

# NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY POLICY AGAINST WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

## WORKPLACE HARASSMENT STATEMENT

Pursuant to Joint Rule 901, it is the policy of the Legislative Assembly to create and maintain an environment in which all members of the Legislative Assembly, legislative employees, and third parties are treated with dignity and respect. Legislators, legislative employees, and third parties have the right to an environment free from workplace harassment, both subtle and overt. The Legislative Assembly strives to eliminate all workplace harassment that legislators, legislative employees, and third parties may encounter. In furtherance of Joint Rule 901, this is the workplace harassment policy of the Legislative Assembly.

## APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to legislators, legislative employees, and third parties. The individuals subject to this policy are expected to comply with this policy and take appropriate measures to ensure the prohibited conduct does not occur.

## DEFINITIONS

1. "Contact person" means:
  - a. The Senate Majority Leader or Minority Leader or a designee of the opposite gender; and
  - b. The House of Representatives Majority Leader or Minority Leader or a designee of the opposite gender;
2. "Legislative employee" includes an employee of the Legislative Assembly or a volunteer providing services to the Legislative Assembly.
3. "Sexual harassment" includes harassment based on sex or sexual orientation and consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:
  - a. Submission to the conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment;
  - b. Submission to or rejection of the conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting the individual; or
  - c. The conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.
4. "Third party" includes a member of the media, a lobbyist, and any other individual involved in the legislative process.
5. "Workplace harassment" includes sexual harassment or harassment based on disability, race, creed, color, religion, age, national origin, military status, genetic information, or ancestry, including verbal or physical behavior or conduct, which denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of that individual's disability, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, national origin, military status, genetic information, or ancestry or which has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

## COMPLAINTS

1. An individual who believes he or she has been subjected to any type of workplace harassment is encouraged to report the conduct to an appropriate contact person as soon as possible. The complaint may be verbal or in writing and should specifically describe the conduct. If the complaint is not in writing, the contact person receiving the complaint shall create a written record describing the circumstances comprising the complaint. The contact person shall refer the written complaint or written record of the complaint to a review panel consisting of five members. The Majority Leader and Minority Leader of each house each shall select one member and the final member must be selected by the four members appointed by the Majority and Minority Leaders. The review panel either shall investigate the complaint as promptly and confidentially as practicable by interviewing the complainant, the accused individual, and any witnesses or coworkers, and by considering the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident or incidents that form the basis of the complaint, or forward the complaint and any record relating to the complaint to an independent investigator unaffiliated with the legislative branch who has experience in conducting workplace harassment investigations. The review panel or investigator shall conduct an investigation and prepare findings of fact and recommendations for resolution of the complaint within 75 calendar days of

receipt of the complaint by the contact person. The review panel shall inform both the complainant and the individual accused of the outcome of the investigation and the recommendations for resolution.

2. The Legislative Assembly is responsible for the cost of an independent investigator hired pursuant to this policy.
3. This policy does not require an individual accused of workplace harassment to involuntarily provide any facts, information, or evidence in response to an investigation of a complaint or to involuntarily sign a written statement or confession.

### **RESOLUTION OF A WORKPLACE HARASSMENT COMPLAINT**

If an investigation results in a determination this policy has been violated, appropriate disciplinary action will follow. As a general rule, remedies must be assessed proportionate to the seriousness of the violation. For legislative employees, this may include an apology, direction to stop the offensive conduct, counseling or training, oral warning, written warning, suspension, demotion, termination, or referral for criminal prosecution. If a legislator has violated this policy, disciplinary action according to constitutional and statutory provisions and the rules of the appropriate house of the Legislative Assembly may include an apology, direction to stop the offensive conduct, private or public admonishment, removal from leadership positions, punishment for contempt, referral for criminal prosecution, and expulsion. If a third party has violated this policy, disciplinary action may include an apology, direction to stop the offensive conduct, restricted or elimination of access to legislative committee rooms and the legislative chambers, revocation of media credentials, referral to employer for disciplinary action, or referral for criminal prosecution.

If workplace harassment recurs after a complaint is made, the complainant is encouraged to bring the matter to the attention of a contact person immediately.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any record pertaining to a complaint or investigation of workplace harassment against public employees is an exempt record under North Dakota Century Code Section 44-04-18.1 until the investigation is complete but no longer than 75 calendar days from the date the complaint was made. For the purposes of this policy, a public employee includes a legislative employee and a legislator. While the records relating to a complaint are exempt, a contact person may share information relating to a complaint or investigation only with an individual who has a legitimate need to know the information to perform legislative work duties or participate in the investigation. Except as necessary to perform the work duties or participate in an investigation, legislators, employees, and contractors of the Legislative Assembly may not disclose information received regarding a complaint or investigation as long as records pertaining to the complaint or investigation are exempt. Any disclosure allowed under this provision during that period must be limited to the minimum information necessary.

Any request for records pertaining to a complaint or investigation of workplace harassment must be forwarded to the Director of the Legislative Council.

### **EVIDENTIARY STANDARDS**

Disciplinary action must be taken if the evidence, when viewed from the perspective of a reasonable individual with the same disability, or of the same race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, national origin, military status, genetic information, or ancestry as the complainant, supports the claim of the complainant.

### **RETALIATION**

1. It is prohibited to subject an individual to any coercion, intimidation, retaliation, interference, or discrimination for having complained of workplace harassment or for having assisted or participated in an investigation of alleged workplace harassment. An individual found to be in violation of this prohibition is subject to appropriate disciplinary action ranging from a written warning or reprimand, suspension with or without pay, termination of employment, or removal from a position.
2. An individual who believes he or she may have been the subject of coercion, intimidation, retaliation, interference, or discrimination for having complained of workplace harassment or for having assisted or participated in an investigation related to an allegation of workplace harassment is encouraged to report that information to a contact person.

### **FALSE COMPLAINT**

Any complaint of workplace harassment found to be intentionally or recklessly dishonest or malicious will not be tolerated.

## **TRAINING**

During each organizational session and at other times deemed appropriate by the Legislative Management, the Legislative Council shall conduct or arrange to conduct mandatory classes and training sessions regarding workplace harassment for legislators and legislative employees.