



CITY OF PROVIDENCE

2.6 EMPLOYEE REPORTING & HR HOTLINE

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear structured, confidential, and accountable channel for employees to report concerns, complaints, ethical violations, misconduct, suggestions, and commendations.

The City of Providence recognizes the importance of maintaining a transparent, ethical, and supportive work environment, and the HR Hotline serves as an essential tool for fostering open communication and resolving issues effectively.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, including full-time, part-time, temporary, seasonal, and contract staff, as well as volunteers, interns, and fellows of 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.

Definitions

HR Hotline: The City's centralized intake mechanism for employment-related complaints, concerns, suggestions, commendations, and reports of policy violations.

Good Faith Report: A report made with an honest belief that the information provided is true, regardless of whether the allegation is substantiated.

Retaliation: Any adverse employment action taken against an individual for engaging in protected activity, including reporting concerns or participating in an investigation.

Anonymous Report: A report submitted where the reporter's identity is completely unknown to both the recipient and the investigator.

Investigation: A structured review process conducted by the Department of People and Culture - Employee Experience or other authorized entity to determine facts and appropriate action.

Protected Activity: Reporting concerns, participating in investigations, or opposing unlawful conduct in good faith.

Policy

The HR Hotline is a critical resource to support an ethical and respectful workplace at the City of Providence.

1. HR Hotline Accessibility

A. The HR Hotline is designed to be accessible, confidential, and easy to use. Employees can reach the hotline by:

1. Phone: (401) 680-5714
2. Online Form: <https://www.providenceri.gov/hr/hr-hotline/>
3. Email: hshotline@providenceri.gov

B. All contact information and methods of submission will be widely communicated and available to employees.

2. Confidentiality



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- A. All submissions to the HR Hotline will be treated with discretion and confidentiality to the extent possible consistent with a thorough investigation and applicable law.
- B. Employees who report concerns, complaints, or commendations will be protected from retaliation. Disclosure will be limited to individuals with a legitimate business need to know.
- C. The City of Providence is committed to maintaining privacy throughout the process while ensuring integrity and thorough investigation of reported issues.

3. **Types of Reports and Concerns**

Employees are encouraged to use the HR Hotline for a variety of purposes, including:

A. Complaints:

1. Harassment, discrimination, or bullying based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or other protected characteristics.
2. Violations of workplace safety or health protocols.
3. Any illegal, unethical activities, including violations of City policies.
4. Retaliation, unfair treatment by supervisors or co-workers.

B. Ethics Violations:

1. Misuse of City resources.
2. Conflicts of interest.
3. Breaches of the City's Code of Ethics.
4. Fraud, theft, or corruption.

C. Suggestions or Recommendations:

1. Ideas to improve workplace efficiency, morale, or culture.
2. Proposals for new policies or practices that can benefit the workplace.

D. Recognition or Commendation (Kudos):

- A. Acknowledgment of exceptional performance, teamwork, or service by colleagues.
- B. Positive feedback about individuals or teams who go above and beyond expectations.

Matters involving criminal conduct may be referred to law enforcement. Ethics-specific matters may be referred to the Municipal Integrity Officer. Emergencies should be directed to 911.

4. **Review and Investigation:**

A. Upon receiving a report, the Department of People and Culture will:

1. Acknowledgment will be issued within **five (5) business days**, when contact information is provided.
2. The Department of People and Culture (DPC) - Employee Experience will conduct an initial triage assessment.
3. Reports will be classified by severity, impact liability, and applicable jurisdiction.
4. Where appropriate, matters may be:
 - A. Investigated internally
 - B. Referred to the Law Department
 - C. Referred to the Municipal Integrity Officer

B. Resolution and Follow-up:

1. After an investigation or review, the DPC – Employee Experience will provide a response, outlining the resolution or any actions taken.
2. Employees who report concerns can expect a follow-up, ensuring that the issue has been addressed appropriately.
3. Investigations will be conducted in a manner consistent with due process requirements and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

C. Anonymity:



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1. Employees have the option to remain anonymous when submitting reports. However, anonymity may limit the City's ability to investigate fully.
 2. Providing contact information can assist DPC - Employee Experience to follow up if more details are needed for resolution.
- D. Non-Retaliation:**
1. The City of Providence strictly prohibits retaliation against any employee for reporting concerns or providing feedback through the HR Hotline.
 2. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, demotion, discrimination, harassment, or any adverse employment action as a result of utilizing the hotline.
 3. Employees who experience retaliation should report it immediately through the hotline.
- E. Reporting Standards**
1. All reports must be made in good faith.
 2. False, malicious, or frivolous claims may result in disciplinary action.
 3. The City of Providence encourages all employees to act with integrity when using the HR Hotline.
- F. Training and Awareness**
1. All employees will receive training and information on how to use the HR Hotline during their orientation and at regular intervals throughout their employment.
 2. The City will ensure that employees are aware of the hotline's availability and how it can be used to report a variety of concerns or commendations.
- G. Accountability and Continuous Improvement**
1. The HR Hotline is an essential tool for maintaining a healthy, ethical, and productive work environment.
 2. The Department of People and Culture shall:
 - A. Maintain aggregate data regarding hotline usage
 - B. Review trends quarterly
 - C. Provide anonymized summary reports to executive leadership
 - D. Recommend policy or training improvements based on identified patterns
- H. Disciplinary Actions**
- Failure to follow the City's policies, including those relating to ethical or policy violations, will result in appropriate disciplinary actions, up to and including termination. This includes both violations reported through the HR Hotline and any instances of retaliation against employees who use the system.
- I. Additional Resources**
1. The City of Providence also has an Ethics Hotline administered through the legal department
 2. Reports can be made via:
 - A. Phone: 844.9ETHICS (844.938. 4427)
 - B. Online: <https://www.providenceri.gov/ethics/contactethics/>
 - C. Mail: C/O Municipal Integrity Officer, 444 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903
 - D. All contact methods are managed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Related Policies:

Ethics Guide

Whistleblower – Anti-Retaliation Policy

Additional Employment Disclosure Policy

Code of Conduct

Personnel Records and Disposition Policy

Other Related Information:

Local 1033 [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)