



# RESIDENTIAL UTILITY CONSUMER OFFICE

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1110 WEST WASHINGTON · SUITE 220 · PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007 · PHONE: (602) 364-4835 · FAX: (602) 364-4846

Douglas A. Ducey  
Governor

Malcolm Hightower  
Director

## **State of Arizona RESIDENTIAL UTILITY CONSUMER OFFICE NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

The Residential Utility Consumer Office is committed to a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunity and prohibits discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, Residential Utility Consumer Office commits itself to the following non-discrimination policy.

### **Equal Opportunity**

It is the policy of Residential Utility Consumer Office to ensure equal employment opportunity without discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, or any other characteristic protected by law. Residential Utility Consumer Office prohibits any such discrimination or harassment.

### **Retaliation Is Prohibited**

Residential Utility Consumer Office encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination or harassment. It is the policy of the Residential Utility Consumer Office to investigate such reports. Residential Utility Consumer Office prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination or harassment or participates in an investigation of such reports.

### **Definitions of Harassment**

Harassment on the basis of any protected characteristic is strictly prohibited. Under this policy, harassment is verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility toward an individual because of his/her race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law or that of his/her relatives, friends or associates, and that:

- Has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance; or,
- Otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

Harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to: epithets, slurs or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; denigrating jokes; and written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group and that is placed on walls or elsewhere on the employer's premises or circulated in the workplace.

Sexual harassment constitutes discrimination and is illegal under federal, state and local laws. For the purposes of this policy, sexual harassment is defined, as in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines, as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when, for example:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment may include a range of subtle and not so subtle behaviors and may involve individuals of the same or different gender.

Sexually harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to: unwanted sexual advances or requests for sexual favors; sexual jokes and innuendo; leering, whistling or touching; insulting or obscene comments or gestures; display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; and other physical, verbal or visual conduct of a sexual nature.

## **Individuals and Conduct Covered**

This policy applies to all applicants and employees, whether related to conduct engaged in by fellow employees or someone not directly connected to the Residential Utility Consumer Office such as an outside vendor, consultant or customer.

Conduct prohibited by these policies is unacceptable in the workplace and in any work-related setting such as outside business trips, business meetings and business-related social events.

## **Reporting an Incident of Harassment, Discrimination or Retaliation**

Residential Utility Consumer Office encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination, harassment or retaliation, regardless of the offender's identity or position. Individuals who believe that they have been the victim of such conduct should discuss their concerns with their immediate supervisor, manager, agency human resources or employee relations staff.

In addition, the Residential Utility Consumer Office encourages individuals who believe they are being subjected to such conduct promptly to advise the offender that his or her behavior is unwelcome and request that it be discontinued. Residential Utility Consumer Office recognizes, however, that an individual may prefer to pursue the matter through informal or formal complaint procedures.

## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

### **Informal Procedure**

If for any reason an individual does not wish to address the offender directly, or if such action does not successfully end the offensive conduct, the individual should promptly notify his/her immediate supervisor, manager, agency human resources or employee relations staff. An individual reporting harassment, discrimination or retaliation should be aware, however, that Residential Utility Consumer Office may decide it is necessary to take action to address such conduct beyond an informal discussion. This decision will be discussed with the individual. The informal procedure is not a required first step for the reporting individual.

### **Formal Procedure**

As noted above, individuals who believe they have been the victims of conduct prohibited by this policy statement or believe they have witnessed such conduct should discuss their concerns with a member of management, agency Human Resources or Employee Relations staff.

Any reported allegations of harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be investigated promptly. The investigation may include individual interviews with the parties involved and, where necessary, with individuals who may have observed the alleged conduct or may have other relevant knowledge.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigatory process to the extent consistent with appropriate investigation and corrective action. Depending on the nature of the complaint, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality.

Retaliation against an individual for reporting harassment or discrimination or for participating in an investigation of a claim of harassment or discrimination is a serious violation of this policy and, like harassment or discrimination itself, will be subject to disciplinary action. Acts of retaliation should be reported immediately and will be promptly investigated and addressed.

Misconduct constituting harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be dealt with appropriately. Responsive action may include, for example, training, referral to counseling and/or disciplinary action such as a reprimand, suspension without pay or termination, as Residential Utility Consumer Office believes appropriate under the circumstances. Responsive action may also include a reassignment or transfer.

If a party to a complaint does not agree with its resolution, that party may appeal to the Agency Director. Employees may also contact the Governor's Office of Equal Opportunity, The Arizona Attorney General's Civil Rights Division, and the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

False complaints of harassment, discrimination or retaliation as opposed to complaints that, even if erroneous, are made in good faith, may be the subject of appropriate disciplinary action.

## **Conclusion**

- Residential Utility Consumer Office has developed this policy to ensure that all its employees can work in an environment free from harassment, discrimination and retaliation.
- Residential Utility Consumer Office will make every reasonable effort to ensure that all concerned are familiar with these policies and aware that any complaint of violation of such policies will be investigated and resolved appropriately.
- The Residential Utility Consumer Office will post the Non-Discrimination Policy throughout departmental facilities. This policy is accessible to employees at [www.azruco.gov](http://www.azruco.gov) and on the bulletin board in the agency's Human Resource Office located at 1110 W. Washington Street, Suite 220, Phoenix, AZ 85007.
- All employment announcements shall include the phrase:

**“AN EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AGENCY”**

As Director of the Residential Utility Consumer Office, I am committed to the principles of Equal Employment Opportunity. To ensure the dissemination and implementation of the Equal Opportunity Policy throughout all levels of the Department, Renee de la Fuente shall serve as the Equal Opportunity Administrator for the Residential Utility Consumer Office. Renee de la Fuente can be contacted at [rdelafuente@azruco.gov](mailto:rdelafuente@azruco.gov) and by phone at (602) 364-4845.

s/ Malcolm Hightower  
Malcolm Hightower

January 20, 2022  
Date

Any employee who has any questions or concerns about these policies should talk with Agency Personnel, Human Resources, or Employee Relations staff, the Governor's Office of Equal Opportunity, <http://azgovernor.gov/eop/index.asp>