

SUPERVISOR TIPS

Maintaining a Respectful Work Environment

As supervisors, sometimes you have to walk a fine line balancing the camaraderie and friendly, effective working relationships necessary for a high performing team with making sure that your work environment remains professional and free of discrimination, harassment and discourteous behavior. Here are some guidelines to help you strike that important balance:

Who's responsible for the work environment?

It is the responsibility, and obligation, of each employee at CCWD to ensure that we maintain a professional and respectful work environment. Any employee who is aware of inappropriate conduct has a duty to speak up. Not saying something makes them a party to the conduct. By saying nothing, they're enabling that kind of behavior to continue unchecked, at the expense of others. If the employee is uncomfortable in raising the issue with the individual directly, ask them to bring it to your attention. Likewise, if you don't take action as a supervisor, you'll become part of the problem – not the solution! Our work environment is what we allow it to be – and we must all be committed to ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect at all times.

So what can a supervisor do to support a respectful workplace?

Make sure you discuss District expectations with your work group. A friendly atmosphere and team environment is a positive thing for all of us. However, it's also important to know where to draw the line. Everyone needs to understand that regardless of social relationships that may exist among staff members, when you're at work, you need to keep things on a professional level. Supervisors and managers in particular need to be very thoughtful in how they communicate with their team members. What could be considered "joking among friends" can take a very different tone and be viewed in a completely different light when it occurs at work. For example, advise employees not to use District computers to forward jokes or non-business related materials to others at CCWD. Work computers belong to the District –and every e-mail you send, every e-mail you receive, and any websites you visit are all subject to scrutiny. When using an employer's equipment, you can have no expectation of privacy. Also, encourage employees to carefully consider what information they choose to share with other employees that is not work related.

But what if we like to joke around, and no one objects?

Just because co-workers on occasion "joke around" or "tease", with "everyone joining in" does not mean it's okay to engage in unprofessional discussions or conduct while at work. You may think "everyone is okay with it" when in reality, someone may be extremely uncomfortable, but not want to rock the boat by confronting another employee (or even worse, their supervisor!) about their behavior. The safest thing to do is ensure that you keep it professional at all times while at work. Bottom line, it's NOT okay to engage in conduct that is in violation of District policy, regardless of how "okay" you think everyone around you may be with that kind of conduct. Behaving toward a fellow employee or member of the public in a discourteous or disrespectful manner is grounds for disciplinary action.

What do I do if someone reports a concern?

ACT! Get as much information as you can from the employee – what happened, when, who was there, what was said, etc. Once you have the preliminary information, don't hesitate to contact your manager, Department Head or Human Resources team for additional guidance and support. HR can always be reached between the hours of 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. at ext. 8002. Most importantly, be willing to take ownership of your role in helping the District be the kind of organization you can be proud of – with a work environment where everyone feels comfortable and is treated with respect.

