

Respectful Workplace Policy

Human Resources

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HALIFAX

Respectful Workplace Policy

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1 - Policy Name

Respectful Workplace Policy

2 - Purpose

Halifax Regional Municipality (the Municipality) is committed to fostering a healthy, safe, diverse and inclusive workplace, and to providing a work environment where all persons are treated with respect and dignity. All employees share the responsibility to maintain a work environment free from disrespectful behaviour, harassment, discrimination and violence. This shared responsibility includes demonstrating respect towards others and actively resolving concerns at the earliest opportunity.

The Municipality recognizes that every employee is entitled to employment free of workplace harassment. The Municipality is committed to ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that no employee will be subjected to workplace harassment.

3 - Objectives

- Establish a culture of shared responsibility and cooperation in promoting a positive work environment free from all forms of disrespectful behaviour, harassment, discrimination and violence.
- Promote prevention and prompt resolution of concerns through early intervention supports and tools.
- Create an understanding of behaviour that does not support a respectful workplace.
- Outline the process for employees and the Municipality in reporting and responding to incidents as they occur.
- Outline the process and requirements for investigations of alleged violence, discrimination and harassment.

4 - Scope

This Policy applies to all HRM employees (as defined in this Policy), and to others made subject to this Policy pursuant to the terms of a contract or tender.

Specific processes pertaining to complaints against sworn members of the Halifax Regional Police and Elected Officials are outlined below:

Halifax Regional Police

Sworn police officers and identified special constables employed by Halifax Regional Police (HRP) are governed by the *Nova Scotia Police Act* and the HRP Collective Agreement. These employees are required to comply with the expected behaviours outlined in this Policy.

Allegations of a breach of this Policy, where discipline is a requested or potential outcome, must be dealt with under the *Police Act*.

Allegations of a breach of this Policy, where the Complainant and Respondent agree to attempt to resolve the matter without disciplinary action, may be dealt with under the Respectful Workplace Policy using a restorative remedy-based process (e.g., facilitated discussion, mediation, etc.)

Respectful Workplace Policy complaints against or between non-sworn employees of Halifax Regional Police are administered under this Policy.

Elected Officials

Per [Administrative Order 2024-004-GOV, Respecting the Code of Conduct for Elected Officials of the Halifax Regional Municipality](#), Elected Officials shall treat every person, including corporate employees, with collegiality, respect, integrity, professionalism, transparency and responsibility and ensure that their work environment is free from discrimination, bullying and harassment. Employees who have concerns with an Elected Official, as it pertains to this Policy, should contact their manager or Human Resources. The concerns will be reviewed to determine what support and options are available.

5 - Definitions

In the context of this document:

Bullying means a form of harassment that typically is carried out through a repeated targeted pattern of behaviour that is intended to, or ought reasonably to be known to, cause fear, humiliation, intimidation, distress or other forms of harm. The impact may be physical or psychological and may damage a person's body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation or property. Bullying may be obvious or subtle, direct, or indirect, and can occur in person, writing, or through the use of technology such as social media, text or email.

Complaint means a Respectful Workplace Complaint made by an employee, alleging a violation of this Policy, which contains specific details about the behaviours and identifies the respondent(s).

Complainant means an individual who has made a Respectful Workplace Complaint under this Policy.

Culturally Insensitive Behaviour means actions or remarks that are disrespectful, harmful or offensive to individuals or groups belonging to a particular culture or ethnicity. This type of behaviour can take various forms, such as making derogatory comments, using ethnic slurs,

stereotyping, microaggressions or failing to acknowledge and respect cultural differences. Culturally insensitive behaviour can be intentional or unintentional, but regardless of the intent, it can cause harm and perpetuate discrimination against certain groups.

Discrimination means making a distinction, whether intentional or not, based on a protected characteristic (as outlined in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* and defined in this Policy) that has the effect of imposing burdens, obligations or disadvantages on an individual or a class of individuals that is not imposed upon others or which withholds or limits access to opportunities, benefits and advantages available to other individuals or classes of individuals in society.

Disrespectful Behaviour means failing or refusing, through words or actions, to treat others in a professional, courteous and civil manner. Examples of disrespectful behaviour include, but are not limited to, teasing or joking that embarrasses or humiliates; shouting or speaking in a hostile tone; excessive use of profanity and spreading gossip or rumours that damage one's reputation.

Employee means an individual employed by the Municipality, and for the purposes of this Policy includes volunteers, student trainees, interns and individuals employed on a personal service contract or sub-contract. Employee also includes contractors or sub-contractors who are made subject to this Policy pursuant to the terms of a contract or tender, and their employees, in the course of providing goods and services to the Municipality.

Exclusion means a type of harassment involving the shunning or ostracism of an individual, or group of individuals. It can include, but is not limited to, isolating others by no longer communicating with them, denying, or ignoring their presence, distancing them from others or purposefully omitting them from decisions, conversations and work-related events without valid reason.

Investigation consists of a formal investigative process wherein the findings are based on an objective assessment of the evidence to determine, on the balance of probabilities (i.e. more likely than not), if the behaviour occurred and if so, was it a violation of this Policy.

Informal Resolution may include discussions with the employee(s) involved, Supervisors, and/or Human Resources. Restorative processes may be used such as, mediation, facilitated conversation, workplace assessments, etc. Participation in restorative processes is voluntary.

Intake means an initial review and assessment of a submitted complaint to determine the best course of action.

Investigator means a person appointed to investigate complaints of harassment or discrimination. The investigator may be a municipal employee or contracted externally.

Leader means a Supervisor, Manager, Director, Executive Director/Chief of Business Unit or employee who has supervising responsibilities in their role (e.g. work assignment, training, etc.).

Microaggression means a subtle, often unintentional, form of prejudice. Rather than an overt declaration against an individual, a microaggression often comes in the form of an off-hand comment, an inadvertently hurtful joke or a pointed insult. Sometimes microaggressions are referred to as “subtle acts of exclusion.”

Municipality means Halifax Regional Municipality; it may also be referred to as “the Organization.”

“Ought Reasonably to have Known” means an objective assessment of how a specific behaviour might generally be received.

Physical Harassment means any unwelcome physical behaviour including threatening or offensive gestures, physical intimidation, coercion, assault, practical jokes or “horseplay” that would reasonably result in embarrassment or humiliation.

If initial analysis of the complaint identifies that the alleged physical harassment involves a threat of physical harm or actual physical harm has occurred, the complaint will be referred to the Safety Specialist for investigation under HRM’s *Workplace Violence Prevention Corporate Procedure*.

Poisoned Work Environment means when inappropriate conduct is so frequent that it results in a hostile and offensive workplace. The conduct may not be directed at anyone in particular but has the overall effect of creating an uncomfortable environment that negatively affects well-being and productivity.

Procedural Fairness means following processes that are consistent, transparent, without bias or conflict of interest and ensuring all necessary information is gathered prior to determinations, including an opportunity for those involved to respond as appropriate.

Protected Characteristics means the list of characteristics as defined by the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* that discrimination and harassment are legally prohibited against in the area of employment. The protected characteristics are: age; race; colour; religion; creed; sex; sexual orientation; gender identity; gender expression; physical disability or mental disability; an irrational fear of contracting an illness or disease; ethnic, national or aboriginal origin; family status; marital status; source of income; political belief, affiliation or activity; that individual’s association with another individual or class of individuals having protected characteristics.

Racial Harassment means offensive behaviour based on the grounds of race, colour, citizenship, place of origin, ancestry, ethnic background or creed that includes, but is not limited to derogatory communications, images or offensive stereotypical conduct, racial slurs, ethnic jokes, insulting depictions, adverse differential treatment, criticizing or being intolerant to racial differences in appearance or customs.

Respectful Workplace means a healthy, safe and professional work environment where each person is treated with fairness and dignity. This includes acting and communicating with personal integrity, openness, and civility.

Respondent means an individual against whom a complaint has been made.

Retaliation means any adverse action or threat of adverse action taken by any manager or employee in response to another's participation in the complaint process. Acts of retaliation include conduct that intimidates, coerces, penalizes, excludes or otherwise discriminates against the complainant or those who are involved in the complaint process.

Sexual Harassment means behaviour or comments of a sexual or romantic nature that are known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome and to make the receiver feel uncomfortable. Sexual harassment can also be harassment based on sex, gender expression, sexuality or gender identity that is not sexual or romantic in nature. It may be a single incident or a series of incidents; it may be overt, coercive, or subtle in nature. It may be a solicitation or advance made to an individual by another individual where the other individual is in a position to confer a benefit on or deny a benefit to the individual to whom the solicitation or advance is made. A reprisal or threat of reprisal against an individual for rejecting a sexual solicitation or romantic advance is also a form of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment also includes comments, gestures or physical solicitation of a sexual nature, or comments with a sexual connotation or component that are directed at no specific person but create an intimidating, demeaning or unsafe work environment. Lack of intent to cause harm is not a defense to an allegation of sexual harassment.

Verbal Harassment means an offensive course of demeaning comments directed at an Employee, or used in reference about an Employee, which would reasonably undermine the reputation of that Employee in the workplace. Verbal harassment includes insults, name-calling, threats, slurs, crude or degrading comments, innuendoes, profanities and negative stereotyping that would reasonably cause offence. If initial analysis of the complaint identifies that an alleged verbal threat involves references to physical harm, the complaint will be directed to a Safety Specialist for investigation under HRM's [Workplace Violence Prevention Corporate Procedure](#).

Vexatious Complaint means when an Employee knowingly complains without sufficient grounds, or for an ulterior purpose. Instances would include situations such as where the Employee is not seeking protection from harassment but is motivated by malice to cause annoyance or embarrassment to the Respondent. A good faith complaint may become vexatious when the Complainant persists in pursuing the complaint after facts demonstrating that there is no reasonable basis for that belief are brought to the Complainant's attention.

Violence means, but is not limited to, any of the following: threats, including a threatening statement or threatening behaviour that gives an individual reasonable cause to believe that the individual is at risk of physical injury; conduct or attempted conduct that endangers or is intended to endanger the physical health, or the physical safety of an individual. Allegations of violence will be directed to a Safety Specialist for investigation under HRM's *Workplace Violence Prevention Corporate Procedure*.

Witnesses means individuals who are identified as having observed alleged actions or behaviours related to a complaint or who are identified as having knowledge relevant to the alleged actions or behaviours. Employees who are identified as witnesses have a responsibility to cooperate in good faith with the complaint resolution process including providing particulars of the alleged incident.

Workplace means any place occupied by employees and includes (but is not limited to) Municipal offices, vehicles/vessels, and facilities, including hybrid and remote work locations; training events; conferences; business travel; work-related social gatherings or any other location where Municipal activity is conducted or where an employee is representing the Municipality in a professional setting.

Workplace Harassment means a single significant occurrence or a course of repeated occurrences of objectionable or unwelcome conduct, comment or action in the workplace, including bullying, that, whether intended or not, degrades, intimidates or threatens, and includes all of the following, but does not include any action taken by an employer or supervisor relating to the management and direction of an employee or the workplace:

- (i) workplace harassment or bullying that is based on any personal characteristic, including, but not limited to a characteristic referred to in clauses 5(1)(h) to (v) of the Human Rights Act,
- (ii) inappropriate sexual conduct, including, but not limited to, sexual solicitation or advances, sexually suggestive remarks or gestures, circulating or sharing inappropriate images or unwanted physical contact.

6 - Roles and Responsibilities

Employees

All employees are responsible for conducting themselves in a respectful manner and are obligated not to engage in workplace harassment. Every employee has a responsibility to support and maintain a respectful workplace. Employees are expected to:

- Ensure words and actions are consistent with this Policy.
- Raise concerns regarding workplace behaviours as soon as possible.
- Accept responsibility for their workplace behaviours and their impact on others.
- Cooperate in investigations and handling of alleged violations of this Policy.
- Maintain confidentiality related to investigations and other processes within this Policy.
- Participate in training associated with this Policy.
- Comply with their obligation under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to advise management of any potential risks to the safety of persons in or near the workplace.

Leaders

All leaders are responsible for conducting themselves in a respectful manner and are obligated not to engage in workplace harassment. All leaders are responsible to recognize, prevent and respond to workplace harassment as outlined in the list of responsibilities below and throughout

this Policy. Leaders have additional responsibilities to create and maintain respectful workplaces and must act immediately on observations or allegations of a violation of this Policy. Leaders are expected to:

- Make reasonable efforts to ensure work-related practices/procedures in their areas are free from barriers and do not discriminate against groups or individuals.
- Set a good example by ensuring their own words and conduct adhere to this Policy.
- Be aware of what constitutes a violation of this Policy and the procedures in place for addressing and resolving such behaviours.
- Act promptly to address workplace behaviours that do not align with this Policy.
- Consult and work cooperatively with Human Resources as needed.
- Keep a detailed record of any violations of this Policy and corrective actions taken.
- Report this information to Human Resources as required.
- Participate in training associated with this Policy.
- Promote and monitor employee training to support a respectful workplace.
- Ensure this Policy is distributed and posted in a location that is easily accessible by all employees and any other individuals who enter the workplace.
- Monitor workplace behaviours and act to address any behaviours that are Concerning, Offensive or Severe as outlined in the policy regulations and in Appendix A- Behaviour Zones.
- Monitor the workplace during and following any reported violations of this Policy.

Human Resources

Several different teams within Human Resources (HR) are responsible for supporting Employees and Leaders in ensuring a healthy, safe, and respectful workplace. Either a Human Resources Business Partner (HRBP) or a Respectful Workplace Specialist will be the first point of contact in HR for employees who have concerns or inquiries related to workplace behaviours.

HRBP's are responsible to:

- Promote the Respectful Workplace Policy and encourage preventative approaches to Employees and Leaders.
- Support business units involved in conflict resolution situations. Provide clarification and guidance to employees in complaint processes.

Respectful Workplace Specialists are responsible to:

- Develop, implement and monitor training program(s) for employees and leaders regarding this Policy
- Oversee the application of this Policy and ensure employees are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- Communicate to employees the processes used for resolving complaints made under this Policy.
- Respond to inquiries from Employees and Leaders.
- Perform intake of complaints, restorative processes and investigations as required.

- Ensure appropriate information is communicated to all parties involved in a complaint resolution process.

Corporate Safety Specialists are responsible to:

- Provide support, advice, and recommendations in relation to workplace violence incidents.
- Conduct workplace investigations into allegations of violence in the workplace between employees.
- Provide training and support to the organization on workplace violence prevention and risk assessment.
- Ensure appropriate information is communicated to all parties involved in a complaint resolution process.

Health and Wellness Specialists are responsible to:

- Provide support and advice to employees when a health file is initiated.
- Refer an employee, who discloses they are on leave related to workplace behaviour, to the Respectful Workplace Specialist to discuss the matter and the most appropriate means to resolve the issue. This concern may be disclosed to the Health Specialist by the employee or the employee's treatment provider.

Diversity and Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO)

The Diversity and Inclusion/ANSAIO team will provide advice and considerations related to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility to Human Resources and Business Units, when requested, in the process of addressing complaints reported through this Policy.

Chief Administrative Officer

The Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for communicating and holding Leaders accountable to organizational expectations for a safe, respectful workplace and ensuring that regular reporting on meaningful respectful workplace metrics will be reviewed and actioned as required.

7 - Policy Regulations

The Municipality does not tolerate any form of harassment or bullying. All employees and leaders are responsible for conducting themselves in a respectful manner and are obligated not to engage in workplace harassment. Employees are encouraged to report allegations of harassment. The Municipality will investigate all complaints of workplace harassment.

The Municipality will not reprimand or seek reprisals against employees who make complaints in good faith. The Respectful Workplace Policy is not intended to discourage, prevent or preclude a complainant from exercising other legal rights under any other law.

The Municipality will take appropriate corrective action respecting any person under the Municipality's direction who subjects an employee to workplace harassment or any other behaviours that do not contribute to a respectful workplace.

All employees are responsible for contributing to a respectful workplace, by managing their own actions and words. For more detailed information related to processes, descriptions, procedures, and roles and responsibilities, please refer to the [Respectful Workplace Policy Toolkit](#).

Behaviors can be viewed on a spectrum ranging from respectful to severe, see Appendix A for details.

Workplace behaviors exist within a range from respectful behaviors (indicating a healthy and safe workplace) to severe behaviors that do not align with our values.

While some behaviours may not initially seem problematic, if they continue, over time this can result in more severe and persistent behaviors which are more difficult to address. Leaders and Employees should act as early as possible when behaviours are experienced or observed.

These behaviour zones help Employees and leaders to recognize, prevent and respond to workplace harassment.

Respectful Behaviours: can be recognized as behaviours or actions that foster a positive, safe, and healthy workplace. Maintaining these behaviors will help to prevent workplace harassment.

- Examples include expressing appreciation for each other, actively listening and being inclusive of team members.
- Employees and Leaders are encouraged to continue to model and recognize this behaviour.

Concerning Behaviours: can be recognized as behaviours that are disrespectful or inappropriate. They show poor judgment and may negatively impact on the workplace.

- Examples include allegations of sarcasm, rude comments or dismissiveness. This behaviour may be identified by avoidance of each other or declining morale or engagement within a team.
- Employees should respond by addressing this type of behaviour directly if they feel safe to do so or by reporting the behaviour to a trusted Leader or Human Resources.
- Leaders should respond by intervening if they observe this behaviour by addressing it and clarifying expectations. Leaders should seek support from Human Resources if needed.

Offensive Behaviours: can be recognized as behaviours that require immediate attention and reporting to leadership or Human Resources.

- Examples include allegations of yelling, or inappropriate jokes. This may cause fear or discomfort among colleagues.
- Employees should respond to this behaviour by telling the person to stop if safe and reporting the behaviour to a trusted Leader or Human Resources if the behaviour continues.

- Leaders should respond by taking the concerns seriously and acting promptly to provide support to the impacted Employee and consulting with Human Resources.

Severe Behaviours: can be recognized as behaviours that result in a violation of the Respectful Workplace Policy, Workplace Violence Policy, or other Municipal Policies.

- Examples include allegations of racism, threats, harassment or bullying. This type of behaviour may cause serious harm or trauma.
- Employees should respond by avoiding confrontation. The behaviour should be reported immediately to a trusted Leader or Human Resources.
- Leaders should respond by taking immediate action to ensure all employees feel safe and should consult with Human Resources. For allegations of violence, Leaders and Human Resources will follow the Workplace Violence Procedure.

Procedures to respond to Respectful Workplace Concerns

Employees are encouraged to address behaviours that do not align with this Policy at the earliest opportunity. There are a variety of options an Employee can select to address their concerns. When a Leader becomes aware of behaviour that does not align with this policy, they must take action to investigate and address the behaviour. For allegations of harassment, bullying, discrimination and violence, the Leader must report this to Human Resources immediately.

Employee to Employee

- If appropriate, and the employee feels safe, they may attempt to address the situation directly by respectfully informing the other individual of the impact of their behaviour and requesting that it not happen again. An appropriate time and place that maintains confidentiality and privacy should be considered for the conversation.
- If the situation continues, the employee may address it again with the employee in an attempt to resolve the situation, or they may decide to involve their Leader or Human Resources (HRBP or Respectful Workplace Specialist) as outlined below under Employee to Leader and Employee to Human Resources. At any time, the employee may file a Respectful Workplace Complaint as outlined below under Submitting a Complaint.

Employee to Leader

- If an employee does not feel comfortable speaking directly to the individual, they should bring it to the attention of their Leader as soon as possible, providing as many details as possible about the event and explaining the impact.
- The Leader must make a demonstrated effort to address the employee's concerns and should seek out guidance and support from Human Resources as required.
- For allegations of harassment, bullying, discrimination and violence, the Leader must report this to Human Resources immediately.
- A Leader will be held accountable if they are aware of harmful or disruptive workplace behaviours that have occurred and cannot demonstrate they have taken steps to address or resolve the matter.

Employee to Human Resources

Employees may reach out to Human Resources at any time for guidance related to the Policy. Some ways they can support are:

- Allow the employee's concerns to be heard through an informal meeting with a Respectful Workplace Specialist or Human Resources Business Partner.
- Identify options to resolve the concerns including, providing support with addressing the individual(s) involved.
- Provide facilitated discussion or mediation support.
- Identify supports available including training or the EFAP.

Submitting a Complaint

At any time, an employee may file a Respectful Workplace Complaint as follows:

- Complete the [Complaint Information Form](#) (**Appendix B**) detailing as much information as possible about the alleged incident(s). The employee then should email the completed complaint form to the following address: respectfulworkplace@halifax.ca or send by interoffice mail to: Respectful Workplace Team, Human Resources, Purdy's Wharf, Tower 2, 8th Floor.
- The complaint will be reviewed by a member of the Respectful Workplace Team, and contact made with the employee within two business days to discuss the submission. Contact a Respectful Workplace Specialist (respectfulworkplace@halifax.ca) or MyHR (902-490-6145) at any point for assistance with the process.

Executive Directors/Chiefs of Business Unit will be notified about all complaints in their Business Unit. If an employee is not comfortable with their Executive Director/Chief of Business Unit being notified, due to real or perceived concerns with involvement in the alleged behaviour, the CAO will be notified of the complaint. Human Resources will work with the employee to determine a course of action that supports the psychological safety and wellbeing of the employee and addresses the alleged behaviours to the extent possible. **Complainants who wish to remain fully or partially anonymous should follow the procedures set out in the Whistleblower Policy.**

Exceptions

- For complaints about Human Resources, the completed complaint form should be sent to the Chief, Human Resources Officer.
- For complaints about Executive Directors/Chiefs of Business Unit, the complaint form should be sent to the CAO at the following address: caooffice@halifax.ca or by phone at: 902-490-4026.
- For complaints involving the CAO or Chief of Staff, the complaint form should be sent to the Municipal Solicitor. All complaints received by the Municipal Solicitor will be reported to the Executive Standing Committee along with actions taken to address them.

Complaint Intake Procedure

The Respectful Workplace Specialist will conduct an intake analysis of all complaints received and will make a determination for next steps based on the following factors:

- Applicability - the Complainant and Respondent must be covered under the scope of this Policy.
- Timeliness - Complaints must be made within twelve months of the last behaviour, unless there are extenuating circumstances that prevent that from occurring. Complaints that are made longer than twelve months after the most recent behaviour must include a rationale for why it was not made within the twelve-month window.
- The subject matter of the complaint is covered under this Policy.
- Whether or not the subject matter of the complaint has been or is currently being addressed through an alternate process (i.e. grievance, Human Rights complaint).
- The persistence of the alleged behaviour in duration and frequency.
- The severity of the alleged behaviour.
- The gap between the Complainant's and Respondent's versions of the incident. (i.e. there is significant dispute over the allegations).
- The willingness of the Complainant and Respondent to resolve the matter through an informal resolution or alternative dispute resolution (ADR) (i.e. facilitated discussion, mediation, etc.) and the appropriateness given the nature of the allegations.
- Legal Requirement – whether there is a legal requirement for the employer to conduct an investigation (i.e. harassment, violence).

Complaint Investigation Procedure

Once it has been determined that a complaint will be investigated, an impartial investigation will be conducted. Investigations may be conducted internally or by an external investigator. All employees have the right to have a support person present during investigation interviews.

In summary, the investigator will:

1. Meet with the Complainant (the person who submitted the complaint) to clarify the allegations and details of the complaint. The Complainant will identify witnesses and provide any relevant supporting documents.
2. Contact appropriate leaders in the workplace/Business Unit to advise them of the investigation. Leaders may provide additional relevant information and will support next steps following the Respectful Workplace Investigation.
3. Meet with the Respondent (the person who the complaint is against) to respond to the allegations. The Respondent will identify witnesses and provide any relevant supporting documents.
4. If necessary, meet with witnesses and anyone else relevant to the investigation, to gather relevant information pertaining to the allegations and supporting documentation.
5. Prepare a report of the findings. The investigator will also provide the Complainant and Respondent a brief summary of the findings.

Depending on complaint complexity, subsequent meetings with the Complainant, Respondent and witnesses may be required. All information gathered during the investigation, including the written report or summary, will be kept confidential and shared on a need-to-know basis only.

Following an investigation, it may be recommended that involved parties participate in a restorative process to assist in repairing workplace relationships. Based upon the findings of the investigation, discipline may be warranted. Discipline will be determined by the appropriate leader in consultation with Human Resources (Labour Relations and/or the Human Resources Business Partner).

Conclusion of the Complaint

If a complaint results in a harassment investigation, both the Complainant and Respondent will be provided with an executive summary of the investigation which includes the findings of the investigation. Both parties will be advised of any corrective action taken to the extent possible while maintaining confidentiality requirements.

Freedom of Expression

Canadians have the fundamental right of Freedom of Expression; however, that right is not absolute and there are restrictions on certain forms of expressions. Hate speech or expressions which promote or incite violence are not protected forms of Freedom of Expression. While the employer has an obligation to respect the Freedom of Expression of its employees, it also has a legal and statutory obligation to provide a safe work environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

Procedural Fairness

If an investigation is conducted under this Policy, it will follow the principles of procedural fairness.

Confidentiality

Anyone involved in the complaint process must keep information confidential. The complainant will be informed of who has been made aware of their concerns or complaint.

The Municipality will not disclose any information obtained in relation to a complaint of workplace harassment, including personal information, unless the disclosure is

- (i) required by law,
- (ii) necessary for the purposes of investigating the complaint, or
- (iii) necessary for the purposes of taking corrective action with respect to the complaint.

Referral to Workplace Violence Prevention

If the complaint involves physical threats or actions, it will be referred to Corporate Safety for investigation under the *Workplace Violence Prevention Corporate Procedure*.

Complaint Withdrawal

A Complainant may request a withdrawal of a complaint prior to the conclusion of any resolution process, as long as the complaint is not withdrawn due to actual or threatened retaliation for having made the complaint. The Respectful Workplace Specialist may decide the investigation should continue, consistent with its due diligence responsibilities in promoting a respectful workplace, should circumstances reveal reasonable evidence of prohibited behaviours (harassment, bullying, discrimination, violence).

Bad Faith or Vexatious Complaints

This Policy provides employees with options for resolving good faith complaints in a fair and effective manner. Submitting a bad faith or vexatious complaint may result in discipline against the Complainant. A good faith complaint that is unfounded due to insufficient evidence is not considered a bad faith complaint.

Complaint Held in Abeyance

There are circumstances in which action on a complaint may be postponed or held in abeyance for a variety of reasons (e.g. one of the parties is on leave). The request to hold a complaint in abeyance may be made by either party, or by the Municipality. Holding the complaint in abeyance is at the discretion of the Respectful Workplace Specialist. The time to hold the complaint in abeyance depends on the circumstances but should not exceed 6 months. Both parties must be advised in writing by the Respectful Workplace Specialist when a complaint is held in abeyance.

No Further Proceedings

A complaint may result in no further proceedings for any one of the following reasons:

- a) An Intake Analysis determines one or more of the following conditions occurred:
 - The Policy is not applicable as both Parties are not Employees (e.g. complaint by a citizen against an Employee)
 - The complaint is outside the designated time limitation of 12 months with no acceptable reason to grant an exception.
 - The subject matter of the complaint has been, or is currently being, dealt with through another process.
 - The subject matter of complaint does not fall under the behaviours covered in this Policy.
- b) The Employee has abandoned the complaint.
- c) The Employee has withdrawn the complaint.

Retaliation

Retaliation in any form, against any individual involved in the complaint resolution process, is strictly prohibited. Employees alleging retaliation for having participated in the complaint process will be required to provide the following details:

- A description of the incident.
- Identity of person(s) responsible for engaging in the behaviour.

- Dates the behaviour occurred.
- Location where the behaviour occurred.
- Names of Witnesses who observed the behaviour.

If the retaliation involves physical threats or actions, it will be referred to the Safety Specialist for investigation under HRM's *Workplace Violence Prevention Corporate Procedure*.

8 - Repeal

Workplace Harassment Prevention Policy 2017

9 - Effective Date

September 1, 2025

10 - Related Policies and Practices

Respectful Workplace Toolkit

Whistleblower Policy

Workplace Violence Prevention Procedure

Code of Conduct Policy

Social Media Policy

Human Rights Act, RSNS 1989, c. 214

Occupational Health and Safety Act, SNS 1996, c.7

Administrative Order 2024-004-GOV Respecting the Code of Conduct for Elected Officials

Nova Scotia's Occupational Health and Safety Act Regulations

11 - Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is meeting its stated purpose and aligned with current legislation.

12 - Contact

respectfulworkplace@halifax.ca

13 - Attachments

Behaviour Zones (Appendix A)

[Respectful Workplace Complaint Information Form](#) (Appendix B)

[Respectful Workplace Response Information Form](#) (Appendix C)

Appendix A- Behaviour Zones

It can sometimes be difficult to isolate workplace behaviours into categories of respectful or disrespectful behaviours. Real life encounters often expose us to behaviours that fall somewhere in the middle of these two categories. To illustrate this, it's helpful to imagine behaviours on a continuum, as illustrated below:



Respectful Behaviours	Concerning Behaviours	Offensive Behaviours	Severe Behaviours
Professional behaviours that contribute to a positive, safe, and healthy workplace. Example Behaviours: - Expressing appreciation - Respecting & valuing others' differences - Using greetings - Asking about others well-being - Being polite & courteous Signs and Indicators: - Work is aligned with HRM values - Employees feel valued and respected - Conflict arises but is resolved timely - Employees are engaged and feel productive What to do: - Continue to model appropriate behaviour - Continue to treat others fairly and equitably - Proactively seek out educational and training opportunities	Disrespectful, inappropriate behaviours that reflect poor judgement and can affect the workplace. Example Behaviours: - Gossiping - Interrupting - Careless humour or sarcasm - Dishonesty - Rudeness - Excessive profanity Signs and Indicators: - Behaviours are not addressed, are appearing more often - Withdrawing - Employees feel isolated and uninformed - Work productivity lowers - Employees are in conflict with one another What to do: - If comfortable, address incidents in the moment directly with the person(s) involved - Talk to a Supervisor - model appropriate behaviour by not going along with disrespectful behaviours	Behaviour that requires immediate action and should be reported to your leader or Human Resources. Example Behaviours: - Yelling, shouting, swearing - Intimidation, insults, or name-calling - Malicious gossip - Sexual innuendos - Bullying - Offensive jokes Signs and Indicators: - Employees are making complaints - Absenteeism is high - Operational impacts are recognized - Employees are unable to perform duties effectively What to do: - If comfortable, address incidents in the moment and/or check-in with person(s) affected - Talk to a Supervisor - Ask for help from HR or upper Management if previous efforts have not improved the situation	Very serious violations of the Respectful Workplace Policy, Workplace Violence, or other Municipal Policies. Example Behaviours: - Racism or discrimination - Verbal harassment - Sexual harassment or assault - Verbal threats/gestures threatening physical harm - Physical Assault Signs and Indicators: - Employees are making complaints. - Widespread feelings of isolation and lack of engagement - Break down in communication - Major operational impacts noticed What to do: - Talk to a Supervisor - Contact your HRBP or Respectful Workplace Team - Submit a complaint - Access Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) as/if needed

Behaviour Zones – Actions for Leaders

Respectful Behaviours

Professional behaviours that contribute to a positive, safe, and healthy workplace.

Action Required by Leader:

- Develop a rapport with employees.
- Constructive feedback & work direction.
- Supportive & respectful performance management.
- Use of discretion based on individual circumstances.
- Model appropriate behaviour.
- Provide opportunities for training & learning.
- Schedule frequent check-ins with employees individually & as a group.
- Keep employees informed of corporate initiatives & opportunities available to them.
- Monitor employee well-being; check in when changes are noticed.

Concerning Behaviours

Disrespectful, inappropriate behaviours that reflect poor judgement and can affect the workplace.

Action Required by Leader:

- Address incidents in the moment.
- Set expectations.
- Be present as often as possible.
- Include corporate policy information & resources in meetings with employees.
- Monitor increases in absenteeism & changes in behaviour.
- Use resources available to assist in managing behaviours.
- Book one on one check ins & follow up meetings as required.
- Take notes of behaviours & responses.
- Take care of yourself & ask for help.
- Provide training opportunities

Offensive Behaviours

Behaviour that requires immediate action and should be reported to your leader or Human Resources.

Action Required by Leader:

- Address incidents in the moment.
- If previous efforts have not improved the situation, ask for help from upper Management or Human Resources:
 - Human Resources Business Partner
 - Respectful Workplace Specialist
 - Labour Relations
- Reinforce and refer to HRM policies, including the Respectful Workplace Policy and Code of Conduct.
- Direct affected employees to the complaint process.
- Remain calm and clarify expectations.
- Take time for rest.

Severe Behaviours

Very serious violations of the Respectful Workplace Policy, Workplace Violence, or other Municipal Policies.

Action Required by Leader:

- Address incidents in the moment.
- Notify appropriate Human Resources Support(s):
 - Human Resources Business Partner
 - Respectful Workplace Specialist
 - Labour Relations
- Use EFAP and HR as support.
- Initiate complaint process with employees.
- Be consistent and clear in direction.
- Follow the process set out in the Workplace Violence Procedure if the behaviour(s) indicate violence or a threat of violence.
 - Consult with Corporate Safety
- Take time for rest.

Respectful Workplace Policy Complaint Information Form



For Office Use only:

Complaint Number: _____

Business Unit: _____

Date Filed: _____

Halifax Regional Municipality is committed to fostering a healthy, safe, diverse, and inclusive workplace, and to providing a work environment where all persons are treated with respect and dignity. If you believe you have personally experienced behaviour that would be in violation of the Respectful Workplace Policy, or you have been witness to such behaviour, you may make a formal complaint by completing this form.

Instructions

- A. Read the Respectful Workplace Policy for information about making a complaint, including the requirement for confidentiality.
- B. Complete as much of this form as possible and provide copies to both:
 1. Your supervisor (note: if you are filing a complaint about your direct supervisor, submit the form to your next level supervisor) AND
 2. Human Resources – submit directly by one of the following methods.
 Email: RespectfulWorkplace@halifax.ca
 Interoffice Mail: Respectful Workplace Team,
 Human Resources
 Purdy's Wharf, Tower 2, 8th Floor
- D. Attach any documentation you believe supports your complaint.

Please note:

The decision to file a formal Respectful Workplace complaint is a serious one; complaints should be undertaken with great care. All information regarding a complaint is to be treated as confidential and disclosed on a need-to-know basis, only. If you are a unionized employee, you may notify and seek assistance from your union representative at any point during the complaint process.

If you have questions about completing this form, please contact a Respectful Workplace Specialist (RespectfulWorkplace@halifax.ca) or consult your Human Resource Business Partner.

Respectful Workplace Policy Complaint Information Form



Section A: Complainant Information

Please complete the following section, providing as much information as possible.

Name (First & Last): _____

Work Title: _____

Business Unit: _____

Phone Number: _____

Alternate Phone Number (optional): _____

Email: _____

Preferred method of contact (phone, text, email): _____

Work Location: _____

Supervisor's Name & Phone: _____

Respectful Workplace Policy Complaint Information Form



Section B: Respondent Information

The Respondent is the person(s) you are making the complaint about. Please complete and attach one "Section B" Page for each Respondent involved in your complaint.

Name (First & Last): _____

Work Title: _____

Work Location: _____

Business Unit: _____

Manager's Name: _____

Work Phone Number (If known): _____

Work Email (If known): _____

The Respondent is my direct supervisor: Yes ☐ No ☐

Respectful Workplace Policy

Complaint Information Form



Section C: Your Complaint

What form(s) of offensive behaviour are you alleging to have experienced and/or witnessed from the Respondent? Please check **all** that apply.

Culturally Insensitive Behaviour ☐

Poisoned Work Environment ☐

Bullying ☐

Discrimination ☐

Exclusion ☐

Harassment ☐

Sexual Harassment ☐

Verbal Harassment ☐

Racial Harassment ☐

Disrespectful Behaviour ☐

Physical Harassment ☐

Microaggression ☐

Violence ☐

If you have selected “**Discrimination**,” please select the applicable ground(s) of discrimination from the list below. Please check **all** that apply.

Age ☐

Colour ☐

Creed ☐

Ethnic, National or Aboriginal Origin ☐

Family Status ☐

Irrational Fear of Contracting an Illness/Disease ☐

Marital Status ☐

Mental Disability ☐

Physical Disability ☐

Sexual Orientation ☐

Race ☐

Religion ☐

Source of Income ☐

Association with Individual(s) Having Characteristics from This List ☐

Respectful Workplace Policy Complaint Information Form



Section C: Your Complaint Continued

Date the offensive behaviour first occurred: _____

Please list other individuals who have been closely involved as a:

1. Person experiencing offensive behaviour
2. Witness
3. Manager
4. Human Resource Professional
5. Other

What is the current status of this offensive behaviour? (Ongoing, Escalating, Stopped, etc.)?

Respectful Workplace Policy Complaint Information Form



Section C: Your Complaint Continued

Describe your complaint, including the impact of the offensive behaviour. Please provide specific incidents/examples. Attach additional pages if needed.

Respectful Workplace Policy Complaint Information Form



Section D: Resolution

To the best of your knowledge, what has been done to date to try to resolve this matter and by whom?

What was the outcome of this (if applicable)?

Have you filed a complaint related to this matter pursuant to another process (e.g. grievance, human rights complaint)?

Please suggest how you think this complaint could be resolved.

Section E: Affirmation

- I am submitting this complaint for review under the *Respectful Workplace Policy*.
- I declare that I am making this complaint in good faith.
- I believe that the information on this form is true to the best of my knowledge.
- I understand that the Respondent(s) and authorized personnel will receive details of the allegation(s).
- I agree to maintain confidentiality as outlined in the *Respectful Workplace Policy*.

Complainant Signature

Date

Respectful Workplace Policy Complaint Response Form



For Office Use only

Complaint Number: _____

Business Unit: _____

Date Filed: _____

Halifax Regional Municipality is committed to fostering a healthy, safe, diverse, and inclusive workplace, and to providing a work environment where all persons are treated with respect and dignity. You have been named in a complaint under the *Respectful Workplace Policy*. You have the right to respond to the complaint with your view of the situation by completing and submitting this form.

Instructions

- A. Read the Respectful Workplace Policy for information about responding to a complaint, including the requirement for confidentiality and ban on retaliation.
- B. Complete as much of this form as possible and provide copies to both:
 1. Your supervisor AND
 2. Human Resources – submit directly by one of the following methods.
 Email: RespectfulWorkplace@halifax.ca
 Interoffice Mail: Respectful Workplace Team,
 Human Resources
 Purdy's Wharf, Tower 2, 8th Floor
- D. Attach any documentation you believe supports your response.

Please note:

All information regarding a complaint is to be treated as confidential and disclosed on a need-to-know basis, only. If you are a unionized employee, you may notify and seek assistance from your union representative at any point during the complaint process.

If you have questions about completing this form, please contact a Respectful Workplace Specialist (RespectfulWorkplace@halifax.ca) or consult your Human Resource Business Partner.

Respectful Workplace Policy Complaint Response Form



Section A: Respondent Information

Please complete the following section, providing as much information as possible.

Name (First & Last): _____

Work Title: _____

Business Unit: _____

Phone Number: _____

Alternate Phone Number (optional): _____

Email: _____

Preferred method of contact (phone, text, email): _____

Work Location: _____

Supervisor's Name & Phone: _____

Respectful Workplace Policy Complaint Response Form



Section B: Statement

In the space provided, please respond to the allegation(s) that have been detailed in the complaint against you. At a minimum, please include:

- *Whether you acknowledge or deny the allegation(s)*
- *A description of the incident(s) from your point of view*
- *Any witnesses who were present for the incident(s)*

Note: If you require additional room for your statement or witness list, please attach additional pages as needed

Respectful Workplace Policy Complaint Response Form



Section C: Resolution

Please describe any actions you have taken to date to try and resolve this matter:

Please suggest how you think this complaint could be resolved.

Section D: Affirmation

- I am submitting this Response for review under the *Respectful Workplace Policy*.
- I believe that the information on this form is true to the best of my knowledge.
- I understand that the Complainant and authorized personnel will receive details of this Response.
- I agree to maintain confidentiality as outlined in the *Respectful Workplace Policy*.
- I understand that retaliation is strictly prohibited by the *Respectful Workplace Policy*.

Respondent Signature

Date