

1.6 Diversity and Inclusion

Effective Date: May 7, 2020

Lake County is committed to fostering, cultivating and preserving a culture of diversity and inclusion.

All employees of Lake County have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. Employees are expected to exhibit conduct that reflects inclusion during work, at work functions on or off the work site, and at all other company-sponsored and participative events. All employees are also required to attend and complete an annual diversity awareness training conducted by the County and all employees ~~of salary grade M12 and above must participate in~~ are encouraged to participate in a -Community Service Project (volunteering for homeless initiatives, AVID Federal Program, United Way, etc.), to enhance their knowledge and experience in diversity and inclusion ~~and to fulfill this responsibility~~.

Purpose:

This Diversity and Inclusion Policy applies to all Lake County employees, contractors, and representatives when they act on behalf of Lake County.

Procedure:

Lake County embraces and supports our employees' differences in age, color, disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender identity or expression, language differences, nationality or national origin, physical and mental and development abilities, education, work and behavioral styles, political affiliation, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, military service, and other characteristics that make our employees unique.

Our commitment to diversity and inclusion aligns with our vision, "*Lake County is a place where all people, families, and businesses have the opportunity to thrive*". Diversity and inclusion are sponsored at the highest levels in the organization and initiatives are applicable, but not limited - to our practices and policies on recruitment and selection; compensation and benefits; professional development and training; promotions; transfers; social and recreational programs; layoffs; terminations; and the ongoing development of a work environment built on the premise of gender and diversity equity that encourages and ensures:

1. Diversity is recognized as a business interest, with every level of the organization holding responsibility.
2. Communication is respectful between all employees regardless of title or level.
3. Insights of diverse groups are sought and welcomed; employees are not alienated or excluded because they do not fit into a set of cultural norms.
4. An environment where employees feel that their background and lifestyle do not affect perceptions of them as a professional or affect their opportunities for development and

promotion.

5. The diversity of our workforce is visible at every level of the organization and in every department.
6. Employees are aware of their own unconscious and conscious bias and know how to ensure this does not manifest at work.
7. In respecting and valuing the diversity among our employees, and all those with whom we do business, management and employees are expected to ensure that there is a work environment free of all forms of discrimination and harassment.

Management Responsibilities:

- a. Implementing this Policy as part of their day-to-day management of employees and in applying policies and practices in a fair and equitable way.
- b. Recognizing unacceptable behavior and taking immediate appropriate action.

Employee Responsibilities:

- a. Implementing this Policy in their day-to-day work and their dealings with colleagues and customers.
- b. Notifying their line manager or senior management of any concerns with regard to the conduct of other employees.

Equal Employment Opportunity:

Candidacy for employment or advancement is based solely on the relevant qualities the candidate would bring to the position. Equal opportunity extends to all aspects of the employment relationship, including but not limited to hiring, promotions, training and development, working conditions, compensation and benefits. All such decisions are made by using objective standards based on the individual's qualifications as they relate to the job.

Discriminatory Harassment and Bullying:

Discriminatory harassment is verbal, written or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of their race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by statute, or that of their relatives, friends or associates, and that: a) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, b) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance, or c) otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

Harassing conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. Epithets, slurs or negative stereotyping
2. Threatening, intimidating or hostile acts
3. Denigrating jokes

4. Written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group that is placed on walls or elsewhere on the employer's premises or circulated in the workplace, on company time or using company equipment by e-mail, phone (including voice messages), text messages, social networking sites or other means

Workplace Bullying includes but is not limited to:

- a. Verbal, Written or Electronic Bullying: slandering, ridiculing or maligning a person or his/her family; persistent name calling that is hurtful, insulting or humiliating; using a person as butt of jokes; and abusive remarks
- b. Gesture Bullying: non-verbal threatening gestures, glances which can convey threatening messages
- c. Exclusion: socially or physically excluding or disregarding a person in work-related activities

Harassment and bullying may come from a supervisor, co-worker, or a non-employee who has a business relationship with Lake County.

Sexual Harassment:

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome or unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, as well as other conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. The submission to or rejection of such conduct is made a condition of the employee's continued employment, or used as the basis for any employment decisions affecting the employee; or
2. The conduct, if unwelcome and severe or pervasive, creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment, or unreasonably interferes with an employee's work environment.

Examples of what may constitute sexual harassment, besides sexual advances and requests for sexual favors include, but are not limited to:

- a. Verbal: suggestive comments; statements or questions about personal sexual matters; insults, threats or jokes about personal or physical traits; or jokes of a sexual nature (including innuendos)
- b. Non-verbal: suggestive or insulting noises; obscene gestures; or the use of literature, e-mails or pictures which are sexually suggestive, revealing, demeaning or pornographic
- c. Physical: touching, pinching, rubbing or massaging the body; coercing sexual relations; or assault

How to Report Discrimination or Harassment

In support of the above policy, Lake County expressly prohibits any form of discrimination, harassment or bullying. It is the responsibility of each employee to respect the rights of co-workers. Employees should remain alert to any harassment and report such events to supervisors, managers and/or the Human Resources Department.

Any employee of Lake County who believes that ~~he or she has~~they have been subjected or witness to harassment is expected to report the circumstances to their supervisor, Department Head or to the Director of Human Resources so that prompt preventative and corrective action may be taken. Employees may report allegations of harassment directly to:

1. Their Immediate Supervisor unless the supervisor is the source of the harassment
2. Their Department Head unless the Department Head is the source of the harassment; or
3. The Director of Human Resources unless the Human Resources Department is the source of harassment

Disabilities Accommodation:

Lake County values the contributions of persons with differing abilities. We are committed to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in our workforce. We do not discriminate on the basis of any known mental or physical disability that is protected by law, a history of disability, a perceived disability or an association with someone with a known disability. Our policy applies to job application procedures, hiring, termination, advancement, compensation, job training, relocation and other aspects of employment.

Diversity and Inclusion ~~Employee Panel~~Committee:

Lake County's commitment to diversity and inclusion is represented by the Diversity and Inclusion ~~Committee~~Employee Panel. This group of supervisory and non-supervisory employees is representative of all areas of Lake County Government. The cooperation and support of all employees and supervisors in diversity and inclusion efforts is essential to assuring the success of any initiatives.

Diversity and Inclusion Employee Resource Groups:

Lake County recognizes the strategic value of allowing groups of employees with common interests to formalize their professional relationship by creating an Employee Resource Group (ERG). Human Resources will work with employees interested in forming an ERG and bring a proposal to the Diversity and Inclusion Employee Panel for review prior to the approval by the Director of Human Resources.

ERGs are voluntary groups dedicated to fostering a diverse and inclusive work environment within the context of the organization's mission, values, business practices and objectives. An ERG typically forms around a specific dimension of diversity such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities, etc. ERGs are also sometimes called affinity groups or network groups. Examples of ERG groups are as follows:

- Women

- Hispanics/Latinos
- Black or African descent
- Asian and Pacific Islander
- People with Disabilities
- Military Veterans
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ)

Benefits of ERG's to Lake County and Employees:

The ERG can provide cultural expertise to the company's employees and businesses in ways that can enable the company to improve recruiting and retention, build cultural competence and leadership effectiveness, facilitate relationships between our organization and external communities and constituencies, and support specific business projects and initiatives. The ERG can enable employees at all levels to enhance their personal and professional development through direct participation in ERG activities and by voluntarily pursuing leadership roles in the ERG of their choice.

Eligibility and Participation:

~~You~~ [Employees](#) may become a general member or leader of an ERG without regard to age, race, sex, ethnicity, physical ability, sexual orientation, or grade level. Membership is open only to current employees of Lake County. Contractors and Consultants are not eligible for ERG membership.

Participation in ERG events or leadership activities during your normal work hours must be approved by your manager. Participation during non-work hours does not require such approval.

Manager's Responsibilities:

To the extent possible, managers are expected to support employees who wish to participate in ERG activities. An employee who desires to pursue a leadership role within an ERG should be encouraged, if they are in good standing within their current job. A commitment to a leadership role should be viewed as part of the employee's personal/professional development, and consideration should be given to exceptional leadership accomplishments as part of the employee's year-end evaluation.

Oversight and Administration:

~~Lake County's Diversity & Inclusion Committee~~ [The Human Resources Department](#) is responsible for the administration of this policy as well as for the general oversight and governance of the ERGs. ERGs interested in sponsoring programs such as a speaker series or other initiatives will forward such proposals to [Human Resources for review by the the committee Diversity and Inclusion Employee Panel prior to final approval by the Director of Human Resources.](#) ~~for review,~~ to ensure that the proposed program fosters and supports the values and business objectives of the County. The purpose of an ERG is not to represent or act as an advocacy group for employees with respect to terms and conditions of employment. An ERG that seeks to engage in conduct that is illegal or inconsistent with the County's policies, guidelines, and Code of Conduct will be dissolved. Programs and events ~~proposed by the ERGs should must~~ align with the County's values and business practices [as determined by the as determined by the Diversity and Inclusion Employee Panel, Human Resources, County Administration, and the -Lake County Board. Diversity & Inclusion Committee.](#)

Diversity:

The quality of being different or unique as an individual or group. This includes but is not limited to age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, language differences, nationality or national origin, family or marital status, physical, mental and development abilities, race, religion, sexual orientation, skin color, socio-economic status, education, work and behavioral styles, political affiliation, veteran status; the perspectives of each individual shaped by their nation, experiences and culture—and more. Even when people appear the same on the outside, they are different.

Inclusion:

The act of including. A strategy to leverage diversity. Diversity always exists in social systems. Inclusion, on the other hand, must be created. In order to leverage diversity, an environment must be created where people feel supported, listened to and able to do their personal best.

Equity:

An approach that ensures everyone access to the same opportunities. Equity recognizes that advantages and barriers exist, and that, as a result, we all don't all start from the same place. Equity is a process that begins by acknowledging that unequal starting place and continues to correct and address the imbalance.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Employees may ask questions, raise concerns or report instances of potential non-compliance with this Policy by contacting:

Human Resources

Email: humanresources@lakecountyil.gov

Phone: 847-377-2700