



## CITY OF PROVIDENCE

### 1.9 PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS & NEPOTISM POLICY

#### Purpose

The City of Providence is committed to maintaining a professional, ethical, and equitable workplace free from favoritism, conflicts, and misuse of authority. This policy establishes standards governing personal, romantic, and familial relationships to ensure fairness, transparency, and public trust.

#### Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contract staff, volunteers, interns, and fellows of the City of Providence.

#### Definitions

**Relative:** An individual related by blood, marriage, or legal action.

- Examples include, but are not limited to: spouse, fiancée, mother, father, daughter, son, sister, brother, mother-in-law, father-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, stepparent, stepchild, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, grandparent, grandchild, cousin, and any individual related to the employee by blood or affinity whose close association is considered equivalent to family relationships.
- The term also includes domestic partners (individuals with whom the employee shares an interdependent life).

**Romantic or Personal Relationship:** A consensual relationship involving emotional, romantic, intimate, or sexual involvement.

**Supervisor:** An employee with the authority to hire, fire, discipline, assign, evaluate, or effectively recommend such actions. This includes managers, department heads, and administrators.

**Power Differential:** The dynamic created when one employee holds authority or influence over another.

**Nepotism:** The use, attempted use, or appearance of use of a position, authority, influence, or access to information to secure, advance, or affect the hiring, appointment, promotion, supervision, evaluation, compensation, discipline, or other employment-related benefit of a family member, household member, or romantic partner, rather than decisions being based solely on merit and/or organizational need.

#### Policy

The City of Providence prohibits employment practices or workplace arrangements that result in favoritism, conflicts of interest, impaired judgment, or misuse of authority arising from personal, romantic, or familial relationships. While personal relationships are not categorically prohibited, they must not compromise professional standards, create conflicts of interest, or undermine public confidence in City operations.

The following guidelines must be adhered to:

1. **Supervision:**
  - A. Relatives or romantic partners may not work under the direct supervision of one another within the same department.
  - B. A direct supervisor-subordinate relationship between relatives or romantic partners is prohibited.
  - C. Employees may not supervise, evaluate, or make personnel decisions regarding a relative or romantic partner.
2. **Workplace Impact:**

Personal relationships must not negatively impact work productivity, performance, or create workplace disruptions. This includes maintaining professionalism and avoiding conflicts in work-related matters.



## CITY OF PROVIDENCE

### 3. **Review and Personnel Actions:**

- A. Employees may not assign, audit, or evaluate the work of a relative or romantic partner.
- B. Employees are prohibited from engaging in any capacity that allows them to review, approve, or influence personnel actions or wage adjustments related to a relative or romantic partner's job status or compensation.

### 4. **Conflict of Interest:**

Any personal employee relationship that creates or has the potential to create disruption, conflict of interest, or is otherwise prohibited by law, the Providence Code of Ethics, the Rhode Island Code of Ethics, or other applicable regulations, will not be allowed to persist. The City will take appropriate action to mitigate such situations.

### 5. **Disclosure:**

- A. All employees are required to disclose any potential or existing personal, romantic, and/or familial relationships that fall within the scope of this policy to the Department of People and Culture (DPC).
- B. Employees who fail to disclose relationships covered by this policy may be subject to corrective and/or disciplinary action, including termination of employment.

### 6. **Budget and Compensation Matters:**

- A. **General Prohibition:** Employees are prohibited from participating in actions or decisions related to budgetary items that would directly affect the employment, compensation, or benefits of any person within their family, household, romantic, or familial relationship.
- B. **Specific Budget Line Items:** An employee may participate in budget discussions or decisions if the family member or household member is part of a significant class of individuals impacted by the budget, and not individually or to a greater extent than others in the same class. Participation is subject to written approval from their department director/chief.

### 7. **Participation in Collective Bargaining and Employee Contracts:**

- A. **General Prohibition:** Employees are prohibited from participating in negotiations related to collective bargaining or employee contracts that address or affect the employment, compensation, or benefits of any direct family member, romantic partner, or household member.
- B. **Voting on Entire Contract:** Employees may participate in decision-making related to an entire collective bargaining agreement if the family, partner, or household member is impacted as part of a significant class of employees and not individually or to a greater extent than others in the class.

### 8. **Procedure for Addressing Relationship-Related Concerns**

When relationships that may fall under this policy are identified—whether with candidates for employment or current employees—the following steps will be taken:

#### A. **Report the Relationship:**

The matter should be reported immediately to the Department of People and Culture – Employee Experience.

#### B. **Assessment:**

- 1. DPC will assess whether the relationship falls within the scope of this policy based on the conditions outlined above.
- 2. If the relationship is found to create a conflict, violate this policy, or other relevant concern, DPC will consult with the affected employees and department director/chief, or supervisor to resolve the issue.

#### C. **Resolution:**

Possible resolutions may include:

- 1. Reassigning an employee to a different position or department.



## CITY OF PROVIDENCE

2. Supervisory reassignment to address conflicts or mitigate any issues of power differentials caused by the relationship.
  3. If no suitable accommodation can be arranged, DPC, in consultation with the department director/chief, will determine which employee must resign or be reassigned in order to resolve the issue.
9. **Retaliation**  
The City strictly prohibits retaliation against any employee who in good faith discloses or reports a romantic or personal relationship as required by this policy, raises concerns about potential conflicts of interest, favoritism also including violations of this policy or participates in an investigation related to workplace relationships or related conduct.

### **Related Policies:**

Non-Discrimination & Anti-Harassment Policy  
Discipline Policy  
Sexual Misconduct Policy  
Code of Conduct  
Open Door Policy

### **Other Related Information:**

Local 1033 [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)  
Providence Code of Ethics  
Rhode Island Code of Ethics

**Formerly separate policies:** Nepotism Policy, Personal Relationships in the Workplace Policy