

January 2022

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AFGE Local 910 Newsletter

Documentation is Key

In the VA, documentation is everything. You may have heard the phrase, “if it isn’t in writing, it never happened”. If you experience issues in your work area, make sure that you document these issues well, and put them in writing whenever possible.

- Depending on the nature of the situation, it may be appropriate to report the incident via JPRS or DBRS. We also recommend keeping your own documentation in addition to reporting the incident so you have a record and can follow-up if needed.
- After verbal meetings/discussions, send a follow-up email to the individuals involved in the meeting summarizing the discussion.
- Fill out VA Form 119: Report of Contact for each incident and include a narrative of the situation (make sure you include all relevant details such as dates, times, names, events). VA Form 119: Report of Contact can be found at <https://vaww.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA119.pdf>
- Save your documentation in a safe, secure place. If electronically, make a folder in your U:/ Drive and/or your Outlook account to save relevant emails. If physically documenting, keep your documentation in a locked personal storage area.

When you bring forward issues to the ELT, AFGE, or other officials, they will need to see documentation!

CONTACT US

Appointments are recommended to ensure availability. Please contact us to schedule an appointment with a steward!

Office: (816) 922-2040

Cell: (816) 924-4440

910afge@910afge.org

VHAKANAFGE910Stewards@va.gov

VHAKANAFGE910Officers@va.gov

M11-244

Member Benefits Corner

Discounted Movie Tickets

Local 910 members can purchase \$5 movie tickets to AMC or B&B theaters. Members may purchase up to twelve (12) tickets per year.

AFGE National Benefits

A comprehensive list of benefits for AFGE members can be found by following this link:

<https://www.afge.org/member-benefits/>

**Did you
know?**

Your union dues
are tax-
deductible

Local 910
wishes you
a Happy
New Year!

What is a Hostile Work Environment?

A hostile work environment exists when unwelcome comments or conduct based on any of the legally protected basis unreasonably interfere with an employee's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Harassment can come from anyone, including but not limited to:

- Non-department individuals (patients, visitors, or vendors)
- Supervisors or managers
- Coworkers
- Contractors

Offensive conduct may include, but is not limited to, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, and interference with work performance.

The victim of a hostile work environment doesn't always have to be the person who was targeted. It can be anyone that is affected by the offensive conduct.

Key characteristics of a hostile work environment are frequency and severity:

- The more severe the conduct, the less frequent it must be to rise to the level of hostile environment.
- The less severe the conduct, the more frequent it must occur to constitute a hostile environment.

Bystander Intervention

What's worse than being targeted with harassment because of your race, sex, religion, color, sexual orientation, disability, age or national origin? Being targeted while surrounded by bystanders who see what is happening, but then do nothing.

Bystander intervention is recognizing a potentially harassing and harmful behavior or interaction and choosing to respond in a way that could positively influence the outcome. Bystander intervention allows individuals (employees and non-department individuals) to send powerful messages about what is (and is not) acceptable and expected behavior.

When you intervene on someone being harassed, you:

- Incorporate the ICARE Values
- Enhance a positive employee and veteran experience
- Establish employee and veteran trust
- Address the situation before it escalates

Bystander interventions are proven to be effective. Everyone is a potential helper.

Why Should I Report Harassment?

It is imperative that you promptly report harassment in the workplace. It doesn't matter if you are the victim of or witness to the action, you should quickly move to stop the situation. To ensure VA is a healthy working environment for all, reporting harassment is key.

Not reporting harassment may result in:

- increased potential for violence
- Unwelcoming work environment
- Decreased office morale
- Loss of productivity
- Damages public perception/ image
- Poor relationships between all
- Ineffective/inefficient teams

The bottom line is...

If you see harassment and don't stop it, you are supporting it.

Employee Resources for Reporting, Support, Guidance, & Conflict Resolution

Click the link below or type it into your search bar for more information on resources available to KCVA Employees:

<https://www.afge910.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/KCVA-Employee-Resources.pdf>

Recruitment Bonus!

New members and their recruiters receive a \$50 bonus, just in time for the holidays!

Harassment Prevention Program (HPP) vs Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

The main difference between HPP and EEO is that HPP is an internal process, whereas EEO is a legal process. The information and table below describes the differences in how you would use them.

Harassment Prevention Program (HPP) is a management-driven process designed to provide prompt/effective resolution of harassment allegations (within 30 days). This process helps ensure a harassment-free work area, tracks and monitors harassment allegations, oversees management’s response to harassment, and reports harassment allegations to VA Leadership. Once management is made aware of harassment (either by victim or observer) they must promptly act.

HPP Complaint Process: VA has established the HPP located within the Office of Resolution Management Diversity & Inclusion (ORMDI) to set up a centralized tracking system to monitor, report, and process all allegations of harassment before they become severe or pervasive. Ensures all harassment allegations are reported to VA leadership. If an individual experiences harassment, you can inform the person(s) responsible for the conduct that it is unwelcome and offensive. If the conduct continues, or if you are uncomfortable confronting the responsible person(s) about the conduct, you must immediately report the matter using the following process:

- Notify your supervisor or another management official, if your immediate supervisor is the alleged harasser or;
- Notify the KCVVA Harassment Prevention Program Coordinator (HPC)
Lesley Andrews Ext. 56050 or Lesley.Andrews@va.gov
- Contact the ORMDI HPP Office. You can speak to a HPP Specialist by calling 888-566-3982 or visiting their website at <https://www.va.gov/ORMDI>

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) is a legal right. Employees can choose to access the EEO complaint process. It is designed to provide remedies for illegal discrimination, “make them whole”, if proven to have occurred. The EEO process is a lengthy one, often taking several months to many years, as it’s a legal matter. Reporting harassment to HPP does not constitute filing an EEO complaint.

EEO Complaint Process: You have the right to contact an EEO counselor at the ORMDI to file an EEO complaint. You must contact an EEO counselor within 45 calendar days from the incident. An ORM counselor can be reached:

- KCVVA EEO Program Manager
Lesley Andrews, EEO Program Manager Ext. 56050
- By calling 1-888-566-3982
- Via TTY/TDD 1-888-626-9008

EEO Process	Harassment Prevention Process
Employees must contact an EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of alleged discrimination	Employees report harassing conduct immediately to supervisor, HPC, etc.
Employee can participate in EEO counseling, choose ADR or file formal. At formal level, all accepted complaints receive an investigation	Supervisor, along with HPC, ER/LR or OGC makes initial assessment as to how to address (inquiry, fact-finding, administrative investigation, etc)
Formal investigation seeks to gather information to determine whether Agency engaged in discriminatory conduct	Inquiries, fact-findings, etc seeks to gather information to determine whether there was misconduct
Determination of the investigation can result in seeking to make complainant whole	Determinations of an inquiry, fact-finding, etc. can result in disciplinary action against individual(s)
EEO process – complainant entitled to a copy of the Report of Investigation	HPP process – employee is not entitled to a copy of the inquiry, fact-finding, etc.

National AFGE Grievance on Vaccine Mandate

More information on the vaccine mandate will be sent soon. National AFGE is working on this through the grievance process. More information can be found at www.afge.org

Whistleblower Protection Program (WPP) / Disclosure of Wrongdoing

VA Employees and applicants for employment are encouraged to report the violation of any law, rule, or regulation; gross mismanagement; gross waste of funds; abuse of authority; substantial and specific danger to public health or safety; or censorship related to scientific research, analysis, or technical information. Reporters may choose to identify themselves or to provide information confidentially/anonymously.

To Make a Report:

- Office of Inspector General (OIG): Call (800) 488-8244 or access the OIG Hotline <https://hotline.oig.dhs.gov/#step-1>
- Office of Special Counsel (OSC): Call (800) 572-2249 or access OSC Form-14 online at <https://osc.gov/Documents/Resources/Forms/OSC%20Form-14.pdf>

For More Information:

- OIG's Whistleblower Protection Program <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/whistleblower-protection>
- OSC's Disclosure of Wrongdoing <https://osc.gov/Services/Pages/DU.aspx>

Are you getting your COVID Vaccine or booster, or accompanying a family member to get their vaccine or booster?

November 19, 2021 OCHCO BULLETIN: Authorized Absence for Individuals and Family Members who Receive the COVID-19 Vaccine

<https://files.constantcontact.com/f2f726b3801/7d7e2494-e878-48d3-a927-9e5b63aca12d.pdf>

OCHCO Bulletin Attachment: Duty Status for Employees Receiving or Assisting a Family Member with COVID-19 Vaccination

<https://files.constantcontact.com/f2f726b3801/86b1c890-7919-4521-8ee9-6939eff0d7b0.pdf>

Local 910 Officers:

Chris Smith, President
Janet Constance, Exec VP
Jill Folsom, Secretary Treasurer
Debbie Brackenbury, Title 38 VP
Shelley Barney, Title 5 VP

Local 910 Stewards:

Corrin Heesch
Frankie Morgan
Ashley Wilson
Tiffany Taylor
Ron Peters
Dallan Hamman
George Lollis

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Employees have access to a free service dedicated to addressing workplace or personal concerns on a confidential basis. EAP Services are provided by a licensed mental health professional who can offer short-term problem solving (1-3 sessions) and can also provide referrals to community-based services for additional support.

For more information, visit <https://rightsolutioncounseling.com>

To access these resources, call (800) 604-4371



AFGE Quarterly Lunch & Learn

Thank you for joining us for the December Lunch & Learn! Mark your calendars for the next quarterly Lunch & Learn on

March 16, 2021

Stay tuned for more information!