

Purpose: Create an environment that is conducive to and fosters physical and psychological safety.

## **DRAFT** Town of Ancram Respectful Workplace Policy

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### **Ancram Town Board Commitment**

It is the commitment of the Ancram Town Board and its related committees and employees to ensure a place of work free from negative, aggressive, and inappropriate behaviors, and an environment aimed at providing an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness, safety and equality. All members of the Board, committees and community have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

All complaints of negative and inappropriate workplace behaviors will be taken seriously and followed through to resolution, and those who file complaints will not be victimized for bringing a complaint to the attention of the committee.

### **Scope**

Protection from negative, aggressive, and inappropriate behaviors extends to the Board, town employees, volunteers engaged in town activities and members of the Ancram community seeking town services and expands beyond the work site, to work performed off-site as well as interactions at Town sponsored social events. It is the responsibility of all Town employees and representatives to provide a healthy workplace environment to peers, co-workers, town volunteers and Ancram residents where all communication and interactions are marked by dignity and respect.

### **Acceptable and Healthy Workplace Behaviors Defined**

Acceptable and healthy workplace behaviors are any behaviors that promote respect, positivity and civility in our workplace. They include, but are not limited to:

- Using respectful language in all interactions, no matter the subject of conversation
- Questioning another's position on an issue politely; listening to other positions; conveying your position in a respectful and collaborative manner
- Giving direct, non-personal feedback as opposed to criticism
- Expressing appreciation for work well done
- Approaching conflict with maturity and true desire for a resolution that is in the best interest of the town

## **Inappropriate and Unacceptable Behaviors Defined**

Inappropriate and unacceptable behaviors are defined as negative and aggressive acts aimed at one or more individuals and causing them to feel hurt, embarrassed, incompetent, disrespected, anxious, or depressed. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Excessive yelling, overtalking, repeated emotional outbursts, berating others, using a harsh tone of voice
- Maintaining that one's own position is correct in a manner that is disrespectful of others or disregards other viewpoints
- Talking down to others or using degrading remarks or tone of voice, or belittling or foul language
- Criticizing or talking down to others in front of a group; using a condescending tone
- Social exclusion or ostracism, ignoring others, silent treatment
- Treating some less favorably than others
- Undermining another's work by giving impossible to meet deadlines or workloads
- Excessive monitoring of work or unnecessary micromanagement
- Arbitrary or punitive punishment without cause; inconsistent discipline
- Withholding pertinent work-related information; undermining another's work by not giving them enough information to do what is required of them
- Gossiping or spreading rumors
- Manipulating a person's job content; unwarranted removal of core responsibilities to make them feel bad
- Blaming others for things out of their control
- Making threats; using intimidating tactics
- Any malicious behavior a reasonable person would find unprofessional, disturbing and harmful to their psychological health

These types of behaviors are well recognized as having damaging consequences for their recipients, the observers of the behavior, and the organization as a whole and are therefore not tolerated.

## **Responsibility**

All elected Town officials and others in positions of authority, including town employees and volunteers, have a responsibility to ensure that healthy and appropriate behaviors are being exhibited at all times and that complaints to the contrary are addressed speedily. Elected town officials and town managers will:

- Provide good examples by treating all with courtesy and respect

- Promote awareness of the policy and complaint procedures
- Be vigilant for signs of inappropriate behaviors at work through observation and information seeking, and take action to resolve the behavior before it escalates
- Deal sensitively with employees, volunteers or town residents involved in a complaint, whether as complainant or alleged aggressor
- Explain the procedures to be followed if a complaint of inappropriate behavior at work is made
- Ensure that an employee, volunteer or town resident making a complaint to the Respectful Behavior Committee is not retaliated against for doing so, and seek resolution of such behavior if it occurs
- Monitor and follow up the situation after a complaint is made in order to prevent recurrence of the behavior.

### **Responsibility of Town Representatives**

We expect everyone to contribute to achieving a work environment which does not tolerate aggressive behavior. Individuals should report what they see in the workplace to the Respectful Behavior Committee as it relates to behaviors defined as unacceptable. A finding of unacceptable behaviors will be dealt with through appropriate disciplinary procedures. Equally, a finding of a pattern of meritless complaints will also be dealt with through appropriate disciplinary procedures.

### **Training Programs**

As part of its commitment to encouraging positive and healthy behaviors, the Town has established a required series of training programs that all Town employees, board members and volunteers will be required to attend. Training will identify factors which contribute to a bully-free environment, familiarize participants with responsibilities under this policy, and provide steps to overcoming a bullying incident, including filing an adequate and informed report to the appropriate party.

### **Process for Investigation of Complaints**

The aim and objectives of a formal complaint process include a thorough investigation of allegations of negative, aggressive, and inappropriate behaviors, written documentation from all parties involved, and resolution in a timely manner. Resolution will include any number and combination of possibilities, depending upon the outcome of the complaint process (e.g., a determination that no action is required or training, disciplinary actions, termination, etc

Any individual seeking to file a complaint against an alleged aggressor should take special care to ensure the complaint is confined to and consists of precise details of each incident of negative, aggressive, and inappropriate behaviors, including dates, times, locations and any witnesses. Formal complaints should be filed using the official Disrespectful Behavior Complaint Form contained within the Town of Ancram

Employee Handbook. The form must be submitted to the Chair of the Respectful Behavior Committee (RBC) for review.

The person complained against will be notified in writing by the RBC that an allegation has been made against him or her and assured of the presumption of innocence at this juncture.

The RBC will act as an investigator, unless otherwise specified by the Town Board. The objective of the investigation is to ascertain whether the behaviors complained of occurred, and therefore will include interviewing the person complained of, witnesses, and any other party that may be involved with or had witness to the alleged behaviors. All interviews will be documented in writing in order to maintain clarity throughout the investigation. The investigation will be conducted thoroughly, objectively, with sensitivity and utmost confidentiality, and with due respect for the rights of both the complainant and the alleged aggressor. The investigation will be completed as quickly as possible.

Upon completion of the investigation, the RBC will submit a report to the Town Board deemed appropriate at the outset of the complaint that will include the investigator's conclusions.

The Town Board will decide in light of the investigator's report and follow up comments by the parties what, if any, action will be taken. The RBC will inform the complainant and the person complained against in writing of the action plan, and each will have the opportunity to appeal the report and/or the action plan. Appeals should include a detailed outline of the reason for the appeal in writing and should be submitted to Town Board.

Where a complaint has been upheld, the Town Board will follow appropriate disciplinary procedures and decide what action in regards to the complaint is necessary. Any disciplinary action of a Town employee will be conducted in accordance with law, including but not limited to civil service rules and regulations, to the extent applicable.