

RESOLUTION NO. 2014 - 210

A RESOLUTION AFFIRMING THE CITY'S CIVIL RIGHTS POLICY FOR ALL OFFICIALS, APPOINTEES, EMPLOYEES, PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS, INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS, AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC THAT INTERACT WITH CITY EMPLOYEES, OFFICIALS AND VOLUNTEERS.

WHEREAS, it is the policy of the City of Vineland to treat the public, employees, prospective employees, appointees, volunteers and contractors in a manner consistent with all applicable civil rights laws and regulations including, but not limited to the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 as subsequently amended, the New Jersey Law against Discrimination, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Conscientious Employee Protection Act, and

WHEREAS, the governing body of the City of Vineland has determined that certain procedures need to be established to accomplish this policy;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the City of Vineland that:

§1: No official, employee, appointee or volunteer of the City of Vineland by whatever title known, or any entity that is in any way a part of the City of Vineland shall engage, either directly or indirectly in any act including the failure to act that constitutes discrimination, harassment or a violation of any person's constitutional rights while such official, employee, appointee volunteer, or entity is engaged in or acting on behalf of the City of Vineland's business or using the facilities or property of the City of Vineland.

§2: The prohibitions and requirements of this resolution shall extend to any person or entity, including but not limited to any volunteer organization or inter-local organization, whether structured as a governmental entity or a private entity, that receives authorization or support in any way from the City of Vineland to provide services that otherwise could be performed by the City of Vineland.

§3: Discrimination, harassment and civil rights shall be defined for purposes of this resolution using the latest definitions contained in the applicable Federal and State laws concerning discrimination, harassment and civil rights.

§4: The Business Administrator shall establish written procedures for any person to report alleged discrimination, harassment and violations of civil rights prohibited by this resolution. Such procedures shall include alternate ways to report a complaint so that the person making the complaint need not communicate with the alleged violator in the event the alleged violator would be the normal contact for such complaints.

§5: No person shall retaliate against any person who reports any alleged discrimination, harassment or violation of civil rights, provided however, that any person who reports alleged violations in bad faith shall be subject to appropriate discipline.

§6: The Business Administrator shall establish written procedures that require all officials, employees, appointees and volunteers of the City of Vineland as well as all other entities subject to this resolution to periodically complete training concerning their duties, responsibilities and rights pursuant to this resolution.

§7: The Business Administrator shall monitor the City's compliance with this policy.

§8: At least annually, the Business Administrator shall communicate a summary of this resolution and the procedures established pursuant to this resolution within the City of Vineland. This communication shall include a statement from the governing body expressing its unequivocal commitment to enforce this resolution. This summary shall also be posted on the City of Vineland's web site.

§9: This resolution shall take effect immediately.

§10: A copy of this resolution shall be published in the official newspaper of the City of Vineland in order for the public to be made aware of this policy and the City of Vineland's commitment to the implementation and enforcement of this policy.

Adopted:

President of Council

ATTEST:

City Clerk

City of Vineland Civil Rights Policy/Procedure

Any individual who observes alleged wrongdoing on the part of officials, employees, or volunteers associated with the City of Vineland may report such action using this procedure. This includes any action the individual believes to constitute harassment, sexual harassment, or any other wrongdoing. Employees of the City of Vineland shall follow the Employee Complaint Procedure. All other individuals including volunteers and members of the public may report the alleged wrongdoing to the head of the applicable department or volunteer organization, or, if they prefer, or do not think that the matter can be discussed with the head of the applicable department or organization, they should contact the Business Administrator, Personnel Director or City Solicitor.

Reporting of such incidents is encouraged both when an individual feels subjected to such incidents, or observes such incidents in reference to other individuals. The report or complaint should be in writing, but individuals may make a verbal complaint at their discretion. If an individual has any questions about what constitutes harassment, sexual harassment, or any other workplace wrongdoing, they may ask their supervisor or one of the individuals listed above. All reports of harassment, sexual harassment, or other wrongdoing will be promptly investigated by a person who is not alleged to be involved in the alleged harassment or wrongdoing.

No individual will be penalized in any way for reporting a complaint. There will be no discrimination or retaliation against any individual who files a good-faith harassment complaint, even if the investigation produces insufficient evidence to support the complaint, and even if the charges cannot be proven. There will be no discrimination or retaliation against any other individual who participates in the investigation of a complaint.

If the investigation substantiates the complaint, appropriate corrective and/or disciplinary action will be swiftly pursued. Disciplinary action up to and including discharge will also be taken against individuals who make false or frivolous accusations, such as those made maliciously or recklessly. Actions taken internally to investigate and resolve harassment complaints will be conducted confidentially to the extent practicable and appropriate in order to protect the privacy of persons involved. Any investigation may include interviews with the parties involved in the incident, and if necessary, with individuals who may have observed the incident or conduct or who have other relevant knowledge. The complaining individual will be notified of a decision at the conclusion of the investigation within a reasonable time from the date of the report an incident.

The Rights and Duties of a Volunteer in Local Government Leader's Guide

Who should conduct the seminar? Someone who is comfortable with the issue to answer questions. Depending upon the circumstances, that could be the leader of the volunteer organization, the City Administrator, Human Resources Manager, General Counsel, Employment Attorney/Advisor or Risk Manager.

Are all volunteers required to attend? Any volunteer considered managerial or supervisory must attend. The law also requires that training be “made available” to all other volunteers. However, the organization has the option of making training mandatory. Attendance must be documented.

How long is the seminar? The formal presentation is about 25 – 30 minutes, mostly consisting of the video. However, the question and answer period at the end could easily add another half hour or more to the seminar.

Section 1: Introduction

Under the law, volunteers in organizations that are a part of or are supported by the City have many of the same rights and responsibilities as governmental employees. Federal and State laws cover such important areas as discrimination, safety, violence and harassment. To protect you, the City has a “no tolerance” policy towards these violations of basic civil rights and expects all individuals associated with the community to conduct themselves consistent with this policy. Today, we will discuss what this means.

The program begins with a 12-minute video that explains your rights and obligations under the “no tolerance” policy. The video states clearly what types of conduct are unacceptable when interacting with fellow employees. As many unacceptable behaviors are also against the law, compliance is essential both for your own protection and to ensure that others are not subjected to conduct that might create a hostile environment. At the end of the video, there will be time to ask questions.

Section 2: Play video, “The Rights and Responsibilities of a Volunteer in Local Government”

Section 3: Question and Answers:

We will now spend a few minutes reviewing the City of Vineland’s specific policies and answering any questions you may have. Questions that pertain to a particular individual are not appropriate for this general session and should be asked after the meeting. Further, if anyone feels uncomfortable asking a question during the meeting, I will be available to talk afterwards. If the question involves a legal issue, it will be forwarded to the General Counsel or Employment Attorney/Advisor who will get back to you.*

Distribute copies of the Civil Rights Resolution and General Complaint Procedure, review each section, and ask if there are any questions.

Note: Make detailed notes of these questions in the attached Question Log and tell the employees that the attorney/advisor will quickly get back to them.