

Respectful Workplaces Policy

Policy Name:	Respectful Workplaces Policy
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Accountability:	County Manager or Designate
Approver:	County Council
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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Lac Ste. Anne County is a harassment-free, violence-free, and bullying-free workplace, and to inform employees of their rights and obligations to this purpose.

Further, the policy confirms the rights of those reporting, or providing witness, on conduct that violates the expectations within this policy, including protecting the person(s) making a good faith disclosure from any punishment.

Policy Overview

All employees, the general public, and other individuals or stakeholders who interact with Lac Ste. Anne County (the County) deserve an environment that is respectful to work or do business in. As the County is committed to a workplace that is free of discrimination, harassment (sexual, psychological, or physical), bullying, abuse of authority, and violence of any kind, it is important that County employees understand the expectations for workplace behaviour, including the rights and responsibilities of employees and the obligations of the County and its managers and leaders.

There will be zero tolerance for physical, sexual, verbal, or psychological harassment, violence, or bullying in the workplace.

Harassment is against the law. The *Alberta Human Rights Act* protects employees from harassment, and the *Criminal Code* protects people from physical and sexual assault.

To protect employees from harm, all Lac Ste. Anne County employees are encouraged to report conduct that does not meet the County's standards or violates this policy or the law.

Guidelines

1. *General Expectations of a Respectful Workplace that is Harassment-Free and Bully-Free*

1.1. Lac Ste. Anne County has zero tolerance for harassment, bullying, psychological harassment, or any form or variation of violence or abuse in the workplace. No form of

harassment, bullying, or psychological harassment will be condoned or tolerated. Harassment is against the law. The *Alberta Human Rights Act* protects Employees from harassment. The *Criminal Code* protects people from physical and sexual assault.

- 1.1.1. **Harassment** is any behavior directed towards an employee that demeans, humiliates, or embarrasses a person. The *Alberta Human Rights Act* prohibits harassment related to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, ancestry, age, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, and sexual orientation. It may include violence, abuse (physical or verbal), or assault.
- 1.1.2. **Sexual harassment** includes offensive or humiliating behavior that is related to a person's sex, as well as behavior of a sexual nature that creates an intimidating, unwelcome, hostile, or offensive work environment, or that could reasonably be thought to put sexual conditions on a person's job or employment opportunities. It may include violence, abuse (physical or verbal), or assault.
- 1.1.3. **Workplace bullying and psychological harassment** is defined as unwanted conduct, comments, actions, or gestures that undermine, disrupt, or negatively impact another's dignity, psychological or physical health and well-being, and the ability to do his or her job. Bullying and psychological harassment create a harmful work environment, may involve violence or abuse (physical or verbal), and may result from the actions of one individual towards another, or from the behaviour of a group.
 - 1.1.3.1. The County does not condone and will not tolerate any form of harassment, sexual harassment, workplace bullying or psychological harassment, or violence of any kind in the workplace, and is committed to:
 - 1.1.3.1.1. Maintaining a healthy and safe workplace for all employees;
 - 1.1.3.1.2. Education and prevention-oriented practices;
 - 1.1.3.1.3. Addressing bullying behavior as soon as possible; and
 - 1.1.3.1.4. Effective problem-solving processes to address employee concerns, whether related to individual or group behaviour.
- 1.2. All aspects of prevention and problem-solving processes will be fair, timely, confidential, professional, impartial, consistently applied, and will aim to preserve the dignity, self-respect, and rights of all parties.
- 1.3. Responses to bullying or harassment will aim to correct identified behaviour and to prevent further occurrences or violations of this Policy. This Policy will be enforced in accordance with the principles of progressive discipline.
- 1.4. The County will not tolerate any individual in a position of authority whose abuse of authority contributes to harassment, violence or abuse, or bullying of any kind.
 - 1.4.1. **Abuse of authority** occurs when an individual uses authority unreasonably to interfere with an employee or the employee's job. This form of harassment

includes humiliation, intimidation, threats, and coercion. It does not include normal managerial activities, such as counseling, performance appraisals, and discipline, as long as these are not done in a discriminatory manner.

2. Employee's Responsibilities and Rights

- 2.1. Every employee of the County is expected to support the implementation of this Policy by:
 - 2.1.1. Conducting themselves in a manner which demonstrates professional conduct, mutual respect for others, and which honours diversity in the workplace;
 - 2.1.2. Participating, fully and in good faith, in any resolution process, formal complaint, and investigation process where they have been identified as having potentially relevant information;
 - 2.1.3. Reporting any incidents which may be in violation of this Policy;
 - 2.1.4. Respecting the rights to personal dignity, privacy, and confidentiality pertaining to this Policy; and
 - 2.1.5. Upholding, in good faith, the processes and procedures as outlined by Lac Ste. Anne County, updated by management from time to time.

3. Management and Lac Ste. Anne County's Responsibilities

- 3.1. While every employee is responsible for maintaining and contributing to an environment that is free from harassment and bullying, those in positions of authority over staff carry more responsibility than other employees within the organization. Management have additional obligations to make every reasonable effort to establish and maintain a workplace free of harassment, bullying, and violence. Their responsibilities include:
 - 3.1.1. Acting as a role model for professional and respectful conduct;
 - 3.1.2. Developing processes and procedures to comply with this policy;
 - 3.1.3. Ensuring employees have full access to information regarding all employer policies and procedures;
 - 3.1.4. Intervening immediately when inappropriate conduct has been brought to their attention or has been observed;
 - 3.1.5. Notifying the local RCMP when there are reasonable grounds to believe that a violation of the *Criminal Code* has occurred;
 - 3.1.6. Respecting the rights of all parties to a fair, equitable and confidential process for responding to complaints;
 - 3.1.7. Support to all those who participate in a problem-solving process; and
 - 3.1.8. Enforcement of corrective and/or disciplinary measures, where applicable.

4. Defining Harassing or Bullying Behaviour

- 4.1. Harassing or bullying behaviour can include, but is not limited to:

- 4.1.1. Actions, such as touching or pushing;
 - 4.1.2. Comments, such as jokes or name-calling;
 - 4.1.3. Displays, such as posters or cartoons;
 - 4.1.4. Bullying or psychological harassment, which can take many forms and may occur when the behaviour or conduct:
 - 4.1.4.1. Would reasonably tend to cause offense, discomfort, humiliation, or embarrassment to another person or group;
 - 4.1.4.2. Has the purpose or effect of interfering with a person's work performance; and
 - 4.1.4.3. Creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive work environment.
 - 4.1.5. Offering an employment benefit (such as a raise, promotion, or assistance with one's career) in exchange for sexual favours, or threatening an employment detriment (such as termination, demotion, or disciplinary action) for an employee's failure to engage in sexual activity;
 - 4.1.6. Visual conduct, such as leering, making sexual gestures, or displaying of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, including downloads from the internet, cartoons, or posters;
 - 4.1.7. Verbal or written (letters, notes, emails, texts) sexual advances, propositions, requests, or comments;
 - 4.1.8. Verbal abuse of a sexual nature, such as graphic verbal commentaries about an individual's body, sexually degrading words used to describe an individual, or suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations;
 - 4.1.9. Unwanted physical conduct, such as touching, grabbing, hugging, patting, brushing, kissing, assault, or impeding or blocking movements.
- 4.2. Violation of this section will subject an employee to progressive disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination.

5. *Protection from Reprisals or Retaliation*

- 5.1. Retaliation against anyone involved in a resolution process through this policy will not be tolerated. Any actions of retaliation or reprisal may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination for just cause.
- 5.2. Protection from retaliation covers both complainants and witnesses who have participated in the policy process. Also protected from retaliation are: facilitators, mediators, investigators, and the County Manager responsible for decision-making functions within this process, acting in accordance with this policy.

6. *Complaint Fabrication*

- 6.1. Because of the serious nature of a complaint, false accusations or abuse of this policy will not be tolerated. Where a formal investigation concludes that a complaint was

knowingly frivolous or malicious and was filed in bad faith, disciplinary action will result, up to and including termination for just cause.

Definitions

Participating in good faith means that any individual employed by Lac Ste. Anne County participates in investigations, resolution processes, or formal complaint and investigation processes fully and based on a reasonable belief that is not malicious, frivolous, or vexatious.

Reprisals or retaliation or punishment means punitive or negative actions taken against a person for making a disclosure in good faith or participating in good faith, including, but not limited to disciplinary action, termination, adversely affecting employment conditions, or a threat to do any of these listed. Reprisals, retaliation, or punishment will not be tolerated.