

# **United In Service**

*leadership for building  
healthy, resilient and inclusive  
emergency services*



## **Austin Fire Department**

**Facilitated by United In Service Training Team**

**October 2021**

## **WHY this training?**

In 2021, racism still divides our nations, our communities and our departments. The fire service culture still struggles with the legacy of its all-male history, and resists the full inclusion of women into its ranks. Many emergency personnel - are afraid to even talk about homophobia or transphobia, unless in the form of insults. There are mission-critical results: personnel cannot perform their best, too many experience negative health impacts, and some communities remain distrustful of our firefighters, EMS responders, fire marshalls, even safety educators.

## **Training Objectives**

While our overarching goals are always to fulfill our mission, enhance responder health and safety, and improve the quality of our customer service, the specific objectives of this training will be to:

- introduce a framework and common language for genuine dialogue about prejudice, bias, and oppression (racism, sexism, classism, homophobia and transphobia, et al), and to create an environment which encourages such dialogue.
- illuminate the historical roots, current realities, and the political and social context of systemic oppression, privilege and internalized oppression in the United States.
- recognize the daily impact of oppression, on emergency service personnel and their customers, including the emotional, mental and physical health consequences.
- identify benefits of an inclusive and diverse emergency service organization.
- inspire and equip mission-focused, emergency service leaders to provide higher quality customer service to ALL members of their community and enhance the health, safety and success of ALL personnel.



# **CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

## ***Recognizing the Gift***

**On every step of our journey, each of us carries the unique perspectives of our age, racial identity, gender, gender identity, national origin, ethnic heritage, class background, sexual orientation, language, spiritual belief, and life with or without a physical, mental, emotional disability.**

**We can choose to see these differences as divisions, or to view our cultural diversity as gifts to be cherished and nurtured. Our community is not a dull fabric of a single colored thread, but a tapestry of vibrant colors and rich textures, woven into a vital, ever-changing design.**

**For our world to survive in this time of intense and quickening change, we need the vision and insight of each person, and the strength and wisdom of each culture.**

*jona olsson*



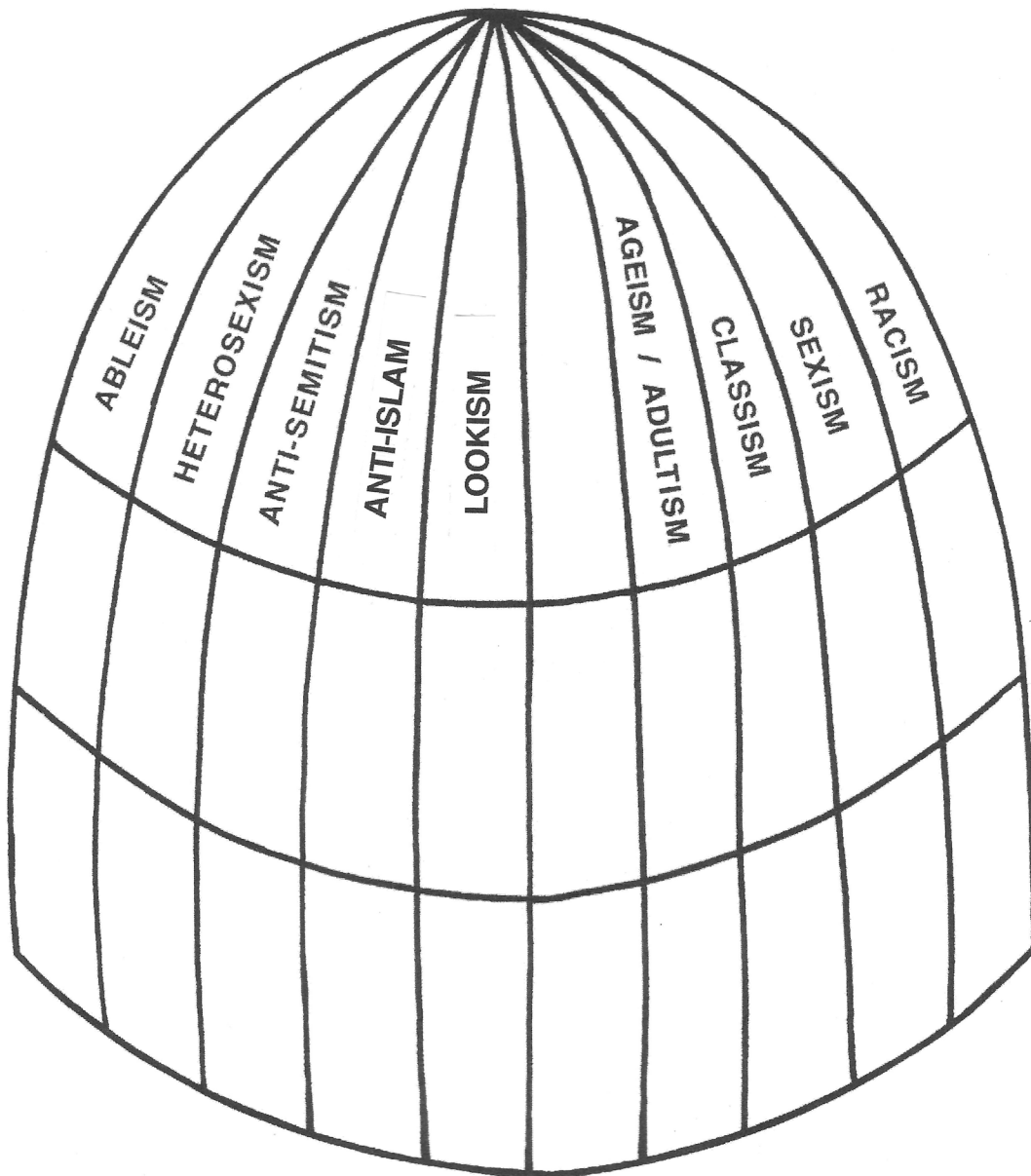
## **OUR WORKING ASSUMPTIONS**

These WORKING ASSUMPTIONS are offered as a foundational framework for this justice workshop.

- 1) Oppression is pervasive and hurts us all, but NOT in the same ways.
- 2) Racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism and every form of oppression is both a system of oppression AND a system of advantage.
- 3) All prejudice was taught to us, and we resisted this teaching. If we choose to, we can un-learn it.
- 4) None of us “invented” oppression; it is a legacy we inherited. Though its creation is not our fault, we must now accept responsibility for our role in its continued existence.
- 5) All prejudices and oppressions are interwoven and entangled.
- 6) “There is no hierarchy of oppression.” Trying to rank one group’s pain over another distracts us and prevents us from dismantling any and all oppression.
- 7) All of us have had the experience as a target of oppression, as well as the experience of privilege.
- 8) There is no such thing as “passive anti-oppression.” We are either actively working against oppression or we are colluding with it, allowing it to continue in our name.
- 9) Individuals, organizations and communities can and do grow and change.
- 10) Our commitment to eliminating all forms of injustice must be a lifelong one.
- 11) Difference among humans is NOT a deficit.  
**Our diversity is a gift.**

(1995 -cultural bridges; #6: essay title by Audre Lorde; #1 & 3: adapted from the work of Ricky Sherover-Marcuse; #2: David T. Wellman)

# CAGE OF OPPRESSION

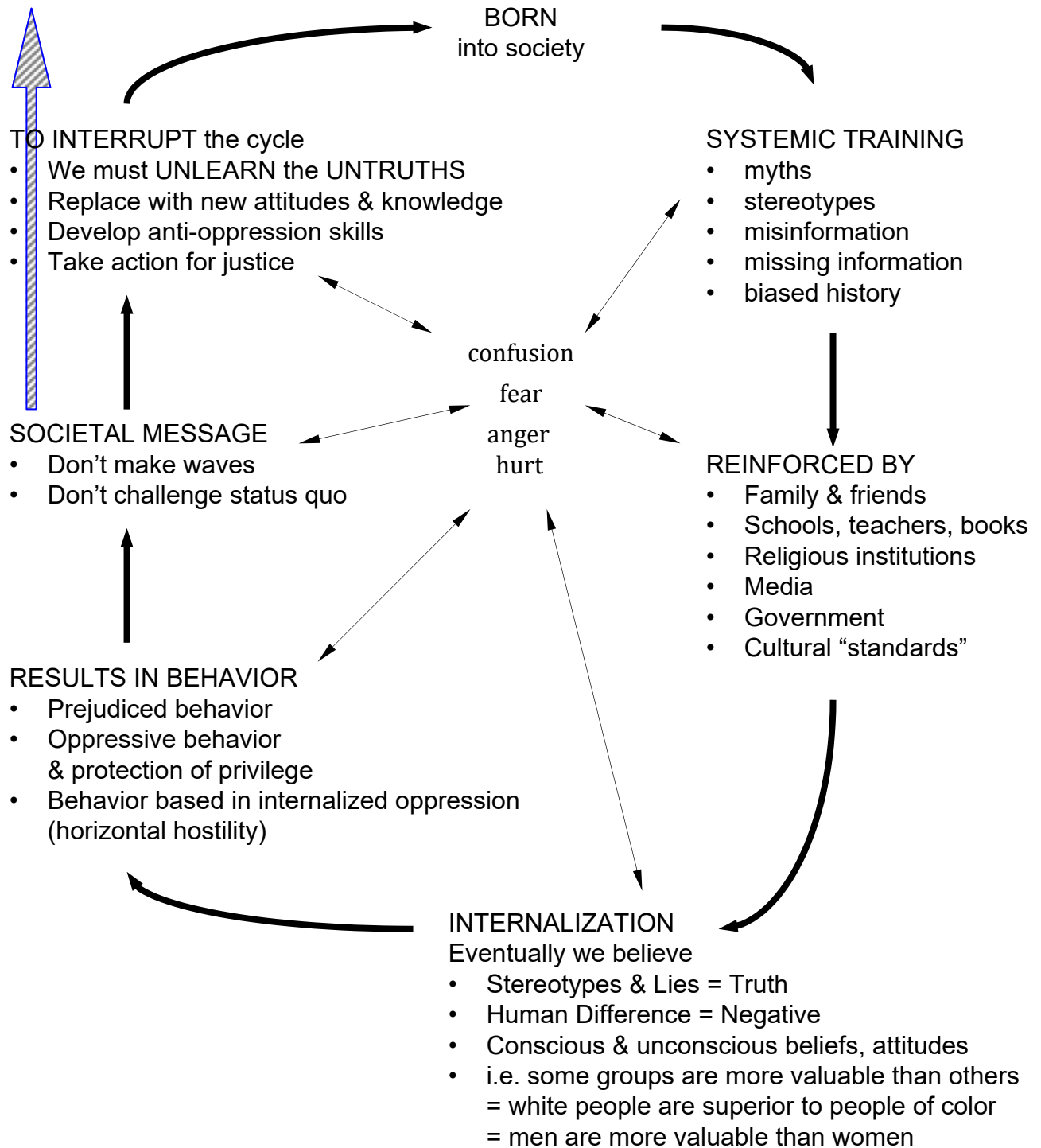


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cultural bridges to justice

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with credit to Bailey Jackson, Rita Hardiman, Judith Webb

# CYCLE OF PREJUDICE & OPPRESSION



Adapted from work of Bailey Jackson & Rita Hardiman by jona olsson & Achebe Powell 1995

## DEFINITIONS

### PREJUDICE (Racial, Gender, Class, et al)

- a **pre - judgment** based on myth, missing information, misinformation (lies) or stereotypes
- a **bias, an attitude, opinion or feeling** usually negative and usually formed with little or no personal experience. (NOT any action or behavior based on those feelings.)

### STEREOTYPE (Racial, Gender, Age, et al)

- a **generalization imposed on an entire group** (all Puerto Ricans, or all Lesbians) based on real or perceived characteristics of some individuals in that group or based on a cultural norm which has been distorted or based on a lie, myth or total misunderstanding of the group / ethnicity / culture

### OPPRESSION (Racism, Sexism, Heterosexism, et al)

- a **system of oppression and a system of advantage based on (race/color, gender, sexual orientation, etc.)** (*David T. Wellman*)
- the **historically constructed personal, cultural and institutional manifestations of prejudice against (people of color, females, members of any target group)**
- **Oppression = Prejudice + (institutional, systemic) Power**
- the **assumed superiority of one group over another based on (skin color, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) and thereby the right to dominate, exclude, discriminate against, abuse, hate, even kill...** (*adapted from work of Audre Lorde*)
- a **SYSTEM of structuring opportunities and assigning value** (Camara Jones)
  - Based on "race" (gender/class/orientation/ disability, et al)
  - That unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities
  - That unfairly advantages some individuals and communities

### INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION (Internalized Racism, or Sexism, et al)

- the **involuntary belief by members of a target group (People of Color, women, girls, Lesbians, gay men, people living with a disability, people living in poverty, etc.) that the stereotypes and lies about them are true.**
- consequences of this internalization: self-doubt, self-hatred, loss of self-esteem and lowered expectations for the future, doubt and mistrust of other target members

### PRIVILEGE (White or Male or Heterosexual Privilege, et al)

- **choices, entitlements, advantages, benefits, assumptions and expectations** granted based on membership in the culturally dominant group. (male, white, heterosexual, etc.)
- includes the privileges granted by the society, as well as the assumptions, expectations and inflated self-image internalized by the privileged group.
- "George Bush (Sr.) was born on third base and to this day he thinks he hit a triple."  
(*Former Texas Governor, Anne Richards*)

## **PRIVILEGE**

Privilege includes the unquestioned, unearned, most often unconscious, advantages, entitlements, benefits, choices, assumptions and expectations bestowed on some people based solely on membership in the culturally dominant group.

To those who have it, privilege is an invisible, or at least substantially obscured, thorny concept. Privilege is easily nameable and definable by people from a target group. As Marilyn Frye said, “the absence of privilege is the presence of knowledge.”

When white people do begin to recognize the concept and reality of white privilege, it doesn't feel very good. The same for men, heterosexuals, people living with no disability, middle class people, et al. Guilt, shame, denial and defensiveness often accompany the first recognition and acknowledgement of one's privilege.

Privilege is not something that can be given up, given back or “turned off.” There are no “exceptional” white people or men - those for whom white or male privilege is not a constant reality.

People are granted privilege regardless of their intentions. Avowed racists and committed anti-racists are both granted white privilege. Intention has no bearing on privilege status; it is relevant only as to how the privilege is “spent.”

**Privilege has potential as a powerful tool to dismantle oppression,** if justice practitioners learn to identify their privilege and then spend their privilege with integrity to challenge oppressive attitudes, behaviors, structures, and institutions.

- **Privilege has Two Faces:**

**Granted Privilege** includes the privileges granted, bestowed or handed out by the oppressive society to members of the privilege group.

**Internalized Privilege** is the expectation and assumption of superiority and entitlement internalized by people in the privilege group.



**There are Core Privileges which fall into categories:**

**Category One - The Individual (Male / Men's Privilege example)**

**Granted Male Privilege examples:**

I am treated as an individual, not as part of the dominant (white, male, middle class, et al) group. I don't have to represent or reflect the traits or abilities of ALL people of the dominant group.

If I mess up, make a mistake, or can't handle some job... (on the job, at school, in the community, as a parent, anywhere)

- It is not a reflection on all men.
- It's not seen that way by others (men or women)- so I don't have to feel my actions reflect on all men.

**Internalized Male / Men's Privilege examples:**

I can feel like an individual. "I'm just me."

"I earned it." People perceive I earned it. And I can feel I earned it.

- The "rugged Individual" and "bootstrap" propaganda are at work.
- The internalized result: my inflated sense of self and an illusion of superiority.
- I have a false sense of the universality of my perceptions, perspectives, experiences, responses, knowledge.
- I can believe my perspective is the valid one and the one by which all others should be judged.

**Category Two - The Default Option (White privilege example)**

- As a white person in a white dominant society, I need only pay attention to racism, let alone challenge it, when it is convenient, safe and easy; when my benefit and self-interest are clear to me. I must be intentional about my awareness and challenge of racism. As a white person, I can move easily through my day without ever paying attention to racism. I can remain unconscious and unaware of the racism around me, its impact on People of Color and the benefit to white people, including me, AND there will be no negative systemic, institutional or (rarely) personal consequence for my inattention.

- This option is always available to me.
- I can choose to recognize and challenge racism at any time, but the Default Option allows me to quit at any time.

### **Category Three - The Intervention of Acceptance**

- “I am innocent until proven guilty.” I am seen as credible and capable until I prove otherwise. One of the benefits of privilege is being given the benefit of the doubt. It is an active intervention.

White Privilege Example:

- The dominant cultural assumption is that white people are trustworthy, intelligent, law abiding, etc. So, when I join a group of white people, they and I include me in that group assumption.
- This intervention on my behalf occurs everywhere; in stores, banks, schools, unemployment or welfare offices, in hospital emergency rooms or court rooms, restaurants and classrooms, the fire house and recruit school.
- There is the assumption of belonging. In an all or mostly white group, I am treated as though I belong there, and I can feel I belong.
- Appearance: I am often accepted and I FEEL acceptable in less than my best clothes.

### **Category Four - Exemption from Effects of Oppression and Internalized Oppression**

**Where I have privilege**, I do not have to face or work to overcome the debilitating effects of either the oppression or the internalized oppression that the target group lives.

**PRIVILEGE + PASSION for JUSTICE + ACTION =**

**Justice Agent for Change**

## **INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION**

**The involuntary belief by people of a target group (People of Color, women and girls, Lesbians, gay men, bisexual people, people who are transgender, people living with disabilities, Jews, people living in poverty, et al) that the lies and stereotypes about them are true.**

Any oppression that continues long enough will inevitably be internalized by all the people targeted for that particular oppression. As we grow up, if we are continually taught lies and stereotypes, experience prejudices and are bombarded with negative images about ourselves, we come to believe them. Thoughts and feelings about ourselves and people of our own targeted group come to be based on this disinformation and the cultural myths promoted by an oppressive societal system.

Internalized oppression has been systematically initiated, encouraged and powerfully enforced upon all targeted individuals and groups in order to keep the system of oppression in place. Therefore, internalized oppression is as pervasive as oppression itself, teaching members of the target / oppressed groups to “accept” feelings of self-doubt, powerlessness and inferiority as a part of reality. In other words, members of any targeted group in an oppressive society eventually - but involuntarily – participate in their own oppression, to “accept” the invalidating feelings, to be defeated in the attempt to retain their full human dignity.

Internalized oppression is a most powerful and useful tool, absolutely necessary in training targeted individuals and groups to be complicit in upholding and maintaining the oppressive hierarchies in which they live. From earliest childhood to the present moment, targets of oppression, through no fault or desire of their own, have absorbed negative feelings and attitudes about themselves and are socialized to embody the values and attitudes of the very system that oppresses them.

Women and men of color, all women and girls, people with disabilities, lesbians, gay men and bisexual people, Jews, poor and working class people, young people and elders, people who are transgender, people targeted for sizism/ lookism, and others - are all human beings who absorb the lessons and exhibit the behaviors of internalized oppression. The socially legitimized teachers of these lessons vary from our schools, teachers, books, religious institutions, social groups and institutions, the media, government, cultural “standards,” to even our own family and friends.

An oppressive society actively enforces both the oppression and the internalized oppression with false “theories” about each group, propaganda, discriminatory treatment of all kinds, religious pronouncements, secret societies, plus the ultimate enforcer: violence and the threat of violence.

As Ricki Sherover-Marcuse wrote:

“Each group targeted by oppression inevitably “internalizes” the mistreatment and the misinformation about itself. The target group thus “mis-believes” about itself the same misinformation which pervades the social system. This “mis-believing” expresses itself in behavior and interactions between members of the target group which repeat the content of their oppression. Internalized oppression is always an involuntary reaction to the experience of oppression on the part of the target group. To blame the target group in any way for having internalized the consequences of oppression is in itself an act of oppression.” (from “Liberation Theory: Part I”)

Among the possible consequences of this internalization are self-doubt, loss of self-esteem, self-hatred, mistrust of other members of the target group, hopelessness, and lowered expectations for the future for children and adults of the target group.

**Examples** (Note: Although the following are listed by specific oppressions, most can be adapted for any form of oppression.)

**Internalized Sexism**

- Girls or women who believe they are not as capable as boys or men.
- Girls or women who take boy's / men's approval, attention, and/or criticism more seriously than girl's / women's.  
Women who believe that working FOR women means being anti-male.
- Women in leadership who do not trust, share critical information, or "coach" the women who work for them.  
Women or women's organizations who believe they need men to perform certain functions.
- Women who believe they did something to cause or deserve being battered or raped, or women who blame a rape survivor for her assault (i. e. think she was in the "wrong place," in the "wrong" clothes, had too much to drink, etc.)

**Internalized Homophobia**

- Lesbians or gay parents who do not show affection around their own children.
- Lesbians or gay men who change the names / pronouns when talking about their significant other.\*
- Lesbians or gay men who do not "come out." (For bisexual people the term would be internalized bi-phobia; for people who are transgender: internalized transphobia.)\*
- 1 in 3 gay U. S. teenagers who attempt suicide. 1 in 3 U. S. teens who have committed suicide was gay or thought they might be gay.

**Internalized Racism**

- Children of color who "want to be white;" when they see that white children are more accepted, treated better, given respect, etc.
- Adults of color who act as "gatekeepers" in preventing other People of Color from advancing.  
Children or adults of color who believe white people are more capable, more reliable, smarter, or better leaders than People of Color.
- People of Color who do not trust other People of Color who are in positions of leadership or authority.
- Always questioning whether the work they have done is good enough.
- Members of one community of color who distrust, put down, or discriminate against People of Color of another ethnic or cultural group.

\* We must always distinguish between decisions driven by internalized oppression and those that are survival strategies.

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## **JOB DESCRIPTION for an Ally for Justice**

This is NOT about BLAME or assigning FAULT  
It is an OPPORTUNITY and a RESPONSIBILITY  
for People of Conscience

1. Listen
2. Be respectful
3. Leave your assumptions and stereotypes behind
4. Educate yourself. Take some risks. Ask questions.
5. Being an ally means YOU interrupt that remark, joke, or policy so the members of your crew / dept who are the targets don't have to. And you interrupt those things EVEN when there is no woman, person of color, LGBT people, et al - anywhere around! ESPECIALLY then.
6. Share what you know – information, tips, tricks of the trade. Every responder should share everything they know – for the TEAM to be more competent.
7. Learn what people of color, women have to share with you. Learn what they bring from their experiences that are different from yours.
8. Welcome teachable moments. Use your mistakes to model cleaning them up. These are huge opportunities for modeling. AFOG
9. Be a role model – model changing YOUR language and behavior, model changing YOUR mind. Model the valuing and affirming of the contributions of every person on the crew.



**LEADERSHIP FOR CULTURE CHANGE**  
To be SUCCESSFUL and SUSTAINABLE  
Demands Leadership

- Keep the respectful conversation going. Avoid walking on eggshells. Be direct
- Have Zero tolerance for racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, anti-Semitic, anti-Islamic, language, comments, jokes, behaviors; and communicate WHY? Allow NO bullying.
- Set clear expectations and follow through with policies, procedures, assignments (non-emergent)
- Stop rewarding bad behavior. Do you have a “toxic” member?
- Reward affirming behavior.
- Stay MISSION focused.
- Learn your crew’s unique gifts.
  - Recognize the unique talents, perspectives of each firefighter
  - You can read smoke? But not your people?
  - Predict and prevent a flashover? But not a personnel blowup?
  - Officers can no longer claim “I didn’t know sexism, racism were happening,” any more than claiming not knowing where their crew was during a building collapse.
- Be a DIVERSITY-INSPIRED LEADER – for the future of emergency services.
- Be able to articulate the benefits of inclusion and diversity.
- Be a Role Model - inspire this and the next generation
- Leaders who are not afraid of change, embrace it, and are enthusiastic about it.
  - Leaders can talk about the needs and the benefits of inclusion & diversity.
  - Leaders acknowledge the resistance and where it’s coming from.
  - Leaders address the root of the resistance.

**LEADERS ARE COURAGEOUS – THEY SPEAK UP**



October 2021

Friends,

The path toward justice is a winding and lifelong one, and we are glad to be on this journey with you. Thank you for the work you do every day to make emergency services and the world a safer, more affirming and just place for all of us. Stay safe as you serve your communities.

The United in Service Training Team:

Chief Jona Olsson, Training Lead, <i>United In Service; cultural bridges to justice</i>	
Chief Pierre Brewton	Chief Michael Cordova
Chief Dan Eggleston	Captain (Ret) Angela Hughes
Chief Tom Jenkins	Firefighter Ali Rothrock
Chief Toni Washington	Deputy Fire Chief Tiffany Wesley



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### **Available Workshops**

United In Service – leadership for building a healthy, resilient, inclusive emergency service  
Challenging Racism in Today’s Emergency Service  
Challenging Sexism in Emergency Services – 2021 and beyond  
Confronting the last taboo – Homophobia & Transphobia in emergency services  
When I Doubt Myself & Other Women: confronting internalized sexism



## **BUILDING A CASE FOR AN INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICE**

Emergency service leaders must justify and convince others of a variety of mission needs on a daily basis. Building an inclusive and diverse organization is one mission need that is beginning to receive more recognition. But rarely do the benefits of an inclusive and diverse workforce receive as much attention as the challenges, resistance, or even legal actions garner.

Leaders must be able to convey the mission need for inclusion and diversity, whether to educate Company Officers of the benefits of an inclusive company and inspire their role in creating it, or to persuade local government to support diversity-inspired leadership training for officers, or to convince recruiters to reach out to “non-traditional” communities. In each instance, leaders must first educate themselves of the realities and complexities of the issues involved, and then guide their organization forward.

When a Chief Officer needs to build a case to the county commission for purchasing a new apparatus, she must prepare a solid rationale for the expenditure. The Chief cannot simply state that the department needs the apparatus, but must offer persuasive information, statistics and evidence to support her argument. She’ll have to pose a business case, showing long-term cost-savings. Her argument regarding personnel safety will identify the additional safety features available on the new apparatus. The Chief will articulate the customer service, recruiting, community risk reduction, and other benefits to convince local government of the value of this purchase.

In a similar way, leaders must be able to present the case, the persuasive argument, the benefits of an inclusive and diverse workforce to our mission. Simply stated our mission is to deliver the highest quality customer service while providing for the health and safety of our personnel, every day, every call.

We believe if our organization is both inclusive and diverse, while firmly rooted in our mission -

- We are better able to serve all – regardless of language or culture
- We are trusted – to enter, to intervene, to serve
- Our personnel are safer and healthier
- Our organization becomes a “recruiting magnet”
- Less time, energy and money are wasted

The following pages express a mission case, a customer service case, a case for health and safety, for recruiting and retention, for community risk reduction and prevention, for disaster preparedness, for reputation management, operations, a business case, plus an ethical and moral case, for building an inclusive and diverse emergency service organization.

### **THE MISSION CASE**

As stated above, the mission of every department is the provision of consistently, high quality service to every customer, while protecting the health and safety of personnel. Today’s mission

of fire and emergency services has expanded beyond fire suppression and will likely continue to expand in the foreseeable future. The community's expectation for a broader range of service demands ever-expanding skill sets from personnel.

Let's say you're the coach of a football team and you have eleven highly skilled quarterbacks. How many games would you win if you fielded only those quarterbacks? None. You'd have the same result with eleven running backs. If you need surgery, you probably don't want the entire surgical team to be surgeons. You'd want the best anesthesiologist, the most skilled med techs and the sharpest OR nurses. Today – a monolithic team is an ineffective one.

A successful team employs the different skills of diverse individuals for the benefit of the team – to meet the mission. A lack of diversity will limit innovation and adaptability. An effective team is agile, flexible, resilient, open to innovative ideas and perspectives and able to put them to work on behalf of the mission.

## THE CUSTOMER SERVICE CASE

The communities we serve are becoming increasingly diverse. Competent and compassionate performance of our mission demands trust and a genuine relationship with those communities.

Our job, whether volunteer or paid, is to serve and protect our communities. When Mrs. Smith or Señora Sanchez call 911, on perhaps the worst day of their lives, they both expect and deserve not just our honed skills and our highest quality customer service, but also to be treated with the utmost respect and dignity.

Common sense tells us our customers will be better served by personnel who speak the language, are familiar with the cultural norms, spiritual rituals, celebrations, history, interpersonal and familial communication norms, needs and expectations when faced with illness, death and dying, and the myriad of other aspects of life that are not the same culture to culture.

## THE HEALTH and SAFETY CASE

### FIREFIGHTER HEALTH

In today's fire service there is a sharper focus on firefighter physical health than ever before. There is also increased attention paid to the behavioral health of personnel. Of the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives (LSI) from the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and Tampa & Tampa 2, Initiative #1 focuses on the need for "cultural change within the fire service relating to safety." Initiative #13 offers guidance specific to behavioral health.

Most of us are familiar with the individual "lifestyle choices" that can lead to better health (don't smoke, drink alcohol in moderation, eat a balanced diet, use sun protection, etc.) In the public health domain "social determinants of health" (eg. racism and other forms of oppression, poverty, working conditions, social exclusion, violence, etc.) are joining those individual risk factors as significant contributors to ill health. <sup>1</sup>

Research shows a correlation between repetitive stressors like racism, sexism, poverty, homophobia, et al, and the resulting allostatic load <sup>2</sup> and Complex (or Chronic) Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (C-PTSD). <sup>3</sup>

We talk about “repetitive stress injuries” to our muscular-skeletal system. What about the female firefighter who experiences “repetitive stress” in the form of daily sexist insults, shunning, humiliation or harassing behaviors on the job? This treatment can have emotional and/or physical effects, like, depression, isolation, substance abuse, hyper-vigilance, low self-esteem, unwarranted risk-taking.

What about the “repetitive stress” caused by the daily flow of racist insults, shunning, humiliation, harassment toward personnel of color? And the physical or emotional impact of continual homophobic / transphobic remarks and behaviors toward LGBT personnel must also be acknowledged.

Exclusion and injustice have a direct and negative impact on a person’s physical, emotional and psychological health. A genuinely inclusive and affirming work environment will contribute to the physical and emotional health of responders, and that will benefit the mission.

## FIREFIGHTER SAFETY

Operational and training safety has been enhanced in departments that have adopted rigorous and job relevant fitness and skill testing requirements. Job relevant fitness and skills will result in fewer job related injuries and lost work time for ALL responders.

Other safety benefits have been the result of diversifying the service. For example, as women entered the fire service in greater numbers, vendors began to develop more ergonomic tools, apparatus, and better fitting PPE. These improvements lead to fewer injuries and safer performance by ALL firefighters.

Responders who belong to or have positive relationships with diverse communities will be trusted more during an incident that occurs in those communities. Instructions from the responders will be better understood and more likely obeyed. When crucial instructions are followed and when community members place their trust in responders, the safety of all personnel who respond to that incident is enhanced.

Personnel safety will be improved by rigorous and relevant job standards, by tools and PPE that fit their working bodies, by being physically and emotionally healthier, and when more trusted in all the communities they serve.

## THE COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION (CRR) and FIRE PREVENTION CASE

“The definition developed for the Vision 20/20 Project years ago is as follows: CRR is the identification and prioritization of risks followed by the coordinated application of resources to minimize the probability or occurrence and/or the impact of unfortunate events. In a fire service context, it means that the fire department exists not only to respond to emergencies after the fact but to prevent or reduce the effects of their occurrence in the first place. It means the fire service will (and should) act proactively as a risk reduction entity for the community. It also

assumes that the fire service can't do it alone and must ultimately partner with other community organizations to accomplish risk-reducing objectives.”<sup>6</sup>

How effective will a fire department's candle safety campaign be if ethnic or spiritual communities can't read the brochures, or don't know how to access the department's education programs, or because of past history of violence in their homeland they don't trust anyone in a uniform? How effective will that candle safety campaign be if department members can't speak the language of the community, or are uneducated regarding the use of candles in their rituals, or have no non-emergency, trust-building relationship with members of the community?

The following is taken from Fire 20/20's *Multicultural Health and Safety Research Project (MHSRP)* (funded through a grant from the Department of Homeland Security)

“Findings from the MHSRP study identified the following risks and challenges between first responders and multicultural communities:

- Bi-directional language barriers
- Lack of trust
- Knowledge gaps
- Lack of proactive, non-emergency relationships

All contribute to the perplexity of providing effective fire prevention, risk-reduction and emergency medical services to multicultural and high-risk communities.”

In the survey 1023 Volunteer\* Departments responded to the question: “Which of the following are issues for your department in providing services to your multicultural and high-risk communities?” Respondents could select as many as were relevant from the eight issues offered, or respond “other.” Below are the eight issues and the percentage of departments who selected that issue.

Community's lack of knowledge about fire department services	48.8%
Community's lack of knowledge about basic life safety and prevention	43.2%
Language barriers	40.1%
Community's misuse of 9-1-1	17.2%
Fire department's lack of proactive relationships with the communities	13.9%
Fire department not understanding cultural practices and how this impacts service delivery	11.4%
Community's fear of people on uniform	6.2%
Community's distrust of the fire department	6.2%
Other	14.5%

Fire prevention remains the only SURE way to eliminate civilian and firefighter deaths from residential fires. Fire suppression efforts, no matter how well funded, resourced or staffed, can never save as many lives or property as preventing fires from starting. Fire service models from other nations (eg, UK) that prioritize fire prevention education, home visits, and on-going, community relationships have significantly reduced residential fire deaths, firefighter injuries and deaths, and property damage.

An inclusive and diverse fire department that develops trusted, on-going, non-emergency relationships with multicultural communities, and shifts more focus onto prevention efforts, will better serve and protect their customers and personnel. **Does your roster foster community relationships?**

\*Fire 20/20's 2012 *National Multicultural Community Fire Prevention Study – understanding leads to safety*, included many more survey results, including those from career departments. <sup>7</sup>

## THE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS CASE

All our communities must be ready to respond to disasters (natural or human-caused) and be resilient following these emergencies. Community preparedness and resilience demand on-going, NON-emergency relationships between community members and their emergency service / management agencies.

As in the case of community risk reduction and fire prevention, similar barriers can impede community readiness and the volunteer / combination fire department's capacity for providing effective preparedness education.

From *Emergency Preparedness: Knowledge and Perceptions of Latin American Immigrants*: "Effective risk communication, ...requires both knowledge of people from other cultures and respect for their diversity. <sup>8</sup> Cultural groups respond to risk and crisis communication on the basis of their perceptions and ways of thinking, and these differ from group to group. <sup>9</sup>

"... the planning process must be firmly grounded not only on the physical or biological science literature on the effects of the hazard agent on human safety, health and property, but also on the behavioural literature describing the response patterns of affected populations and emergency organisations." <sup>10</sup>

Once again, as in the case of community risk reduction, ongoing, proactive, positive relationships between the department and all the communities served will lead to more thorough and relevant disaster preparedness, response, as well as post-disaster resilience. More such relationships will be possible when the department includes members of those communities.

## THE RECRUITMENT CASE

The fire service should not have to work so hard to recruit and retain qualified, passionate, skilled, safety minded people for the best job in the world. There has to be something very wrong when recruiting and retaining a diversity of quality responders is so challenging, and when so few men and women of color, white women and Lesbians, gay men, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) personnel move into positions of leadership.

Regrettably, it is the "traditional" (volunteer and career) fire service culture, with it's obvious lack of inclusion of women and men of color, white women, LGBT people that continues to discourage potential, competent, compassionate and socially adept candidates. It will remain difficult to recruit from those groups as long as the historical and current public image of a

firefighter persists: a six foot plus, bulging biceps, military hair cut, grim-faced, emotionless, white man.

It is critical to acknowledge two facts at this point in the discussion. First, all fire service organizations (volunteer or career) are merely microcosms of the larger society, since the fire service culture does not exist in a vacuum, isolated from the rest of society. The many forms of oppression and discrimination (racism, sexism, et al) that have existed historically and persist today are reflected in every arena of U. S. society, including emergency services. Second, the U. S. fire service is steeped in tradition. Many are honorable traditions that should be valued and preserved. But discriminatory policies, harassing behaviors, or other barriers to full inclusion that impede our mission, need to be abandoned by the side of our future roads.

A truly inclusive, affirming organization becomes a “recruiting magnet” that attracts people from beyond the “traditional” recruit pool. When these new recruits become active and recognized by their home communities, others will consider joining. Visible role models have a powerful recruiting effect.

The U. S. military and recruiting of women soldiers was a clear example. As the military re-wrote policies to enhance women’s experiences, unlocked previously closed duties, and diversified recruiting messages to include women, more women signed up. As more women joined the service and related their opportunities, more women became aware of the potential opportunities for themselves. More women volunteered. The increase was slow but steady.

While role models were an effective recruiting tool, bad experiences by those “non-traditional” members can have a predictable, negative impact on recruiting, as the U. S. military has also learned. The increase and magnitude of military sexual assault of women soldiers and sailors became common knowledge. Female survivors returned to the U. S. and told their stories to family and friends, who told their friends. It is no wonder that the U. S. military may have a more difficult time recruiting new women or retaining current female personnel.

Similarly, as cases of sexual harassment, sexual assault, racist and homophobic incidents within the volunteer service become public knowledge (whether from social media or other means), recruiting women and men of color, white women, or LGBT people will be difficult.

Good news travels slowly and quietly; bad news travels fast and with a louder voice. A truly inclusive, affirming department will become a “recruiting magnet” by making the good news visible.

## THE RETENTION CASE

An inclusive and diverse, emergency service organization that builds an empowering and rich work environment, avoids the “revolving door” syndrome, and will retain more personnel.

Some departments, in an attempt to diversify without first building an affirming, inclusive climate, have created that “revolving door.” Members from diverse populations (i.e., men and women of color, white women, LGBT people, et al) are recruited, become members and begin serving their community. If the department culture is exclusionary and the new people are not fully included in the life and work of the department, why would they remain? If they face racist,

sexist or homophobic “jokes,” remarks and/or behaviors, whether overtly hostile or more subtle, the member may soon look for the exit door.

A note here about volunteer versus paid departments: In the current economic downturn, there can be a significant difference regarding the “revolving door” for volunteer departments, compared to paid ones. A career job in the fire service is well-paid, has good benefits, and offers work schedules that many workers seek. A recruit who has fought their way through the testing process, the interviews and made it through the academy, may choose to stay on the job longer because of the income and benefits, even in the face of oppressive treatment.

Because they love serving their community, many volunteers stay on the job, even if they have been ignored, shunned, insulted or threatened. But can volunteer or paid personnel perform their very best under those conditions?

Better retention is influenced by many factors, but a key one is the ability of the department’s leadership to remove barriers to inclusion, and to affirm, support and develop every member’s capacity for success.

As an organization becomes truly inclusive and diverse, momentum will build. More personnel will experience the benefits and recognize the value of diversity. There will be less resistance to change and some previously resistant members may even become advocates for more diversity.

## THE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT CASE

When an individual firefighter displays poor judgment by posting racist, sexist, homophobic comments, cartoons or photos on social media, the reputation of his / her department is tarnished. Similarly, acts of theft, public intoxication or criminal behavior erode the positive image of the fire service held by most members of the public.

As the Fire Service Reputation Management White Paper reminds us, “The nation’s fire service has long been held in justifiably high esteem. [but] that hard earned respect is easily lost.”<sup>11</sup>

Unprofessional and inappropriate behaviors committed in the past might never have reached the eyes of the public, but today’s (and future) social media can broadcast a damaging story in moments. The damage may not be isolated to a single department, but have a national impact. Offensive comments about women, People of Color or any other group will erode public trust, as well as the trust among personnel.

An abusive tweet may take 5 seconds to read, but it may take years for the department to recover the respect and cooperation of it’s community. In addition to the loss of trust from the public and personnel, there can be a negative impact on the department’s recruiting and retention efforts, increased government oversight, loss of funding, even legal action.

Standard Operating Procedures regulating departmental computer and internet use, verbal or written public statements, whether on personal or department time or accounts, that do not address the content of comments or graphics that are posted will do little to prevent reputation damage. Only education on social justice issues (racism, sexism, et al), combined with a clear code of ethics, plus knowledgeable, firm and consistent leadership will protect a department’s reputation.

## THE OPERATIONS CASE

The operations case for an inclusive and diverse department could be summed up in two words: trust and perspectives.

Trust - The fire service is founded on trust. Daily operations in emergency services put responders in hazardous situations on a regular basis. Whether a working fire or an MCI, responders must constantly protect themselves and each other from harm. We trust one another to have our back. It is naïve to believe the common statement, “once we’re in our turnouts, everyone is my trusted brother.” Realistically, if there is a lack of trust at the station, because of someone’s gender, racial identity or sexual orientation, then there will be a lack of trust on scene. Personnel who truly value and trust each other will undoubtedly perform at a higher and safer level.

Perspective - Every incident is a problem to be solved, often demanding quick situational information gathering and rapid-fire decision-making. Commercial airlines, surgical teams and other high stress vocations have instituted Crew Resource Management (CRM), formalizing the adage “two heads are better than one.” CRM is a set of training procedures for use in environments where human error can have devastating effects, and can be defined as a management system that makes optimum use of all available crew perspectives and other resources to promote safety and enhance the efficiency of the crew.

A crew composed of all 40-50 year old, white, heterosexual men will bring some degree of variation of skills, perspectives and problem-solving. But common sense persuades us of the value-added to decision-making when a broader range of experience, skills, world views, cultural and generational perspectives, and problem-solving techniques are available to the decision makers.

When trust exists and more perspectives and skill sets work for the mission, efficiency and effectiveness will be improved and personnel safer.

## THE BUSINESS CASE

While fire service organizations are not profit driven they cannot afford to waste money, especially in these current economic times. An organization that has not done the work to build an inclusive, diversity-affirming environment will waste money, time and energy.

Both career and volunteer departments invest huge amounts of money and time recruiting, testing, training, outfitting, and equipping each member. If the new recruit discovers a hostile organizational culture, she/he may leave the department to seek a more affirming workplace. The “revolving door” is financially costly to the exclusionary department.

Legal grievances, lawsuits resulting from discrimination and/or harassment are expensive. A cursory review of recent monetary settlements against fire departments reveals awards in the millions of dollars. (Two recent examples: Ohio sexual harassment settlement: 3-2013 - <http://firelawblog.com/2013/03/ohio-fd-tagged-for-1-7-million-in-sex-discrimination-suit/> and



San Francisco, racially motivated abuse settlement:

<http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Tentative-settlement-in-black-SF-firefighter-s-4795725.php>)

Social media is playing an expanded role in making regrettable, even criminal behavior by responders widely known. Bad publicity is costly, both in potential monetary damages and the loss of donations.

The budget is critical, of course, but our mission is our “bottom line.” Emergency responders have to be able to perform at 110% every day, every shift, every call. Anything that interferes with highest performance is costly to the department, and more importantly, costly to our customers.

Our mission is ever-expanding and so requires ever-expanding skill sets, creative problem-solving and new ideas to do more with less. Innovation is essential for emergency services today and in the future. An affirmed, diverse workforce can offer innovation, creativity, high performance and will save money.

## The ETHICAL and MORAL CASE

Building a service that fiercely promotes and protects genuine inclusion of people from all segments of the U. S. population (i.e., people of all racial and ethnic groups, spiritualities, gender and gender identities, sexual orientations, economic and educational backgrounds, generations, veterans, and others) is ethical, moral, rooted in U. S. American values, and simply the right thing to do.

## CONCLUSION

An emergency service organization that is both inclusive and diverse will be more agile, resilient, healthier, safer, cost-effective, creative, open to innovative ideas and perspectives and able to put them to work on behalf of the mission.

We have courageous people, honorable traditions, and a future with limitless potential for good. Perhaps never before has the fire service had such a moment – such an opportunity. This sister/brotherhood COULD be a model for our communities and the nation - to prove that our diversity is the high octane fuel that powers our highest performance.

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**AUSTIN FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
**Policy and Procedure**

General Order  
Number

**E202.3**

Subject:

**Discrimination, Harassment, and  
Retaliation**

Effective Date:  
**05-06-2020**

Rescinds:  
**E202.2**

Page:  
**1 of 9**

Application:

**All Uniformed Personnel**

Authorized by:

Joel G. Baker, Fire Chief

**I. Purpose**

To define and establish the Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation policy for Austin Fire Department (AFD) sworn personnel. AFD civilian personnel need to refer to Chapter A of the City of Austin's Personnel Policies.

**II. Background**

The Austin Fire Department strives to create and maintain a work environment in which people are treated with dignity, decency, and respect. The environment of all workplaces within AFD should be characterized by mutual trust and the absence of intimidation, oppression, and exploitation. Members should be able to work and learn in a safe, yet stimulating atmosphere. Accomplishing this goal is essential to the mission of AFD. For that reason, AFD is committed to equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination. Discrimination, harassment, or retaliation to a protected class, in any form, as defined in federal, state, or local law/ordinance, will not be tolerated. Through enforcement of this policy, and by education of its members, AFD seeks to prevent, correct, and discipline behavior that violates this policy.

All members, regardless of their positions/ranks, are responsible for maintaining a professional environment free of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, and for bringing to their chain of command's attention conduct that interferes with providing such an environment. Findings of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation against a member may result in discipline, up to and including indefinite suspension.

### **III. Policy**

#### **A. Definitions**

1. Assault – When a person intentionally or knowingly causes physical contact with another, and said person knows or should reasonably believe the other will regard the contact as offensive or provocative. This includes a threat of bodily harm coupled with an apparent, present ability to cause that harm.
2. Bullying – Persistent conduct that is malicious or unwelcome. Abusive, obscene, or threatening conduct or communication intended to shame, injure, or instill fear in another and/or conduct that harms, intimidates, offends, degrades, or humiliates another. Bullying conduct can be verbal, non-verbal, physical, or psychological. This policy considers bullying to be a form of harassment.
3. Discrimination – The unequal or different treatment of an individual, in any employment and/or personnel action, due to their status in a protected class.
4. Harassment – Unwelcome verbal or physical conduct toward an individual or a group due to their status in a protected class. Harassment can create a hostile work environment when such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.
5. Hazing – The practice of rituals or other activities that potentially involve abuse or humiliation, and are used as a way of initiating a person into or out of a group. This policy considers hazing to be a form of harassment.
6. Protected Class – Group affiliation that includes race, color, religion, creed, sex, gender, pregnancy status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, age, disability, and veteran status, or other legally protected class.
7. Retaliation – An action or inaction that adversely affects the terms and conditions of employment, and is taken in response to a member's good faith complaint, participation in an investigation, proceeding or hearing, exercise of rights, or availing themselves of any benefit authorized under City and AFD policies. An adverse employment action includes, but is not limited to, suspension, demotion, and/or denial of promotional opportunity.
8. Sexual Assault – Any sexual act, threat of a sexual act, or contact of a sexual nature in which a person is forced, threatened, or coerced to engage against his/her will.
9. Sexual Harassment - Any unwelcome sex- or gender-based comments and/or conduct that occurs when:

- a. Submission to such conduct is made either openly, or by implication, as a term or condition of an individual's employment;
- b. Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting that person; and/or
- c. Such conduct unreasonably interferes with a member's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

## B. Discrimination

As an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) employer, the City and AFD will recruit, hire, train, compensate, discipline, provide benefits, and promote without regard to protected class. It is the policy of the City and AFD to ensure: equal opportunity to all members and candidates, and that members be selected and promoted without discrimination.

1. In addition, the City and AFD will not discriminate in employment decisions and/or personnel actions on the basis of an individual's AIDS, AIDS Related Complex, or HIV status; nor will the City and AFD discriminate against individuals who are perceived to be at risk of HIV infection, or who associate with individuals who are believed to be at risk.
2. Reasonable accommodations shall be provided for all members and qualified applicants with a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, provided the individual is otherwise qualified to perform the essential functions of the job and such accommodations can be provided without undue hardship for the City and AFD.

## C. Harassment

1. AFD will not tolerate the harassment of members. This includes any intentional or reckless act that endangers the mental or physical health, or safety of a person, as well as any activity that intimidates or threatens a person with ostracism or subjects them to mental stress, shame, or humiliation regardless of consent. Physically endangering, intimidating, or injuring co-workers or members of the public will not be tolerated.
2. Members, independent contractors, and/or vendors shall not engage in conduct which could reasonably create a hostile work environment while on duty or on City premises, to include any work-related setting outside the workplace, such as business trips, professional conferences, etc. Such conduct will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including indefinite suspension.

3. The following list of prohibited conduct is meant to give some examples of behavior that constitutes harassment and is not a complete list of conduct prohibited under this policy:
  - a. Use of epithets, innuendos, comments, foul language or slurs, negative stereotyping, denigrating nicknames, pet names, or slang because of an individual's protected class;
  - b. Jokes, pranks, or other banter, including stereotyping based on a protected class; or
  - c. Distribution, display, viewing, downloading, or discussion of any written or graphic material, including online content, voicemail, e-mail, text messages, materials placed on walls or bulletin boards, calendars, posters, and/or cartoons that are sexually suggestive, or show hostility toward an individual or group based on a protected class.
4. While off duty, AFD members shall not engage in any form of harassment with co-workers if such conduct has the effect of interfering with an individual's subsequent work performance and/or creates an intimidating, oppressive, or hostile work environment. If a member is a victim of any such conduct, or if a member witnesses an act of harassment that occurs while off duty, he/she shall report this immediately per the reporting process of this policy.
5. Harassment can be a criminal act, but should not be confused with assault which is always a crime that shall be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

#### D. Sexual Harassment

1. While on duty or on City premises, AFD members, independent contractors, visitors, and/or vendors shall not engage in activities that could constitute sexual harassment; members shall report such activities if they do occur. These activities include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors:
  - a. Unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or unwanted verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature;
  - b. Sex- or gender-based and/or sexually oriented jokes, remarks, gestures, or pictures; and/or
  - c. Distributing, displaying, viewing, downloading, or discussing any written or graphic material, including online content, voicemail, e-mail, text messages, materials placed on walls or bulletin boards, calendars, posters, and cartoons that are sexually suggestive.
2. While off duty, AFD members shall not engage in any form of conduct that interferes with an individual's subsequent work performance and/or creates an intimidating, oppressive, or hostile work environment. This includes harassing communications sent via e-mail and/or through social media while off duty. Any

such conduct shall be reported immediately.

3. Sexual harassment can occur between persons of the opposite sex or of the same sex.
4. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated and is subject to discipline up to and including indefinite suspension.
5. Sexual harassment should not be confused with sexual assault which is a crime that shall be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

#### **IV. Procedure**

##### **A. Duty to Report**

1. All AFD members are required to promptly raise questions and concerns to stop offenders from engaging in behavior that discriminates, harasses, or retaliates, and shall provide assistance to individuals who are victims of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation. Promptly raising questions and/or concerns allows the opportunity for them to be addressed quickly, and can assist in preventing problems from occurring or escalating. Sometimes discrimination, harassment, or retaliation can be remedied with intervention during an initial offense.
2. Members are not prohibited from reporting or filing a complaint regarding discrimination, harassment, or retaliation on a first occurrence.
3. If the discrimination, harassment, or retaliation continues, any member who witnesses or becomes aware of the behavior has a duty to report it following the complaint process described below. Failure to report known violations of the policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including indefinite suspension.
4. Any supervisor or manager who receives a complaint of the above prohibited conduct must, without undue delay, notify AFD's Professional Standards Office (PSO), AFD Human Resources, or the Employee Relations Division of the City's Human Resources Department (HRD) so an investigation into the allegations may begin. If the investigation confirms evidence of prohibited conduct, the supervisors or managers shall take immediate and appropriate corrective action.

##### **B. Complaint Process**

1. Any member who believes they have been subjected to discrimination, harassment based on a protected status, or retaliation based on a protected activity should file a complaint about the matter as provided in this policy.



**Policy and Procedure**  
**Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation**  
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- a. Members may also report complaints to any supervisor, manager, chief officer, other executive management, or an AFD Human Resources representative.
  - b. Members are not required to follow the “chain of command” when reporting harassment, discrimination, or retaliation. They may instead file a complaint directly with the City’s HRD Division or the HRD Director.
  - c. Members can also make an anonymous or named complaint to the Office of the City Auditor’s Integrity Unity or through AFD’s Electronic and Anonymous Reporting System (EARS) (see Section C below).
2. The City’s HRD Director and Employee Relations Division shall investigate all complaints of sexual harassment. Further, HRD will investigate most allegations of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation brought against AFD’s executive management. Allegations received by HRD that do not meet these standards will be reviewed, then referred back to AFD’s Professional Standards Office for investigation. The HRD Director or the HRD Employee Relations Division will coordinate with AFD’s internal investigations personnel to promptly conduct any investigation warranted by the complaint.
- a. All AFD members are expected to fully cooperate with any investigation. When the offender and/or victim is a uniform member, the PSO will participate as requested by HRD investigators to compel cooperation of uniformed members or assist in the collection of facts and evidence as warranted.
  - b. HRD shall provide the investigative results to the Fire Chief and the City Manager’s office. If at any time during the course of the investigation the offense is determined to be criminal, the appropriate law enforcement agency will be notified by HRD and/or the PSO.
  - c. If an investigation finds conduct has occurred that is in violation of this policy, AFD management will take prompt and appropriate corrective action. If the investigation reveals a policy violation occurred, the Fire Chief, per civil service law, has 180 days from the date the incident occurred to take disciplinary action. If the allegation is potentially criminal in nature, then the Fire Chief, per civil service law, has 180 days from the date AFD becomes aware of the incident to take disciplinary action.
3. Failure by a supervisor or manager to notify AFD Human Resources, the HRD Director, or HRD’s Employee Relations Division of a complaint may result in discipline up to and including indefinite suspension.
4. No member shall face harassment or retaliation as a result of good-faith reporting of any policy violation or participation in the investigation of a complaint.
- C. Electronic and Anonymous Reporting System (EARS)

The Department recognizes that its members may not always feel they can safely make a report of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation. In an attempt to alleviate

these concerns, AFD has identified an alternative to the aforementioned, traditional reporting mechanisms for discrimination-, harassment-, or retaliation-related topics.

1. AFD will maintain an electronic reporting system, allowing members to make confidential reports of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation.. This system will provide members the ability to anonymously report actions related to the above conduct, with the anonymity of the reporting member protected to the fullest extent allowed by law.
2. When filing these reports, members will have the option of routing their report to any/all of the following personnel/offices within AFD:
  - a. Fire Chief;
  - b. Psychologists;
  - c. HR Representative;
  - d. AFD Peer Support Team; and/or.
  - e. AFD Professional Standards Office.

Members may also send a notification to the Austin Firefighters' Association/Local 975, but must include at least one of the other options listed above.

3. Members will have the option of providing contact information for follow-up questions or they may opt to use a blind e-mail. The blind-email option will allow the recipient of the report to ask follow up questions while maintaining the reporting member's anonymity (to the extent allowed by law). All reports of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation will be reviewed, with appropriate feedback given to the reporting member if requested.
4. Members who opt to utilize EARS to make an anonymous report are reminded of their duty to protect their peers from any ongoing/active harm, and are strongly encouraged to consider other reporting mechanisms when situationally appropriate (e.g., criminal events, impending danger, personal safety concerns, members in crisis, etc.).

#### D. Support for the Victim

Victims of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation are encouraged to seek support from any or all of the following sources:

1. AFD Psychologists;
2. City of Austin's Employee Assistance Program (affiliated with the City's health care program);
3. AFD Peer Support Team;

4. An AFD Chaplain; and/or
5. Austin Police Department Victim Services.

City HRD or AFD Human Resources can help with additional resources if needed.

**E. Discrimination, Harassment, or Retaliation Outside of This Policy**

If any member feels they have been harassed, were discriminated against, or retaliated against in a manner not covered by this policy, then they may file a complaint with the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

**F. Retaliation Prohibited**

1. AFD is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of retaliation and where any member is free to raise questions or concerns involving the terms and conditions of any member's employment.
2. The City prohibits retaliation against any member who, in good faith, reports discrimination, harassment, or retaliation; files a complaint regarding a law, policy, practice or procedure; testifies, assists, or participates in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing; or exercises rights or avails themselves of any benefit authorized under personnel policies, such as filing a worker's compensation claim, requesting time off through the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), or requesting military leave.
3. Unacceptable conduct that would likely deter an individual from reporting or supporting a claim may constitute retaliation, even if the underlying complaint is not substantiated.
4. Any member who experiences harassment, intimidation, or any form of retaliation as the result of having reported a violation of this policy should immediately report such action to any of the following:
  - a. Any AFD supervisor (civilian or uniformed);
  - b. AFD PSO;
  - c. Fire Chief;
  - d. AFD Human Resources Manager; and/or
  - e. City HRD.
5. Any member who discriminates against, harasses, intimidates, or in any other way retaliates against an individual who reports a violation of this policy in good faith or cooperates in the investigation shall be subject to discipline up to and including indefinite suspension.

**G. Criminal Activity and Threat of Imminent Physical Harm**

Criminal activity—such as assault and sexual assault as defined above—and any other threat of imminent physical harm shall be referred to the appropriate law enforcement agency. If a member is aware of a threat of imminent physical harm to themselves, another member, or the public, he/she should attempt to remove themselves from the situation and immediately notify appropriate law enforcement personnel by calling "911." Additionally, a member shall notify his/her co-workers who may be in peril, and report this emergency call to "911, their supervisor, or another member of management immediately.

**H. Malicious Accusations**

Anyone who knowingly makes a false accusation shall be subject to discipline up to and including indefinite suspension.

**I. Training**

All members shall receive training on this policy and its components as necessary and available. It is the purpose of this provision to create a clear standard and to raise the emphasis on achieving compliance. All members will be required to participate in refresher training on a frequency determined by the Fire Chief.