United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Post Office Box 2890
Washington, D.C. 20013

DEC 19 2013

SUBJECT: EOP - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Anti-Harassment Policy

TO: All NRCS Employees File Code: 230-15

The most productive and satisfying work environment is one in which work is accomplished in a spirit of mutual trust and respect. All employees have a right to work in an environment free from discrimination and harassing conduct, including sexual harassment.

Harassment is a form of discrimination that is offensive, impairs morale, undermines the integrity of employment relationships, and causes serious harm to the productivity, efficiency, and stability of our organization. Harassment on the basis of an employee's race, color, national origin, sex, gender (including gender identity and expression), religion, age (40 and over), mental or physical disability, political affiliation or belief, sexual orientation, marital or familial status, genetic information, and/or reprisal (retaliation) for prior Equal Employment Opportunity activity will not be tolerated.

For the purpose of this policy, harassment is defined as persistent and unwelcome conduct or actions on any of the bases above. Sexual harassment is one type of harassment and includes unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome physical contact, and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature includes, but is not limited to—

The repeated making of unsolicited, inappropriate gestures or comments.
The display of offensive sexually graphic materials not necessary for our work.

Harassment on any basis (race, sex, age, disability, etc.) exists whenever—

Submission to harassing conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's employment.
Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for an employment decision affecting an individual.
The conduct interferes with an employee's work or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Harassment may be subtle or manipulative and is not always evident. It does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature. It refers to behavior that is not welcome and is personally offensive. All forms of gender harassment are covered. Men can be sexually

harassed; men can harass men; women can harass other women. Offenders can be managers, supervisors, coworkers, and nonemployees, such as clients or vendors.

Physical harassment is actual or threatened assault, including hitting, tripping, kicking, punching, unwanted touching, and malicious or insulting gestures.

Verbal harassment includes jokes, insults, and innuendoes (based on race, sex, age, disability, etc.); degrading sexual remarks; referring to someone as a stud, hunk, or babe; whistling; "cat calls," comments regarding a person's body or sex life; or pressures for sexual favors.

Nonverbal harassment includes gestures, staring, touching, hugging, patting, blocking a person's movement, standing too close, brushing against a person's body, or display of sexually suggestive, degrading, racist or other derogatory pictures, cartoons, or drawings.

This policy also expressly prohibits retaliation of any kind against any employee bringing a complaint or assisting in the investigation of a complaint. Such employees may not be adversely affected in any manner related to their employment. NRCS views harassment and retaliation to be among the most serious breaches of workplace behavior. Consequently, appropriate disciplinary or corrective action, ranging from a warning to termination, can be expected.

This policy will be issued to all current employees and during orientation of new employees. Any employee who believes he or she is being harassed, or any employee who becomes aware of harassment, should promptly notify his or her supervisor. If the employee believes that the supervisor is the harasser, the supervisor's supervisor should be notified. If an employee is uncomfortable discussing harassment with his or her supervisor, the employee should contact the NRCS Civil Rights Division. Information on your right to file a harassment complaint is also available at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/about/civilrights/.

As Chief of NRCS, I am fully committed to ensuring that every employee and customer is treated with dignity and respect. Managers, supervisors, and employees must remain cognizant of this policy and refrain from perpetrating acts of harassment. All employees, including contractors and others performing official work for the agency must fully support this zero-tolerance harassment policy.

Jason A. Weller
Chief