



Administrative Policy No. 18.93

Subject: Respectful Work Environment in the Department of Social & Health Services

Information Contact: Human Resources Division

Authorizing Sources: [Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)
[Chapter 49.60 RCW Discrimination – Human Rights Commission](#)
[Chapter 357-25 WAC, Affirmative Action](#)
[State Human Resources Directive 20-03](#)
[Model Policies and Considerations for a Diverse, Equitable, Inclusive, and Respectful Work Environment](#)

Effective Date: June 14, 2024

Revised: New ^{1i Housekeeping 10/15/2024} ^{2 Housekeeping 5/1/2025}

Approved By: **Original signed by Wendy Long**
Senior Director, Human Resources Division

Purpose

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is committed to creating and maintaining a work environment where people are treated and expected to be treated with civility, dignity, and respect.

This policy establishes respectful work environment and behavior standard expectations for all DSHS employees at all DSHS workplaces.

Scope

This policy applies to all DSHS employees, including appointing authorities, managers, and supervisors, interns, and volunteers (whether paid or unpaid), contractors, and vendors.

If any provision of this policy conflicts with a [collective bargaining agreement](#) (CBA), the CBA will supersede the policy provision with which it conflicts.

Additional Guidance

DSHS administrative policy [7.22](#) cultural competence

DSHS administrative policy [18.25](#) religious discrimination

DSHS administrative policy [18.64](#) standards of ethical conduct

DSHS administrative policy [18.66](#) discrimination, harassment, and other inappropriate behavior

DSHS administrative policy [18.89](#) investigations

DSHS administrative policy [20.01](#) internal employee work-related civil rights investigations

DSHS administrative policy [20.02](#) response to complaints of discrimination filed with an external agency

[DSHS Pro-equity anti-racism \(PEAR\) ecosystem](#)

[Respectful Workplace Video](#)

Definitions

Appointing authority: An individual lawfully authorized to appoint, transfer, layoff, reduce, dismiss, suspend, or demote employees. [WAC 357-01-25](#).

Bystander intervention: Recognizing a potentially harmful situation or interaction and choosing to respond in a way that could positively influence the outcome.

Competence: Conduct, behavior, qualities, skills, and attitude expected from a person who is trained to do a job well.

DSHS executive cabinet: The advisory body that supports the DSHS secretary and includes the assistant secretaries; chief of staff; deputy chief of staff; the director of division of vocational rehabilitation; and the senior directors for human resources division (HRD) and ; office of communications and government affairs.

Gender expression: External appearance of one's gender, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut, or intonation (speech pattern), and which may or may not conform to societal expectations of a person's sex assigned at birth or their gender identity.

Gender identity: A person's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both, or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. A person's gender identity can be the same or different from their biological sex.

Policy

A. Respectful behavior:

1. Includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - a. Engaging others with an open, collaborative, and cooperative approach.
 - b. Valuing the diversity and the human rights of others, regardless of their race, national or ethnic origin; color; religion; age; sex; sexual orientation, gender

identity or expression; marital status; family status; veteran status; body shape/size; or any physical or mental disability.

- c. Recognizing the dignity of a person through courteous conduct.
- d. Committing to learn and develop an understanding of differing social and cultural norms.
- e. Taking responsibility for one's actions, displaying humility with mistakes and offering others grace and forgiveness for theirs.
- f. Emphasizing positivity and commonality rather than opposition or right and wrong.
- g. Finding ways to be constructive in providing feedback to others.

B. Behaviors inconsistent with a respectful work environment

1. DSHS considers the following as examples of behaviors inconsistent with a respectful work environment: aggression; coerciveness; inappropriate physical contact; intentional embarrassment, humiliation, or belittlement; or making offensive statements, remarks, or jokes.
2. Behaviors that amount to discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, or retaliation, as described in DSHS administrative policy [18.66](#) discrimination, harassment, and other inappropriate behavior, are not consistent with a respectful work environment.
3. If you see or experience any of these behaviors, follow the procedures outlined in DSHS administrative policy [18.66](#) discrimination, harassment, and other inappropriate behavior or DSHS administrative policy [20.01](#) internal investigations under the HRD employee relations unit (ERU).
4. See also DSHS administrative policy [18.89](#) investigations and DSHS administrative policy [20.02](#) response to complaints of discrimination filed with an external agency.

C. Employee responsibilities

Employees are responsible to:

1. Engage in respectful behavior in the workplace.
2. Treat others in the workplace with dignity, civility, and respect.
3. Recognize both the intent and impact of their behaviors, and to create and maintain a safe and respectful work environment.
4. Complete the DSHS diversity and cultural competency training.

5. Employees who have questions about their own conduct may consult with their supervisor or manager or their [human relations division \(HRD\) business partner](#) for advice or support.
6. Employees who observe or experience behavior in the workplace inconsistent with this policy:
 - a. Are encouraged to tell the offending individual directly that the behavior is unwelcome and attempt to resolve the issue.
 - b. Should promptly report the conduct to either their supervisor or manager; appointing authority; or [HRD business partner](#). That will give the supervisor or manager the opportunity to provide the offending individual with any additional training, tools, or resources that may help them understand how to be more respectful in the workplace.

D. Supervisor and manager responsibilities

Supervisors and managers are responsible to:

1. Engage in respectful behavior in the workplace.
2. Model appropriate behavior.
3. Treat others in the workplace with dignity, civility, and respect.
4. Recognize both the intent and impact of their behaviors, and to create and maintain a safe and respectful work environment that demonstrates respect and competence.
5. Model and encourage bystander intervention.
6. Coach, mentor, and advise employees on how to uphold the expectations described in this policy and support employees in their efforts to learn. If a supervisor or manager needs assistance, they should contact their [HRD business partner](#).
7. Hold employees accountable for creating and maintaining a safe and respectful work environment that demonstrates respect and competence, and address behaviors that are inconsistent with the expectations described in this policy quickly, and at the first appropriate level.
8. Engage with employees when issues regarding this policy are raised and act promptly. If a supervisor or manager needs assistance in determining how to address issues raised, they should contact their [HRD business partner](#).

9. Commit to learn and grow through engagement and availing themselves to workforce training related to respectful behaviors and work environments, and similar topics.
10. Complete the DSHS diversity and cultural competency training.

E. Appointing authority responsibilities

Appointing authorities are responsible to:

1. Engage in respectful behavior in the workplace.
2. Model appropriate behavior.
3. Treat others in the workplace with dignity, civility, and respect.
4. Recognize both the intent and impact of their behaviors, and to create and maintain a safe and respectful work environment that demonstrates respect and competence.
5. Model and encourage bystander intervention.
6. Hold employees, supervisors, and managers responsible for creating and maintaining a safe and respectful work environment that demonstrates respect and competence, and address behaviors that are inconsistent with the expectations described in this policy quickly, and at the first appropriate level.
7. Engage with employees when behaviors that are not considered respectful under this policy are raised. Seek assistance from their [HRD business partners](#) for guidance.
8. Complete the DSHS diversity and cultural competence workplace training.

F. DSHS cabinet members

DSHS cabinet members are responsible to:

1. Require that all DSHS employees complete the DSHS diversity and cultural competency training by 2025, or upon new hire.
2. Require that all DSHS employees review this policy annually.

¹ Housekeeping to update links, references to competence, and update additional guidance.

² Updated to reflect DSHS reorganization.