

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY
LEGAL SERVICES OF NORTH FLORIDA, INC.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY

The purpose of the equal opportunity policy of Legal Services of North Florida, Inc., is to prohibit discrimination based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, and sexual orientation by any of its employees, delegate agencies, vendors, lenders, contractors or subcontractors, in all program activities. The goal of LSNF is to establish a policy to eliminate discrimination within the program and in the delivery of services by the program. To effectuate this goal, measures will be taken to:

1. Ensure equal access to program components without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, veteran status or sexual orientation. Minority groups will be recruited to take advantage of the services available to them and to participate in all phases of the program.
 - The facilities and activities of Legal Services of North Florida will be accessible to all eligible clients and beneficiaries.
 - Participation of minorities and the poor in program planning and evaluation, on the governing board and on policy advisory committees will be provided.
2. Ensure that employment practices are nondiscriminatory in regard to color, race, national origin, sexual orientation, sex, disability, age, veteran status, and religion. These employment practices include but are not limited to hiring, promoting, demoting, transferring, recruiting, advertising, termination, rates of pay, and selecting employees for training.

In regard to veterans, when equally qualified applicants are under consideration for any employment position, LSNF shall give preference to an applicant who is a veteran. A veteran is an individual who has served on active duty in any branch of the Armed Forces of the United States who has been separated therefrom under honorable conditions.

I ask your continued support and assistance in achieving and maintaining these policies to ensure equality in employment opportunity and program services.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I. EMPLOYMENT ADVERTISING

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. (also referred to as LSNF) has taken, and will continue to take, steps to recruit and hire minority, female and veteran applicants.

1. All job announcements will include the criteria for employment by the program for the position listed and a request that veteran status be indicated.

2. A statement concerning educational requirements will be developed by the program to appear in all advertising.

3. Job descriptions designed by Legal Services of North Florida will ensure standardization of criteria and non-discrimination in selection of employees. Job descriptions will be received with the manual of personnel policies and practices.

4. Applicants will be tested only in those substantive skill areas appropriate to non-subjective evaluation (clerical skills, etc.).

II. EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

A. SEX DISCRIMINATION

There shall be no discrimination against employees on account of sex with regard to job policies and practices. There will be no distinction based on sex in employment opportunities, wages, hours, or working conditions.

- Appropriate physical facilities are made available to employees of both sexes.
- As an employer we will not deny a female the right to any job that she is qualified to perform.
- There is no differential specified between male and female employees on the basis of sex in either mandatory or optional requirements.

1. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination based on sex. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

- The victim or the harasser might be a man or a woman. The victim does not have to be the opposite sex.
- The harasser might be anyone. When in doubt, report the event according to the procedures described on pages 4-6.
- The victim does not have to be the person harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.

- Conduct can be unlawful even without economic injury to or discharge of the victim.

Sexual harassment or harassment based on any protected class will not be tolerated at LSNF. Sexual harassment includes lewd jokes or electronic mail messages, inappropriate comments and any other behavior that makes another employee feel uncomfortable. Any person who feels that he or she is being harassed or discriminated against must *immediately* report the offensive conduct to his or her direct supervisor. However, if the employee's direct supervisor is in any way involved in the alleged inappropriate behavior or is unavailable, the employee should report the conduct directly to the Human Resources Officer of LSNF. Finally, if the employee's direct supervisor and the Human Resources Officer are involved in the alleged inappropriate conduct or are unavailable, immediately contact the Executive Director of LSNF.

2. PREGNANCY DISCRIMINATION

If an employee is temporarily unable to perform her job due to pregnancy, Legal Services will treat her the same as any other temporarily disabled employee by providing modified tasks, alternative assignments, disability leave or leave without pay. Pregnant employees will be permitted to work as long as they are able to perform their jobs. If an employee has been absent from work due to her pregnancy or related condition and recovers prior to the birth of the child, Legal Services will not require her to take leave for the remaining portion of her pregnancy.

B. RACE/COLOR DISCRIMINATION

Legal Services will not tolerate any form of racial or color discrimination either on the employment level or when providing services to clients.

Racial and color discrimination includes decisions based on an immutable characteristic based on race (skin color, hair texture, facial features), marriage or association with an individual of a different race; membership in or association with ethnic based organizations or group, or attendance or participation in schools or places of worship generally associated with certain minority groups.

There will be no pre-employment inquiries based on race or color.

Harassment based on color will not be tolerated. Harassment includes ethnic slurs, racial jokes, offensive or derogatory comments, or other verbal or physical conduct based on an individual's race/color if it creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment, or interferes with the individual's work performance.

C. RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination based on religion will not be tolerated at Legal Services of North Florida. LSNF will accommodate the religious practices of employees unless it would create an undue hardship on LSNF. LSNF will accommodate religious practices via flexible scheduling, voluntary substitutions or swaps, job reassignments, and lateral transfers.

D. NATIONAL ORIGIN DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination based on national origin will not be tolerated at Legal Services. This includes the disallowance of a "speak English only" rule, denial of employment based on an accent or manner of speaking, or verbal or physical conduct based on an individual's national origin if it creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment, unreasonably interfering with work performance or employment opportunities.

E. DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

An individual has a disability who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities or has a record of such an impairment or is regarded as having such an impairment. LSNF will reasonably accommodate persons with disabilities upon employee request as long as the request does not cause undue hardship. Undue hardship includes significant difficulty or expense.

For funding to provide accommodations, Legal Services of North Florida will contact:

State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program
Rehabilitation Services Administration
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
U.S. Department of Education
(202) 205-8719
(800) 877-8339(TDD)

To determine appropriate and effective accommodations, Legal Services may contact:

The Job Accommodation Network at (800) 526-7234.

III. COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

In the event that an employee, or job applicant has a complaint alleging a violation of Legal Services of North Florida's anti-discrimination policy, the following procedure must be used:

A. Report the act immediately to the Human Resources Officer or, in the case of an employee, to the employee's immediate supervisor (or in the event an employee's complaint arises from the actions of the immediate supervisor, directly to the Human Resources Department). (If the employee's direct supervisor and any staff in the Human Resources Department are involved in

the alleged act of discrimination, immediately contact the Executive Director of LSNF.)

B. In the event the complaint was made by an employee to his/her immediate supervisor, that supervisor should report the complaint to the Human Resources Department. The Human Resources Department shall conduct a thorough investigation of the complaint. Such investigation shall include a meeting or discussion with the accused, as well as interviews with any appropriate witnesses, and a review of any other pertinent information (including what the aggrieved person desires in order to rectify the situation).

C. The Human Resources Department should submit a report to the Executive Director within 14 days of receipt of the complaint.

D. If it is determined by the Executive Director that a violation has occurred, appropriate corrective action will be taken. The nature of such action will be determined by the Executive Director and the Human Resources Officer.

E. Any employee, supervisor or manager, vendor, contractor, volunteer, nonemployee, or any other person, who is found after appropriate investigation to have engaged in a violation of this policy will, in the case of an employee, be subject to appropriate disciplinary action as set forth in Section VI of the Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual, including termination, and in the case of a vendor, contractor, volunteer, or nonemployee, be subject to appropriate action, including but not limited to termination of the business relationship with the program or removal from a volunteer program, or debarment from the program's premises.

F. If the complaint is not resolved to the aggrieved party's satisfaction, he/she may appeal any decision to the Executive Director, then to the Personnel Committee of the Board of Directors.

G. If the Personnel Committee of the Board of Directors cannot adequately rectify the situation, the aggrieved person is to be informed by the Human Resources Officer of outside remedies.

No person shall be penalized or subjected to retaliation for filing a complaint of discrimination or for cooperating in the investigation of such a complaint.

For discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, ethnicity, age or disability, the aggrieved person must file a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or the Human Relations Commission within 180 days of the alleged discrimination. The appropriate EEOC office in which to direct a formal complaint of discrimination is:

Miami District Office
One Biscayne Tower

Two South Biscayne Boulevard, Suite 2700
Miami, Florida 33131
(305) 536-4491
www.eeoc.gov

and the appropriate HRC office in which to direct a formal complaint of discrimination is:

Florida Commission on Human Relations
325 John Knox Road, Building F, Suite 240
Tallahassee, Florida 32303
(850) 488-7082

(Note: A complaint must be filed first with the Human Relations Commission or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission before a lawsuit can be filed.)

In the event that a client or client-applicant has a complaint alleging a violation of Legal Services of North Florida's anti-discrimination policy, he/she may file a complaint with the Executive Assistant pursuant to the Client Grievance Procedure.

If the complaining party is an applicant of the Low Income Tax Clinic, he/she shall be advised of the opportunity to submit a written complaint to:

Director, Office of Equal Opportunity Program
Department of Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Metropolitan Square - Room 6071
Washington, D.C. 20220

IV. DISSEMINATION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY

A copy of this policy is to be given to all employees of Legal Services of North Florida, Inc., and referenced in the manual of program policies provided each employee at the commencement of employment. Any questions about the policy should be answered immediately by the employee's supervisor. The policy is also to be made available in each LSNF office and is to be referenced in all employment advertising. All supervisors are to be educated about the policy and the policy's implications. The Executive Director informs all supervisors of the policy. It is the responsibility of each supervisor to insure equal opportunity for all employees under his/her supervision in areas of work assignments, selection for training, advancements, salary and other conditions of employment. Any act of discrimination by a supervisor will result in appropriate disciplinary measures.

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