

# ***Warren-Newport Public Library District*** **Staff Manual**

## **724 Respectful Workplace**

Effective Date: 01/16/2007

Review/Revision Date: 07/13/2010; 02/08/2013; 05/18/2021

The Warren-Newport Public Library District (WNPLD) recognizes its responsibility to build and maintain a diverse, respectful workplace, where all employees enjoy an environment in which the dignity and self-respect of every person is valued, and which is free of offensive remarks, material, or behavior.

We recognize that workplace conflicts and disrespectful behavior can jeopardize an individual's dignity, self-esteem, and well-being and can undermine work relationships, friendships, and productivity.

A truly respectful workplace requires cooperation and support from each and every employee in the organization. Everyone has a responsibility to set a positive example and to behave in a manner that will not offend, embarrass, or humiliate others, whether deliberately or unintentionally.

Every employee can expect to be treated respectfully in the workplace. Every employee has the responsibility to refrain from participating in behavior that is or could reasonably be perceived to be disrespectful in nature.

Treating employees in a disrespectful manner must not be confused with the normal exercise of the employer's managerial rights, in particular, the right to assign tasks and the right to reprimand or impose disciplinary sanctions. When the employer exercises these rights in a non-abusive manner, these actions do not constitute disrespectful behavior.

A respectful workplace is one that values the following:

- Diversity and the human rights of others regardless of their race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, age, sex, marital status, family status, any physical or mental disability, and sexual orientation;
- The dignity of the person;
- Courteous conduct;
- Mutual respect;
- Fairness;
- Positive communication between people; and
- Collaborative working relationships, regardless of the job classification or the seniority of the employees.

Disrespectful behavior includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Offensive or inappropriate remarks, gestures, material, or behavior;
- Inappropriate jokes or cartoons, including racial or ethnic slurs;
- Grouping or isolating (example: by race or ethnic origin);

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- Yelling;
- Belittling;
- Reprimanding in the presence of others;
- Aggressive or patronizing behavior;
- Embarrassing or humiliating behavior;
- Discrimination as defined under human rights legislation;
- Sexual harassment (See Personnel Policy 703: Harassment, Discrimination and Retaliation);
- Harmful rumors;
- Unwarranted physical contact; and
- Inappropriately withholding information;

This policy applies to all management and non-management employees of WNPLD, including regular, temporary, volunteer, student, and contract employees. It applies to all work-related activities, either at the Library or off-site. It applies to relationships and interactions between employees and patrons/general public.

Employees are responsible for exhibiting the following behaviors:

- Treat others with respect.
- Set an example by respecting the dignity and human rights of all employees and members of the public.
- Recognize and refrain from actions that offend, embarrass, or humiliate others, whether deliberate or unintentional.
- Raise the subject of disrespectful conduct with the employee displaying it or with a person in authority as soon as possible.
- Refrain from making any frivolous or vindictive allegations of disrespectful behavior.
- Make every effort to resolve respectful workplace issues, whenever possible, in an informal manner.

Managers and supervisors who witness any situation involving disrespectful behavior are expected to act immediately to resolve the situation. Managers and supervisors will do the following:

- Recognize and address actions that offend, embarrass, or humiliate others, whether deliberate or unintentional.
- Treat each situation as a serious matter.
- Manage the situation towards a resolution between the parties if possible, with a view to correcting behavior and preserving long-term working relationships.
- Safeguard against further incidents.
- Ensure there are no reprisals against employees making a complaint or participating in an investigation.
- Provide support to employees who are experiencing the effects of disrespectful behavior.
- Consult with the administration if the situation cannot be resolved between the parties.

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An employee who is accused of disrespectful behavior should do the following:

- Attempt to resolve the situation by listening to and trying to understand the concern.
- Be open to the other person's perspective. For example, something which you consider to be humorous might be offensive to someone else.
- Consider the impact of your actions on the other person.
- Be willing to make reasonable changes that could make a difference. Often a sincere apology and a commitment to refrain from disrespectful behavior are sufficient to resolve the situation in an informal manner.
- If a formal investigation is underway, cooperate with the person(s) conducting the investigation. Remember that the same care and consideration would be given to you if you had reported an issue.
- If necessary, seek support or assistance from your supervisor, a manager, or the Executive Director.
- Exercise discretion regarding the persons with whom you discuss the complaint.

An employee who feels they have been treated in a disrespectful manner should, whenever possible, attempt to resolve the issue informally as soon as possible. Employees are advised to follow the informal resolution process as outlined below to try to resolve the situation.

### Informal Resolution Process – Levels 1 to 3

#### Level 1

Be proactive. Try to resolve the problem on your own. Do not wait until a recurrence or assume the problem will go away. Approach the employee who made you feel uncomfortable, explain how it affected you, and ask her or him to stop. Do this calmly, respectfully, and privately. Often, an employee may not be aware that their behavior is offensive, and most will change the behavior once they are aware of the problem. If another employee approaches you regarding an issue of respect, listening carefully and discussing the issue respectfully and honestly will often lead to a resolution.

#### Level 2

If you have attempted to resolve the problem without success or if you are not comfortable addressing the problem on your own, discuss the problem and possible solutions with your immediate supervisor.

#### Level 3

If for any reason you are unable to discuss the problem with your immediate supervisor, other avenues are available to help you resolve the problem. You may contact another appropriate level of management up to and including the Executive Director. If the problem involves the Executive Director, you may contact the Board of Library Trustees.

Whether a formal or informal process is used, employees are advised to keep notes which reflect, as accurately and completely as possible, the dates, times, nature of the behavior, any witnesses, and what was done. These notes will be useful for anyone assisting in resolving the

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problem. In addition, you may be asked to file a formal written report or complaint with a person in authority. Managers and supervisors are required to document their involvement in all resolution processes, formal or informal.

### Formal Resolution Process

Not every complaint of disrespectful behavior warrants a formal investigation. In fact, it is hoped that most complaints can be resolved between the parties involved, with subsequent monitoring by management to ensure that there is no recurrence. However, in situations where allegations are denied or where discipline is likely, an investigation may be required, and the Executive Director or Deputy Director would head the investigative team. A formal investigation should be conducted as expeditiously as possible.

An investigation generally includes the following:

- Interview the employee who has raised the concern. The employee may be accompanied by a support person.
- Interview witnesses.
- Meet with the employee alleged to have acted disrespectfully along with their representative to present the complaint and hear the response.
- Determine the facts.
- Stress the need for confidentiality on the part of everyone involved.
- Provide findings to the administration.
- Recommend an appropriate response to the administration, which may include disciplinary action. (See Personnel Policy 716: Progressive Discipline.)

During the course of an investigation, the manager conducting the investigation will do the following when communicating with the individual raising the concern:

- Listen carefully and take the issue seriously.
- Advise the individual of the process to be followed.
- Recommend that the individual to keep the matter confidential.
- Inform and support the individual throughout the investigation.
- Inform the individual of action taken or to be taken.
- Ensure the situation is documented appropriately using the Disrespectful Behavior Complaint Form.

During the course of an investigation, the manager conducting the investigation will do the following when communicating with the person alleged to have committed the disrespectful behavior:

- Inform the person of the complaint.
- Advise the person of the right to representation.
- Give the person an opportunity to respond to the allegations.
- Advise the individual of the process to be followed.
- Recommend the person be cautious about disclosing information about the complaint.

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- Inform the person throughout the process.
- Inform the person of action taken or to be taken.

Managers, the administration, and investigators will keep the details of a complaint confidential to the best of their ability, but the confidentiality of any complaint cannot be guaranteed. Because witnesses may be involved, confidentiality does not mean anonymity.

These limitations on confidentiality should not discourage employees from making a complaint. Many complaints are resolved without a formal investigation. Issues should be raised at an early stage to facilitate a resolution that is acceptable to all parties involved.

If the investigation determines that the complaint was deliberately made for frivolous or vindictive reasons, the employee making the false allegation is subject to discipline. This policy is not intended to discourage or prevent the complainant from exercising any other legal right pursuant to any law, including filing a complaint with the Illinois Department of Human Rights; 100 W. Randolph St., Suite 10-100; Chicago, IL 60601; (312) 353-2713.