



<b>POLICY NAME:</b>	<b>Respectful Workplaces</b>
<b>Effective Date:</b>	July 2, 2025
<b>Policies Rescinded:</b>	Policy 1904
<b>Document Owner:</b>	Chief Administrative Officer
<b>Required Review Date:</b>	July 1, 2027
<b>References:</b>	None

**PURPOSE**

All Employees are entitled to a respectful workplace. Woodlands County is committed to creating and maintaining a workplace environment which fosters mutual respect, integrity and professional conduct. All forms of disrespectful behaviour are strictly prohibited.

The purpose of this policy is to inform all parties on the rights and obligations of Woodlands County, its employees, contractors, volunteers, and other stakeholders to ensure a harassment free, violence free, and bullying free workplace. Further, the policy confirms the rights of those reporting or providing witness to conduct that violates this policy, including protecting persons making a good faith disclosure, from any reprisal.

**POLICY STATEMENT**

Woodlands County has zero-tolerance for harassment, bullying or psychological harassment in the workplace, or any form or variation of violence or abuse in the workplace. Disrespectful behaviour in the workplace, committed by or against any County Employee, volunteer or contractor working on the County’s behalf is unacceptable conduct and will not be tolerated. Disrespectful behaviour in the workplace is identified as a hazard and shall be treated as such. Responses to bullying behavior or harassment will aim to correct identified behavior and to prevent further occurrences or violations of this Policy.

Woodlands County is committed to:

- Maintenance of a healthy and safe workplace for all employees
- Education and prevention-oriented practices
- Addressing disrespectful behavior as soon as possible
- Effective problem-solving processes to address employee concerns, whether related to individual or group behavior

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.



*The Alberta Human Rights Act protects Employees from harassment. The Criminal Code protects people from physical and sexual assault. This Policy is not intended to discourage a worker from exercising rights pursuant to any other law, including the Alberta Human Rights Act.*

## DEFINITIONS

**Abuse of authority:** 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 or unprofessional manner.

**Bullying:** 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 creates 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 behavior of a group.

**Chief Administrative Officer (CAO):** The person, appointed by Council, as the administrative head of the Municipality

**Complainant:** The person that puts forward the complaint regarding a conduct matter

**Contractor:** a person, partnership or group of persons who, through a contract, or an agreement with the county, directs the activities of one or more employers or self-employed persons involved at work at a workplace, and are not an employee of Woodlands County.

**County:** Means The municipality named Woodlands County

**Employee:** any person employed by the County on a permanent, non-permanent, full time or part-time basis; including all management and staff engaged through an employment contract.

**Harassment:** 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 or abuse (physical or verbal) or assault. Harassment may be a single incident, or a pattern of unwanted behavior.

**Reprisal:** negatively impacting an employee because the employee had, in good faith, made a report, or participated in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing with respect to a suspected violation of any County Policy, Procedure, or other rule/expectation respecting the conduct of employees.

**Respondent:** The person, against whom the complaint has been filed.

**Sexual harassment:** 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 or abuse (physical or verbal) or assault.

**Vexatious:** Denoting the action that is brought without reasonable grounds for the purpose of causing harm or annoyance to the respondent.

**Violence:** The threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical injury to a person and/or damage to property. It includes but is not limited to:

- Unwelcome, threatening or intimidating behaviour, such as shaking fists, destroying property, throwing objects, verbal or written threats
- Any expression of an intent to inflict harm
- Verbal abuse - swearing, insults, or condescending language
- Physical attacks - hitting, shoving, pushing, or kicking, etc.
- Domestic and sexual violence.
- Violence that occurs off-site at business-related functions, at social events related to work, in clients' homes, or away from work but resulting from work

**Workplace:** a 'work site' as defined by the Occupational Health and Safety Act: a location where a worker is, or is likely to be, engaged in any occupation and includes any vehicle or mobile equipment used by a worker in an occupation.

**Zero Tolerance:** Means a strict and unwavering application of the policies and procedures related to an unacceptable form of conduct.

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

### **Employees**

- a) Participate, in good faith, in all training provided by the employer related to this policy.
- b) Conduct themselves in a manner which demonstrates professional conduct, mutual respect for others, and which honours diversity in the workplace
- c) Participate fully, and in good faith, in any resolution process or formal complaint and investigation process where they have been identified as having potentially relevant information.
- d) Report any incidents which may be in violation of this Policy, including any observed incidents involving other County employees.
- e) Respect the rights to personal dignity, privacy, and confidentiality pertaining to this Policy.

### **Supervisor/Manager**

- a) Act as a role model for professional and respectful conduct.
- b) Ensure employees have full access to information regarding all employer policies and procedures.
- c) Intervene immediately when inappropriate conduct has been brought to their attention or has been observed.
- d) Notify the local RCMP when there are reasonable grounds to believe that a violation of the Criminal Code has occurred.
- e) Respect the rights of all parties to a fair, equitable and confidential process for responding to complaints.
- f) Participate in the formal investigation process as outlined in the Conduct Investigation Procedure.



- g) Support to all those who participate in a problem-solving process.
- h) Enforcing corrective and/or disciplinary measures, where applicable.

**Human Resources**

- a) Make recommendations for updates to policies and procedures regarding respectful workplaces practices.
- b) Participate in the formal investigation process as outlined in the Conduct Investigation Procedure.
- c) Lead formal investigations of disrespectful behaviour.
- d) Protect the privacy of the individuals involved as far as it is possible and reasonable to do so within the context of an investigation.
- e) Ensure that both Complainants and Respondents are treated with dignity, respect and fairness.
- f) Recommend to Leadership appropriate discipline and/or corrective actions where it has been determined that this Policy has been violated.
- g) Keep on file all formal complaints, accompanying documentation and findings of any investigation for an indefinite period.
- h) Approve any discretionary deviations from the normal procedure.
- i) Ensure workers have acknowledged receipt of this Policy.
- j) Ensure all County staff receive training on respectful workplace practices.
- k) Arrange assistance (support) for workers, if required.
- l) Support all impacted workers in accessing the County's Employee Assistance Program.

**Health and Safety**

- a) Assist in the training of harassment and bullying.
- b) Monitor compliance with the Respectful Workplaces Policy and the Employee Code of Conduct.
- c) Provide input into the County's harassment prevention programs and strategies.
- d) Communicate the existence of this policy.
- e) Report to Human Resources any instances of conduct which may be in violation of this policy.

**GUIDELINES**

**1. Requirements for Woodland County's Respectful Workplaces Program**

- 1.1. Any incidents of conduct in violation of this policy will be investigated, and corrective action taken to address the incident. Investigations will be completed in accordance with the Conduct Investigation Procedure.
- 1.2. Those subjected to acts of disrespectful conduct shall be encouraged to seek assistance that may require in order to pursue a complaint.
- 1.3. Workers are to be advised of available recourse if they are subjected to, or become aware of, situations involving disrespectful conduct.
- 1.4. Woodlands County will treat all complaints of this nature seriously and will ensure that they are resolved quickly and fairly.
- 1.5. Preventing disrespectful conduct will come in the form of training provided to Woodlands County workers. It will also come in the form of a condition of employment or work with Woodlands County.



1.6. The harassment prevention plan, which includes this policy and accompanying procedures will be reviewed on the earliest of the following:

- 1.6.1. When an incident of harassment or bullying occurs
- 1.6.2. If the health and safety committee or representative recommends a review of the plan
- 1.6.3. Every three (3) years.

**2. *Distinguishing Workplace Bullying from other Behaviours***

2.1. There may be circumstances where an employee experiences stress or discomfort in the workplace, which is not related to bullying or inappropriate behaviors.

2.2. Bullying or harassment would not include:

- 2.2.1. The normal exercise of supervisory responsibilities, including performance reviews, direction, counseling and disciplinary action where necessary, provided they are conducted in a respectful, professional manner, in accordance with this Policy.
- 2.2.2. Social interactions, jokes and bantering, which are mutually acceptable, provided the interactions are respectful and there is no negative impact for others in the work environment.
- 2.2.3. Disagreements, misunderstandings, miscommunication and/or conflict situations provided the behaviour of the individuals involved remains professional and respectful.

**3. *Protection from Reprisals or Retaliation***

3.1. 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.

3.2. 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.

**4. *Vexatious or Frivolous Complaints***

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

**5. *Confidentiality and Privacy related to Harassment or Workplace Bullying***

5.1. Every participant involved in a formal complaint or investigation process is required to maintain confidentiality throughout the process and thereafter. Only those who must be informed of the details will be involved, in order to effectively address the situation.

5.2. To protect the interests of all parties involved, all information must remain confidential, subject to the rules listed below, and except where sharing of information is otherwise required by law, and/or with respect to a possible violation of the Criminal Code.



- 5.3. Complainants, respondents and witnesses will have access only to their own statements.
- 5.4. Respondents and complainants must have sufficient information about the allegations and response of the other parties to enable them to offer rebuttal.

**6. Support For Those Impacted by Harassment or Workplace Bullying**

6.1. The County recognizes that victims of disrespectful behaviour and other workers that may have been exposed to such incidents may require emotional support and reassurance. The County will ensure that victims as well as others exposed to such incidents are advised to consult a health professional of their choice for treatment or referral. The County will also advise eligible affected workers of the ability to access the Employee and Family Assistance Program.

*Original Signed*

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CAO Signature

**Version Control**

This section tracks all revisions to the policy. Administrative changes made under CAO authority must not alter the original intent of the policy and are logged accordingly. Council-approved revisions are noted with corresponding resolution numbers.

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Approved by</i>	<i>Type of Change</i>	<i>Summary of Change</i>	<i>Reference</i>
1.0	July 2, 2025	CAO	Original	New	

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