

# Town of Cochection Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment

## SECTION 1: PURPOSE

The Town of Cochection believes in the dignity of the individual and recognizes the rights of all people to equal employment opportunities in the workplace. In this regard, the Town of Cochection is committed to a policy of protecting and safeguarding the rights and opportunities of all people to seek, obtain, and hold employment without subjugation to harassment or discrimination in the workplace. It is the Town of Cochection's policy to provide an employment environment free from harassment and discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, arrest record, and veteran or marital status.

- A. Scope of Policy** – This Policy applies to all Town of Cochection employees and all personnel in a contractual or other business relationship with the Town of Cochection including, for example, applicants, temporary or leased employees, independent contractors, vendors, consultants, volunteers and visitors. Depending on the extent of the Town of Cochection Municipality's exercise of control, this Policy may be applied to the conduct of non-employees with respect to unlawful harassment and/or discrimination of Town of Cochection employees in the workplace. This Policy applies with equal force on Municipality's property as it does at Municipal-sponsored events, programs, and activities that take place off Municipal premises.
- B. Policy Objectives** – By adopting and publishing this Policy, it is the intent of the Town of Cochection Board to:
- (1) Notify employees about the types of conduct that constitute discrimination and harassment prohibited by this Policy;
  - (2) Inform employees about the complaint procedures established by the Municipality that enable an employee who believes (s)he is the victim of harassment or discrimination to submit a complaint which will be investigated by the Municipality;
  - (3) Clearly advise all supervisory staff, administrators, and employees that discriminatory treatment based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, arrest record, and veteran or marital status of employees is strictly prohibited and no such person possesses the authority to harass or discriminate; and
  - (4) Notify all employees that the Municipality has appointed a Compliance Officer who is specifically designated to receive complaints and ensure compliance with this Policy.

**NOTE:** The names and office location of each Compliance Officer designated to receive and investigate complaints for the year 2012 are listed below in section 10 of this Policy.

## SECTION 2: DEFINITIONS

**"Prohibited Discrimination of Employees"** – Prohibited discrimination of employees can take the form of a negative treatment of an employee, by either a Municipality employee or official, or a third party engaged in activities sponsored by the municipality which: (a) negatively impacts an employee's employment opportunities and/or employment benefits; *and* (b) is based upon the employee's race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, political affiliation, age, sexual orientation, arrest record, and veteran or marital status. Prohibited discrimination of employees can

also take the form of harassment even where there is no tangible impact upon the employee's employment opportunities and/or employment benefits. The phrase "prohibited discrimination" as used in this Policy includes all forms of "prohibited harassment" as defined below:

**"Prohibited Harassment"** – Harassment can constitute a form of prohibited discrimination under this Policy if it is unwelcome and has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance, or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment. Such harassment of employees is prohibited by this Policy if it is based upon race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, arrest record, and veteran or marital status. In this regard, individuals subject to this Policy should be mindful that conduct or behavior that is acceptable, amusing or inoffensive to some individuals may be viewed as unwelcome, abusive or offensive to others.

**"Prohibited Behavior"** – While it is impossible to list all of the possible forms of unlawful harassment, the following is a list of *examples* of conduct that may constitute harassment:

- (1) Using slurs or derogatory terms based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, arrest record, and veteran or marital status
- (2) Telling derogatory jokes or stories based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, arrest record, and veteran or marital status
- (3) Displaying graffiti or other derogatory or insulting writings based on race color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, arrest record, and veteran or marital status
- (4) Making degrading comments about a person and/or his or her appearance based on race color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, arrest record, and veteran or marital status
- (5) Demeaning or criticizing an individual because of his or her race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, arrest record, and veteran or marital status
- (6) Sabotaging, damaging, or interfering with an individual's work because of that individual's race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, arrest record, and veteran or marital status
- (7) Threatening or intimidating an individual because of his or her race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, arrest record, and veteran or marital status

As set forth above, this list is not intended to be all-inclusive. Furthermore, while a single incident of these types of behavior may not create a hostile working environment, if such behavior is severe, persistent or pervasive, or if submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or receipt of employment benefits, such conduct constitutes prohibited discrimination and/or harassment.

### **SECTION 3: POLICY**

The Town of Cochecton prohibits harassment and discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, arrest record, and veteran or marital status, and will not tolerate any form of unlawful discrimination or harassment. The Town of Cochecton will take all

steps necessary to prevent and stop the occurrence of unlawful discrimination and/or harassment in the workplace.

All employees, including but not limited to, the Town of Cochection's officials and supervisory personnel, are responsible for ensuring a work environment free from prohibited harassment and discrimination. All employees will be held responsible and accountable for avoiding or eliminating inappropriate conduct that may give rise to a claim of illegal harassment or discrimination. Employees are encouraged to report violations to one of the Compliance Officers listed in Section 10 of this Policy in accordance with the Complaint Procedure set forth in this Policy. Officials and supervisors must take immediate and appropriate corrective action when instances of prohibited harassment and/or discrimination come to their attention to assure compliance with this Policy.

Each employee is assured pursuant to Section 6 of this Policy, that retaliation against an individual who makes a complaint or report under this Policy is absolutely prohibited and constitutes, in and of itself, a violation of this Policy.

Any questions regarding the scope or application of this Policy should be directed to one of the Compliance Officers listed in Section 10 of this Policy.

#### **SECTION 4: POLICY ENFORCEMENT**

##### **A. Complaint Procedure for Employees**

- (1) Notification Procedure** – Prompt reporting of complaint or concerns is required so that timely and constructive action can be taken before relationships become strained. Reporting of all perceived incidents of prohibited discrimination and/or harassment is essential, regardless of the offender's identity or position. An employee or other individual who feels aggrieved because of harassment or discrimination shall contact his or her supervisor or a Compliance Officer listed in Section 10 of this Policy, or another administrator.
- (2) Making a Complaint** – If the complainant prefers, she/ he may report the matter directly to her/his supervisor. If the complainant feels uncomfortable reporting the harassment to her/his supervisor, she/he should immediately report the matter to any other member of management. The Town of Cochection will not tolerate violations of this policy and strongly encourages victims of harassment to report such harassment as soon as it occurs.

Complainants are expected to cooperate with the Municipality's investigation procedures by providing all relevant information relating to the complaint, as are other supervisory and non-supervisory employees having relevant or related knowledge or information.

- B. Time for Reporting a Complaint** – Prompt reporting of all complaints is strongly encouraged. All employees should be aware that appropriate resolution of complaints and effective remedial action oftentimes is possible only when complaints are promptly filed. Furthermore, complaining parties should be aware that statutes of limitations may constrain the time period for instituting legal actions outside of this Policy.
- C. Confidentiality and Privacy** – In recognition of the personal nature of discrimination and/or harassment complaints and the emotional impact of the alleged acts, the Town of Cochection

shall keep complaints as confidential as is consistent with a thorough investigation, applicable collective bargaining agreements, and other laws and regulations regarding employees. For the protection of all individuals who make complaints or are accused of prohibited harassment and/or discrimination, every witness interviewed during an investigation under this Policy will be advised to the confidentiality requirement and instructed not to discuss the complaint, the investigation, or the persons involved. To the extent complaints made under this Policy implicate criminal conduct, the Town of Cochection may be required by law to contact and cooperate with the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

#### **SECTION 5: INVESTIGATION**

The Town of Cochection will investigate all allegations of discrimination and harassment prohibited by this Policy as promptly as possible.

#### **SECTION 6: PROHIBITION AGAINST RETALIATION AND ABUSE OF THE POLICY**

Retaliation is strictly prohibited by this Policy and by law against anyone who in good faith reports a suspected violation of this Policy, who assists in making such a complaint, or who cooperates in a harassment or discrimination investigation. Retaliation means taking any adverse action in response to a complaint being made.

Complaints of retaliation should be brought directly to a Compliance Officer, or another administrator. Such complaints will be promptly investigated. If retaliation is found, the person retaliating will be subject to corrective action up to and including termination from employment, or in the case of a non-employee, an appropriate remedy up to and including termination of the business relationship.

#### **SECTION 7: APPEALS**

Any complainant or accused party who wishes to appeal the procedures which the Town of Cochection followed in investigating a written complaint filed under this Policy may do so within ten (10) days of receipt of the appellant's notification of the investigation outcome. Untimely submissions shall not receive consideration. Such appeal must be made in writing to the Town Clerk. The appellant shall be entitled to present evidence as to why the investigation procedures were flawed, improper, or otherwise not in compliance with this Policy. The Town of Cochection's consideration and review of any such appeal shall be conducted confidentially in executive session. Following a review of that evidence, as well as the information obtained in the investigation process and conclusions derived there from, the Town of Cochection, or its designee, shall render a decision. The Town of Cochection's decision shall be final. The appellant shall be notified of the decision in writing.

Nothing set forth in the Appeal Process above shall be construed to in any way confer upon either the complainant(s) or the person(s) accused of violating this Policy any right to appeal the Town of Cochection's determination as to appropriate disciplinary and/or corrective action to be taken on meritorious complaints. In this regard, the Town of Cochection at all times retains sole discretion to determine the appropriate disciplinary and/or corrective action to be taken with regard to a meritorious complaint.

**SECTION 8: RECORD KEEPING**

The Town of Cochection shall maintain a written record of all complaints of illegal discrimination and/or harassment for a period of at least six (6) years. The Town of Cochection shall also document the steps taken with regard to investigations, as well as conclusions reached and remedial action taken, if any. The Town of Cochection shall also maintain these documents for, at a minimum, six (6) years.

The Town of Cochection records regarding alleged discrimination shall be maintained separate and apart from personnel records.

**SECTION 9: QUESTIONS**

Any questions by employees of the Town of Cochection about this Policy or potential harassment or discrimination should be brought to the attention of one of the Compliance Officers, the chief elected official, or the Town Supervisor. The names, addresses and telephone numbers of the Compliance Officers are listed in Section 10 of this Policy.

**SECTION 10: COMPLIANCE OFFICERS**

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Name	Telephone Number
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Address

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Name	Telephone Number
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Address

**SECTION 11: EFFECTIVE DATE AND POLICY DISSEMINATION**

The effective date of this Policy shall be February 8, 2012. The Town Supervisor shall ensure that this Policy is adequately disseminated and made available to all employees of the Town of Cochection. This Policy shall be distributed at the beginning of each year with or as part of the Re-Organizational Meeting. In addition, copies of this Policy and Complaint Form shall be maintained in the office of each Compliance Officer, and the Supervisor as well as the Town of Cochection’s Policy Book that is available at the Town Clerk’s office.

Upon the effective date of this Policy, the provisions of this Policy shall supersede and replace all prior Town of Cochection policies and regulations regarding employee discrimination and harassment, and related complaint procedures with the exception of the “Town of Cochection’s Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment.”

## Complaint of Alleged Discrimination

This form is to be filed as a part of the Formal Procedure in order to initiate a complaint of alleged discrimination or harassment prohibited by the Town of Cocheton's Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment.

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) and Time(s) of incidents of discrimination and/or harassment took place: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you also filed this charge with a Federal, State or Local Government Agency?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) and location of the individual who allegedly discriminated against or harassed you. If more than one, list all.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the incidents which occurred and your reason for concluding that it is/was discriminatory. (Use the back of this sheet if necessary.)

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\_\_\_\_\_

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