

# FOR ALL THE RIGHT REASONS

## A Guide to Understanding Your Role in Ensuring a Workplace Free of Discrimination and Harassment

Through adherence to its Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Harassment Policy and Procedure, the County of Yolo has made a strong commitment to prohibit unlawful discrimination and harassment and has created a process for investigating and resolving complaints. This guide serves as a brief introduction to or review of the fundamentals of equal employment opportunity and protection from harassment. We encourage you to read the policy in full and to raise any questions or concerns you may have to your supervisor, manager, department head, or to Human Resources.



**Fair treatment comes from valuing diversity and inclusion.**

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EEO

Way back in the employment time machine, society recognized that many people were being denied opportunities for employment based on factors that had nothing to do with their talent or abilities. A group of federal laws were enacted to remove artificial barriers to employment and states, including California, followed with their own laws. Those laws continue to serve as the legal requirements placed upon employers to assure fairness in all employment-related decisions (e.g. hiring and advancement in organizations). The most encompassing of those laws, which have been and will continue to be revised, are:

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 (EEO)
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)
- Fair Employment and Housing Act of 1954 (FEHA)

These laws, as well as other laws and statutes designed to complement or expand them, identified groups of people who had been the victims of unfair employment practices as members of “protected classes” who should be provided equal access to employment and advancement. As a result, employers cannot discriminate against applicants and employees on the basis of:

**RACE/COLOR**

**RELIGION/RELIGIOUS CREED** (including religious dress and grooming practices)

**SEX** (including pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding and related medical conditions)

**GENDER, GENDER IDENTITY, and GENDER EXPRESSION**

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

**NATIONAL ORIGIN** (including language use restrictions)

**ANCESTRY**

**DISABILITY** (mental and physical including HIV and AIDS)

**MEDICAL CONDITION** (cancer and genetic characteristics)

**GENETIC INFORMATION**

**MARITAL STATUS**

**AGE** (over 40)

**MILITARY AND VETERAN STATUS**

**FAMILY AND MEDICAL CARE LEAVE**

Discrimination includes taking an adverse action against or harassing someone on the basis of their membership in a protected class; excluding a similarly situated employee from advancement on the basis of membership in a protected class; or taking any employment action based upon bias against a person who is known or perceived to be a member of a protected class. As Yolo County employees we are responsible and accountable for the fair treatment of all applicants and employees in all aspects of personnel administration and for hiring, retaining, and separating employees on the basis of qualifications and performance without regard to membership in a protected class.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO ABOUT EEO

Yolo County is a proactive and productive organization that values diversity. There is no place for “not my job” attitudes when it comes to ensuring fairness and equal opportunity for all in the workplace. We are all accountable for creating and sustaining an inclusive workplace. The most creative and innovative results come from diversity in thinking and perspectives.

Oftentimes an individual discriminates without consciously meaning to do so or fails to be proactive in ensuring fairness and inclusion. A quick self-assessment may be helpful in identifying areas where you could improve your EEO – I.Q.

Rate yourself candidly on the following statements as they relate to work:

	Rarely/No	Often	Always/Yes
I understand the County’s commitment to Equal Employment.			
I am curious about new things and people and ask questions.			
When I don’t understand what someone says, I ask for clarification.			
I demonstrate respect for all co-workers, customers and vendors.			
I work willingly and cooperatively with people different from me.			
I know how to file a complaint of discrimination or harassment.			
I communicate with and influence people who are different from me in positive ways.			
I am interested in the ideas and opinions of those who don’t think as I do.			
I am aware of my prejudices and consciously try to control my assumptions about people’s abilities, background and intentions.			
I work to make sure that people who are different from me are heard and are respected.			
I refrain from repeating rumors that reinforce bias or prejudice.			
I recognize and avoid using language that reinforces stereotypes.			
I am comfortable working with disabled co-workers.			
I “call out” derogatory comments or jokes about members of a protected class as inappropriate behavior.			
I am interested in learning about my own biases.			
I have read the County’s policy on Equal Employment Opportunity.			
Total			

As you tally your results, you may already have sensed from those statements that you answered as “rarely” or “no” areas where you could focus a bit more attention. Most of us have heard and been taught enough to be able to recognize the most blatant discrimination in the workplace. But all of us, as a part of our jobs and as a shared value, need to be more aware of the biases in ourselves and in others and, more to the point, need to affirmatively address both.

## HOW TO ADDRESS DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Whether you are the victim or a witness, there are many avenues available to you to stop discrimination when it occurs in the workplace. You may talk with your supervisor, manager or department head, who will undertake an investigation into your concerns. You may contact Human Resources for assistance or to file a formal complaint using the County's process for addressing issues of unfair treatment in the workplace. You may take advantage of the AVENUES program's confidential email or hotline to notify the County of inappropriate activity. You may contact your union/association who will contact the County on your behalf. County policies and procedures detailing how to proceed when addressing discrimination and harassment are referenced below. Investigations into such allegations are confidential, involve only those with firsthand knowledge of the events or those who have a need to know, and, importantly, include strong protections against retaliation for all those – victims, witnesses, perpetrators – who are parties to the investigation.

## HOW YOU CAN DO THE RIGHT THING

1. Celebrate diversity and be inclusive.
2. Develop tactful, clear and firm ways to challenge inappropriate language, behavior, decisions, and attitudes by others and be willing to voice sincere apology if you act on a bias.
3. Immediately report to your supervisor, manager, department head, or Human Resources instances of discrimination and harassment so that they can be addressed expeditiously.

## REFERENCES MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- [County of Yolo Equal Employment Opportunity and Harassment Policy and Procedure](#)  
(found on Inside Yolo, homepage tiled quick link buttons – Policies and Procedures)
- [County of Yolo Equal Employment Opportunity Policy and Procedure](#)  
(found on Inside Yolo, homepage tiled quick link buttons – Policies and Procedures)
- [County of Yolo Workplace Civility Policy](#)  
(found on Inside Yolo, homepage tiled quick link buttons – Policies and Procedures)
- [County of Yolo Workplace Civility Procedure](#)  
(found on Inside Yolo, homepage tiled quick link buttons – Policies and Procedures)
- [County of Yolo Code of Ethics – Standards of Ethical Conduct](#)  
(found on Inside Yolo, homepage tiled quick link buttons – Policies and Procedures)
- [Yolo Training Academy offerings, such as “Harassment Prevention” and “Ethics and Workplace Civility”](#) (found on Inside Yolo, homepage Employee Resources – Training Academy)
- [AVENUES program](#) (found on Inside Yolo, under Departments - Human Resources - General Information)

**Please complete the enclosed Acknowledgement of Training and give it to your supervisor, who will answer any remaining questions you may have.**