office of Special Counsel (OSC) using Form OSC-11, at 1730 M Street NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505, or online at <http://www.osc.gov>.

Harassment against an employee or applicant for making a protected disclosure under the Whistleblower Protection Act is prohibited by 5 United States Code (U.S.C.) 2302(b) (8). If you believe you have been the victim of whistleblower retaliation, you may file a written complaint with OSC. For harassment dealing with non-discriminatory reasons, contact the DHA Management Employee and Labor Relations Branch, at (703) 681-2317, on your rights to file an administrative grievance.


R. C. BONO
VADM, MC, USN
Director