Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy Template

This tool is part of a collection of resources to facilitate gender parity and meaningful representation of equity-deserving groups in leadership roles in co-ops. Learn more in our Digital Library.

A. Rationale

Having an anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policy within an organization will make it clear to employees, leadership and board members that harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated and will guide expectations for behaviour. It will also provide knowledge to people within an organization on how to document and report for harassment and discrimination they may experience or someone else experiences. It is important to not only outline clear definitions for behaviours related to harassment and discrimination but should also describe the types of behaviour that are discriminatory or harassing, with links to relevant human rights provincial legislation which outlines the protected grounds and areas.

B. Considerations

Anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies are key to ensuring that harmful behaviours that might be experienced by equity-deserving groups are spelt out clearly. It is key that these policies not only consider how an organization defines harassment and discrimination but how these complaints are documented and reported within an organization and who's responsibility it is to ensure it is dealt with in an effective manner. It is also important that anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies are tied to specific provincial human rights legislation that also highlights an employers' rights and responsibilities.

C. Organizational commitment

It is important that the organization drafts statements around its commitment to creating and maintaining respect for human rights and advancing equity and inclusion. This can be included within an anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policy as well within its strategic plan. Employees' and particularly those from equity-deserving groups need to feel that the organization is committed to eradicating discrimination and harassment and ensuring a psychologically safe space free of harmful behaviours. Reporting and documentation processes need to be clear as well as any support for victims of discrimination and harassment. It is also important these policies go hand in hand with accountability practices and processes so that harmful behaviour is eliminated, and employees know what responsibility they have in changing their behaviours towards others.

D. Policy objectives

The policy should be very clear in setting out the objectives of why such policy or practice is in place, the promotion of human rights as well as the eradication of harassment and discrimination. The policy should also clearly state how such acts of discrimination and harassment set out its objectives, such as promoting human rights within the organization, preventing harassment and discrimination, and defining principles and standards for behaviour.

E. Define key concepts

Just as Equity, Diversity and Inclusion should be defined by an organization, it is key that the organization also defines what constitutes discrimination and harassment within their organization. Along, with these definitions it is also important to provide examples of discrimination and harassment, so it is clear for employees. The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) as well as the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF) have excellent glossaries that may help outline clear definitions of discrimination, harassment and other principles such as racism, sexism, homophobia etc that can also be added for clarity.

F. Applying the policy

It is important that the policy states exactly who is being protected (eg. temporary, casual, contract staff, volunteers etc). It is also important to state from whom they are being protected within the organization and if this protection includes the actions of other external stakeholders, such as clients, suppliers etc. Another important aspect to consider is the environment where the protection is taking place like for example onsite, during working hours or outside of these hours. All of these are dependent on the organizational context and should be consulted by various stakeholders within and outside of the organization.

G. Links to Provincial Human Rights Legislation

Depending on the province that the organization is located in, it is key that an anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policy is tied to appropriate human rights legislations. The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) has a great resource that specifies the human rights legislation for each province.

Most Human Rights Codes prohibits discrimination and harassment on the following protected grounds and in any combination of these grounds[1]:

- Age
- Creed (religion)
- Sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding)
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Gender expression
- Family status (such as being in a parent-child relationship)
- Marital status (including married, single, widowed, divorced, separated or living in a conjugal relationship outside of marriage, whether in a same-sex or opposite-sex relationship)
- Disability (including mental, physical, developmental or learning disabilities)
- Race
- Ancestry
- Place of origin
- Ethnic origin

[1] Canadian Human Rights Code: https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/h-6/section-3.html

- Citizenship
- Colour of skin
- Receipt of public assistance (in housing)
- Record of offences (in employment).

It is also important to note the intersections of identities that might experience discrimination and harassment. For example, a person who experiences harassment because she is a Muslim woman can file a complaint based on both sex and creed.

It is important to take into consideration the province that an organization is located in to ensure that the correct human rights legislation is applied and the protected grounds under that legislation are taken into consideration.

H. Reporting and Documenting

It is key that the anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policy clearly stipulates how to report and document complaints made by employees who experience or witness harmful behaviours. Power dynamics should be taken into account when considering who to report to. Folks who experience discrimination or harassment in the workplace may not feel safe or comfortable reporting these incidences directly to employers. Ensuring there is a system in place for anonymity as well as safety is key to reporting and documenting cases of harassment and discrimination. The processes should also go hand in hand with regular training to ensure that all employees know what to do if they experience or witness this behavior.

The organization should also offer support to the victim of the harassment and discrimination either through employee benefits or other third party counselling services. It is important that the victim of this behaviour feels supported by their organization and safe to continue their employment.

I. Roles and responsibilities

Lastly, it is important to set out the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders present in the organization. Employers and employees should uphold and abide by the stipulations of the policy and making it clear that the organization will not participate in any harassment or discriminatory behaviour should be clearly spelt out. It is also important to ensure that employees know that they should cooperate fully in any investigation of a harassment or discrimination complaint is also very important particularly so the person who experienced the behaviour feels supported by the organization.

Everyone in the organization has the responsibility to report and document harassment or discriminatory behaviour in their organization. Likewise, everyone in the organization is expected to take accountability to repair any harm that has been inflicted and change their behavior.

Below is a visual example of creating an anti-harassment policy (that can also take into consideration discrimination and other forms of harmful behaviour).



Source: Academy to Innovate HR https://www.aihr.com/blog/anti-harassment-policy/