



CITY OF PROVIDENCE

2.4 OPEN DOOR POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this Open Door Policy is to promote open, respectful, and constructive communication throughout the City of Providence. The City recognizes that employees are often best positioned to identify workplace concerns, operational challenges, and opportunities for improvement. Encouraging employees to raise questions, concerns, and ideas in a timely manner supports a professional, transparent, and accountable workplace.

This policy establishes a framework that allows employees to communicate concerns, seek guidance, and provide feedback while preserving appropriate supervisory structures, respecting collective bargaining agreements, and ensuring that workplace issues are addressed through appropriate channels.

The City is committed to fostering a workplace where employees can raise concerns in good faith without fear of retaliation.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees associated with the City of Providence.

Nothing in this policy shall supersede, modify, or diminish any rights, benefits, or obligations contained within applicable collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) or laws. In the event of a conflict between this policy and a CBA, the CBA shall prevail for covered employees. For all other employees not covered by a CBA, this policy shall govern.

This policy is not intended to replace formal complaint procedures, grievance processes, or reporting requirements established under City policy or law.

Definitions

Open Door Communication: A workplace practice that encourages employees to communicate questions, concerns, suggestions, or feedback to supervisors or appropriate management officials without unnecessary barriers.

Supervisor: An employee's immediate manager or any individual responsible for directing the employee's work and performance.

Escalation: The process of bringing a concern to a higher level of management or to the Department of People and Culture when a matter cannot be resolved at the supervisory level or when an employee reasonably believes that raising the concern with their immediate supervisor is not appropriate.

Retaliation: Any adverse action taken against an employee because the employee raised concern, reported misconduct, participated in an investigation, or exercised a right protected by law or City policy.

Policy

The City of Providence encourages open dialogue between employees and supervisors to address workplace issues promptly and constructively. Open communication supports effective problem-solving, strengthens working relationships, and promotes accountability throughout the City, which translates into quality service to constituents.

Employees are encouraged to raise questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding workplace issues, policies, operations, or conditions through appropriate supervisory channels whenever possible. An Open Door Policy means that access to the supervisor is available, and employees should feel comfortable speaking with their supervisors about any questions or concerns they have. In most cases, talking with the supervisor is the most



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effective and efficient way to resolve issues. The supervisor is typically the most direct source of information regarding an employee's job and departmental policies and procedures.

1. **Employee Standards**

Employees are expected to understand and adhere to the following standards:

A. **Non-Retaliation**

1. The City of Providence strictly prohibits retaliation against any employee who raises concerns, reports potential misconduct, participates in an investigation, or seeks guidance under this policy.
2. Employees who believe they have experienced retaliation should report the concern to their supervisor, Department leadership, or the Department of People and Culture.
3. Employees can refer to the Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy for further information.

B. **Respectful Communication**

Employees are expected to engage in open conversations in a professional, respectful, and solution-oriented manner. Open dialogue is most effective when it is conducted in good faith and with a focus on resolution.

C. **Confidentiality**

1. Management will make every effort to respect confidentiality and privacy of information received when employees raise concerns.
2. In situations where confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, employees will be informed ahead of time.

2. **Escalation**

A. When concerns cannot be resolved at the supervisory level, employees may escalate concerns through the following channels:

1. Immediate Supervisor
2. Next-Level Supervisor or Department Leadership
3. Department of People and Culture (Employee Relations / Employee Experience)
4. Other appropriate reporting mechanisms depending on the nature of the concern

B. If the concern involves issues such as discrimination, harassment, or policy violations, employees can contact DPC – Employee Experience directly for guidance and support.

C. Employees may also utilize formal complaint or reporting procedures established under other City policies or collective bargaining agreement (CBA) when appropriate.

3. **Supervisor Responsibilities**

A. Supervisors and managers play a critical role in maintaining open communication within the workplace.

B. Supervisors are expected to:

1. Maintain an environment where employees feel comfortable raising concerns or questions;
2. Listen to employee concerns respectfully and objectively;
3. Address workplace concerns promptly and professionally;
4. Seek guidance from the Department of People and Culture when issues involve policy interpretation, employee relations concerns, or potential policy violations;
5. Maintain appropriate confidentiality to the extent possible;
6. Avoid any behavior that could be perceived as retaliatory.

C. Supervisors should not dismiss concerns raised in good faith and should escalate issues to appropriate City leadership or the Department of People and Culture when necessary.

4. **Confidentiality**



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- A. The City will make reasonable efforts to respect the privacy of employees who raise concerns. However, confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed. In certain situations, information may need to be shared with appropriate individuals to properly review, investigate, or address issues.
- B. Employees raising concerns will generally be informed when confidentiality cannot be maintained due to operational, legal, or investigative requirements to the extent applicable.

5. **Limitations**

- A. While this Open Door Policy encourages communication on a wide range of workplace issues, there are some matters that may fall outside of its scope.
- B. These may include:
 - 1. **Issues Outside the Control of Management**
Certain issues, such as changes in law or City-wide policies, may require broader organizational decisions and are not always resolvable through individual discussions.
 - 2. **Behavioral or Legal Violations**
If concerns involve serious violations of City policy or laws (e.g., theft, fraud, violence), these should be reported through formal grievance or reporting processes, including the City's whistleblower policies, as appropriate.
 - 3. **Collective Bargaining Grievance Procedures**
The grievance procedure for union employees is determined by labor law and the applicable collective bargaining agreement; this policy is not intended to replace lawful rights entitled to covered union employees.

Related Policies:

Non-Retaliation Whistleblowers Policy
Non-Discrimination Anti-Harassment Policy
Ethics Guide
Discipline Policy
Code of Conduct
Grievance Procedure

Other Related Information:

Local 1033 [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)