

Policy Title: Inclusive and Respectful Workplace Policy

Chapter: 4

POLICY STATEMENT

Ramsey County is committed to creating and maintaining a healthy, inclusive, and respectful workplace, free of harassment and discrimination. All employees are expected to adhere to this policy and hold each other mutually accountable for ensuring a workplace culture that is inclusive, supportive, and respectful of all our employees. All managers, supervisors, and other employees, including vendors and contractors, will treat each other, the residents we serve, and everyone we meet, with courtesy, dignity, and respect.

This policy defines behaviors that may violate this objective and outlines procedures for making complaints and for responding to complaints to ensure timely and appropriate follow-through. Harassment, intimidation, violence, microaggressions, and other bullying or discriminatory behaviors are prohibited.

Individuals who believe they have been subjected to, or witnessed, behaviors that violate this policy should file a complaint using the complaint process outlined in the **Procedures** section below. People who violate this policy will be subject to corrective action, as outlined in the **Corrective Actions** section below.

Discrimination

Ramsey County strictly prohibits discrimination, including discrimination based on an individual's actual or perceived protected class characteristics (see the definition of **Protected class** below). Discrimination includes unfair or prejudicial treatment, adverse actions, or conduct that segregates, separates, limits or restricts the individual from employment opportunities, including (but not limited to) hiring, promotion, compensation, disciplinary action, assignment of job duties, or other benefits or privileges of employment.

The county is committed to: ensuring a respectful work environment free of all forms of harassment and discrimination; actively recruiting, developing, and sustaining a diverse workforce that reflects the community; and creating a cooperative work environment that promotes outstanding service to all the county's diverse communities.

Harassment

Ramsey County strictly prohibits any form of harassment, defined as unwanted, unwelcomed, and uninvited conduct that threatens, offends, intimidates, alarms, or puts a person in fear for their safety. Harassing behavior includes but is not limited to derogatory comments, offensive touching or gestures, impeding or blocking movement, or interfering with work. It can also include visual insults such as derogatory posters, memes, or cartoons. In addition to this policy, state and federal laws prohibit unwelcome conduct or communication based on actual or perceived membership in a protected class, including stereotypes of protected classes, that has a negative effect on the individual and/or on the workplace, as defined in the **Protected class** section below.

See **Definitions** for more examples of harassment.

Ramsey County is committed to preventing and responding to sexual harassment of any kind in the workplace (defined below). Sexual harassment includes harassment involving unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, written or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature. It includes any behavior that degrades someone based on their sex, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Sexual harassment also includes preferential treatment or promises of preferential treatment for submitting to sexual conduct, or negative treatment or threats of negative treatment for refusing to submit to sexual conduct.

Non-Retaliation Statement

Ramsey County prohibits retaliation or reprisal in any form against an employee who opposes harassing, discriminatory or disrespectful conduct, or who files a complaint, reports a violation, acts as a witness, or participates in the investigation of a reported violation of Ramsey County workplace policies or any applicable law, government rule, or regulation. Retaliation also includes conduct or communication aimed at preventing a person from opposing or reporting harassing, discriminatory or disrespectful conduct, or participating in an investigation. This is true even if the report is ultimately determined to be unsubstantiated.

Any employee who is found to have engaged in retaliation in violation of this policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including discharge.

Forms of retaliation may include harassment or adverse employment consequences such as:

- Arbitrary discipline or demotion, providing inaccurate work information, or failing to cooperate or to discuss work-related matters.
- Intentionally pressuring, falsely denying, lying, covering up, or attempting to cover up conduct such as that described above.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all employees of the county.

The standards in this policy apply to behavior in the workplace, which is defined in the **Workplace** section below.

DEFINITIONS

Protected class: A group of people with a common characteristic who are legally protected from employment discrimination based on that characteristic. Protected classes are created by both federal and state law. Protected classes include: race; color; creed; religion; national origin (includes birthplace, ancestry, culture, or linguistic characteristics closely associated with an ethnic group); sex; pregnancy (includes childbirth and related medical conditions); marital status; familial status; receipt of public assistance; membership or activity in a local human rights commission; disability (physical or mental); age; sexual orientation; gender identity; gender expression; employee genetic information; and, for employees in some federally funded programs, political beliefs.

Bullying: Behavior that is threatening, intimidating, or humiliating (see examples below). It includes many of the same behaviors under the definition of harassment.

Intimidation: Behavior that induces fear in another person through threats, insults, badgering, bullying, or aggressive behavior that causes, or threatens to cause, physical or emotional harm to others.

Microaggressions: Indirect or subtle statements or behaviors (intentional or unintentional) that communicate a negative attitude toward marginalized or stigmatized groups (see examples below). Types of microaggressions include but are not limited to:

- When a person behaves in a discriminatory way but alleges that they did not intend it to be offensive. *Example:* a person telling a racist joke, then saying, “I was just joking.”
- When a person makes seemingly favorable comments that are unintentionally discriminatory. *Example:* a person saying to a doctor of color, “Your people must be so proud.”
- When a person’s comment invalidates or undermines the experiences of a certain group of people. *Examples:* a white person telling a person of color that racism does not exist today; or a man telling a woman that sexism does not exist today.

Offensive behavior: Words or conduct that a reasonable person would find objectionable, although the conduct is neither severe nor pervasive (see examples below).

Violence: Actions that hurt or attempt to threaten or hurt people. This includes physical force, harassment, intimidation, or misuse of power and authority resulting in fear, pain, or injury. Violent behavior can be direct, indirect, or with reckless disregard for another person. Violent behavior also includes verbal abuse, threats, acts, or conditions that would lead a person to reasonably believe a violent act could occur.

Workplace: The workplace includes wherever anyone is representing Ramsey County or conducting work on behalf of the county, whether at a Ramsey County property, at home, or in the community. The workplace also includes anywhere employees engage one another through their shared connection as county employees, which includes social, virtual, and physical work environments, not solely limited to county property or to conduct occurring during work hours. Workplace conduct may play out in personal conversations, memos, notes, emails, texts, social media posts, and phone calls.

Examples of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and offensive behavior:

- Discussing sexual activities or making sexual comments, jokes, suggestions, or invitations
- Intentional physical conduct that is sexual in nature, including kissing, touching, brushing against, patting, or pinching
- Comments about a person’s physical or mental health

- Comments of a sexual or demeaning nature about a person's clothing, body, or physical appearance (this may also be considered sexual harassment)
- Displaying or sharing sexually explicit, suggestive, racially insensitive, or demeaning or disrespectful materials
- Sexually suggestive facial expressions, leering, or ogling
- Racial jokes or slurs
- Using demeaning or inappropriate terms or labels
- Using crude language or behavior
- Sabotaging another person's work
- Hostile physical conduct
- Physical assault, including assault of a sexual nature
- Humiliation, demeaning actions, or name-calling
- Following or stalking
- Ridiculing
- Yelling
- Spreading rumors or gossiping
- Statements demeaning the hiring of others

RESPONSIBILITIES

Ramsey County will take prompt and effective remedial action to review complaints under this policy and conduct investigation when necessary. Ramsey County may take immediate steps, at its discretion, to protect the complainant, other employees or members of the public, pending the completion of the investigation.

Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors are responsible for:

- Ensuring all employees adhere to this policy
- Monitoring the workplace and reporting incidents that violate this policy
- Reporting and addressing situations where harassment and bullying have occurred

Managers and supervisors who allow or tolerate behaviors that could be in violation of this policy, and who fail to report such behaviors immediately are subject to corrective action, which may include discipline up to and including termination of employment.

All Employees

All employees share responsibility for creating and maintaining a workplace where everyone is valued and respected. Employees are responsible for adhering to this policy and holding each other mutually accountable to this policy.

PROCEDURES

Reporting

Employees have multiple options for discussing or reporting concerns about behavior that may or may not violate this policy. Employees are encouraged to discuss with a supervisor, manager, or [Human Resources \(HR\) business partner](#) any behavior that feels uncomfortable, intimidating, threatening, or offensive, even if the employee is not sure the behavior violates this policy. If the behavior involves a manager or supervisor, employees should contact HR directly. If the person making the complaint is not comfortable sharing their concerns with their supervisor, manager, or HR, they may contact the Workplace Investigations Team in the Compliance and Ethics Office.

Employees may share concerns or make a complaint through any means, including in person, in an email, over the phone, or in a letter. A concern or complaint can also be reported on RamseyNet using the [workplace conduct complaint form](#). This form can be submitted anonymously, if desired.

When an employee reports a complaint to a supervisor or manager regarding a violation of this policy, the supervisor or manager is required to discuss options with the employee as to how best to respond to that complaint, including [reporting it to HR](#) or the Workplace Investigations Team. If the reported behavior appears to violate this policy and the employee does not wish to take the issue to HR or the Workplace Investigations Team themselves, the manager or supervisor is required to report the behavior to HR or the Workplace Investigations Team.

All employees have a responsibility to report violations of this policy. If appropriate, employees may attempt to resolve an issue with the person or people who engaged in offensive behavior through direct communication, though it is not necessary to do so before reporting.

Incidents will be reported to law enforcement or other authorities when required by law.

In the case of violent behavior, the incident should be reported immediately. An employee who feels they have been subjected to such conduct by a non-employee third party, such as a vendor or members of the public, should report the conduct to their supervisor, manager, HR, Workplace Investigations Team or Compliance and Ethics Office. For immediate assistance in responding to violent behavior, contact on-site security, and/or an onsite supervisor or manager, or dial 911.

Confidentiality

Ramsey County will treat all complaints with sensitivity and discretion. The County will maintain confidentiality to the greatest extent possible and respect employees' privacy by sharing information only with those who have a need to know, so an investigation may proceed, and appropriate disciplinary or corrective action may occur. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because confidentiality may prevent an effective investigation or may not be possible due to labor and employment laws.

It is possible to submit an anonymous complaint when using the [workplace conduct complaint form](#) on RamseyNet.

Witness Intervention

People who witness violations of this policy have the responsibility to report it using the above outlined procedures. People who witness and report violations in good faith of this policy are protected from retaliation as reasonably possible.

Complaints

All complaints will be reviewed promptly, thoroughly, and impartially.

Managers and supervisors who receive a complaint of discriminatory, violent, harassing, intimidating, offensive, or retaliatory behavior, or who have reason to believe that such behavior is occurring, must report the concern and forward the entire complaint promptly, thoroughly, and impartially to HR or the Workplace Investigations Team. HR staff who receive such a complaint must report the concern to the Workplace Investigations Team to determine whether a violation of county policy has occurred. Managers and supervisors must not make an independent determination as to the validity of a complaint.

Complaints that are submitted via the [workplace conduct complaint form](#) on RamseyNet go directly to the Workplace Investigations Team.

If an employee believes their complaint was not handled properly or promptly, they are urged to contact the Compliance and Ethics Office or HR. While employees are encouraged to use the County's internal complaint procedure, they may also choose to file a charge or complaint with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights ("MDHR"), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC"), or other external entity, or pursue available legal options.

Corrective Actions

Once management is aware of a violation of this policy, prompt remedial action must be taken that can reasonably be expected to stop the behavior. People who violate this policy are subject to various forms of resolution or corrective action, including discipline up to and including termination.

It may be necessary to take interim steps to avoid ongoing violations during the investigation period. This may include removing the person who has been accused of violating the policy to a different work location temporarily or putting them on a leave with pay pending the investigation.

Once the investigation is complete, resolution or corrective actions may include an apology, direction to stop the behavior, coaching, counseling, training, implementation of a performance improvement plan, transfer, or discipline. If discipline is warranted, disciplinary measures will be taken in alignment with the County's personnel rules and collective bargaining agreements, and may include the following:

- written reprimand
- suspension
- demotion; and
- termination.

Not all policy violations will require disciplinary measures. Once HR has reviewed the complaint, and investigated, if warranted, managers/supervisors will receive feedback from HR as to how best to resolve the incident. With HR's guidance, managers and

supervisors may employ other restorative tools including mediation, conflict resolution, coaching, and restorative circles, to resolve conflicts that occur in the workplace.

AUTHORITY

This policy and the procedures herein were prepared under the authority of the County Manager. It ensures compliance with:

- United States Code: 42 U.S.C. § 2000e, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Code of Federal Regulations: 29 C.F.R., Guidelines on Discrimination
- Public Law No: 113-128, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Minnesota Human Rights Act, Chapters 363A and 363A.03
- Ramsey County Administrative Code, 9.30.10 (Code of Ethics of Ramsey County Employees, Equal Treatment) and 5.10.78 (Sexual Harassment Policy)
- Ramsey County Board Resolution #80-645, Affirmative Action Policy
- Ramsey County Board Resolution #84-53 dated January 16, 1984
- Ramsey County Personnel Rules 2: Purpose, and 24: Causes for Disciplinary Action

LINKS AND RESOURCES

[Employee Assistance Program](#)

[Employee Resource Groups](#)

[Inclusive and Respectful Workplace Policy Addendum for Elected Officials](#)

CONTACTS / SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

For more assistance and information, the following contacts may be helpful:

- [Human Resources](#): 651-266-2700
- [Workplace Investigations Team, Office of Compliance and Ethics](#): 651-266-8000
- [Minnesota Department of Human Rights](#) (MDHR): 651-539-1100 or TTY: 651-296-1283. MDHR is Minnesota's civil rights enforcement agency. Contact MDHR if you need more information about discrimination and your rights, or to report discrimination if attempts to have complaints addressed by the county are unsuccessful.
- [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) (EEOC): 1-800-669-4000 or 1-800-669-6820. The EEOC is responsible for enforcing federal discrimination laws. Contact MDHR if you need more information about federal discrimination laws,

your rights, or to report discrimination if attempts to have complaints addressed by the county are unsuccessful.

- Union stewards for employees represented by a union.

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Brief description of change
March 4, 2024	This policy supersedes by incorporation the Respectful Workplace and Violence Prevention Policy, the Non-discrimination Policy and the Sexual Harassment Policy.
May 6, 2016	Updated for inclusion in the countywide administrative policy manual
March 24, 2009	Resolution 2009-111 updated Workplace Violence Prevention and Respectful Workplace Policy; revised to Respectful Workplace and Violence Prevention Policy
May 18, 1999	Resolution 99-218 changed title from Workplace Violence Policy to Workplace Violence Prevention and Respectful Workplace Policy
August 1994	Original adoption of policy

APPROVAL

Name: Johanna Berg
Title: County Manager
Effective Date: June 3, 2024