

Public Service Commission

Respectful Workplace Program Policy and Procedures

Preamble

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador promotes personal well-being and productivity of employees throughout the public service. The Public Service Commission (PSC) recognizes that employees have a right to work in a respectful, harassment-free, psychologically safe and healthy working environment.

Policy Statement

The PSC is responsible for administering the Respectful Workplace Program (RWP) for Government Departments and approved entities. RWP provides confidential support and consultation to employees, managers, departments and agencies to constructively respond to situations of conflict within the work environment using informal conflict resolution options.

RWP offers a range of respectful workplace and conflict resolution services in the interest of organizational and individual psychological health. The goal of the program is to provide necessary support to public service employees and departments towards the creation and maintenance of a healthy, inclusive, and respectful workplace culture.

Specifically, RWP provides mediation, facilitation, conflict coaching and other conflict management services to individuals, workplace teams, and departments. The program supports Government's Harassment and Discrimination Free Policy through the provision of conflict resolution services provided by Master's trained professional staff employed by the Public Service Commission (RWP Coordinator).

Scope

This policy shall apply to all employees of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and those scheduled to the Public Service Commission Act.

Purpose

The purpose of RWP is to:

- Promote the enhancement of individual and organizational psychological health and well-being through prevention and early intervention.
- Enhance psychological health and well-being of employees and organizations through capacity building initiatives, knowledge transfer, and skill development in conflict management.
- Provide confidential, professional assessment, referral, and follow up conflict management services to assist employees, managers and the organization who may be experiencing issues of conflict, harassment, violence, and discrimination in the workplace.

Procedures

Services provided under RWP are coordinated by the Employee Assistance and Respectful Workplace Division in conjunction with professional external service providers and consultants contracted by the Division. The Coordinator will complete an assessment or consultation session, either in person or over the phone, with the individual employee, department, or agency to assess individual and or workplace needs; offer support and guidance; and provide information on the range of dispute resolution services available to the employee or work group.

Referral to RWP may be by a self-referral, a workplace-assisted referral or a management-initiated formal referral.

Types of Referrals:

1. Self Referral:

A self-referral is made by the employee on their own behalf. All employees can seek assistance on a voluntary basis by contacting an RWP Coordinator of the program.

2. Workplace Assisted Referral:

The manager and/or supervisor may identify an individual or work group in need of support and advice on how to constructively manage an interpersonal or workplace conflict and recommend contact with RWP. The manager and/or supervisor are not provided with any information regarding contact unless the employee(s) provides consent.

3. Management Initiated:

A formal referral to RWP may occur when work performance issues and/or behavior have been identified by the manager and/or supervisor to the employee. The employee is provided with a letter by the employer outlining the issues of concern and the employer's expectations for their behavior. The employee is also offered the option of RWP services to assist in addressing those issues of concern. Participation in RWP is voluntary and the employee maintains the right to confidentiality in the content of the information shared throughout their involvement in the program.

The Coordinator has a duty to provide confirmation of whether an employee is participating in the recommended program when this information is requested from the manager or human resources. The manager is responsible for maintaining contact with the Coordinator to confirm whether or not the employee is participating and attending the program. The manager is also responsible for offering the employee workplace support throughout the process. The Coordinator maintains contact with the employee and where appropriate the outside external service provider.

Confidentiality

A cornerstone of RWP is confidentiality with respect to all matters associated with professional services to clients. The Coordinators demonstrate respect for the trust and confidence placed in them by clients by protecting the privacy of client information and respecting the client's right to control when or whether this information will be shared with third parties. All parties engaged in services provided through RWP will be expected to agree to the terms and conditions of the RWP confidentiality agreements and policy. Coordinators are prohibited from disclosing any information unless consent of the individual employee(s) is obtained.

The general expectation that Coordinators will keep information confidential does not apply when there is a professional duty or obligation to disclose information, or where there is serious, imminent, or foreseeable harm to a client, employee(s), and/or others.

RWP files shall be handled with the highest degree of confidentiality. Names shall not be used on these files or on the working notes contained therein. Other means of identification such as codes, numbers, or letters will be used.

RWP files and working notes shall be retained in a secure and restricted area and shall be destroyed according to the Records, Retention, and Disposal Schedule as per the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Records Management guidelines. The confidential file of the individual employee may be made available for inspection by the employee within reasonable notice.

When an employee is referred by the RWP Coordinator to an appointed external service provider, sufficient information shall be released to that individual in order that they may provide the most appropriate conflict coaching, mediation or resolution service to the employee(s) or group.

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of RWP are to:

- Contribute to a healthy workplace by providing employees with expert assistance in understanding , managing, and resolving workplace conflicts;
- Explain the informal conflict resolution process and approaches used by the Coordinator;
- Assist employees to better understand the issues underlying the conflict situation, exploring options for resolution, and referring them to other services when they are identified as being more appropriate to resolve the situation;
- Ensure that clients using the RWP service are fully informed on the limits of confidentiality;
- Collaborate with departments to develop RWP initiatives with the goal of enhancing departmental capacity in creating respectful and healthy workplaces;
- Remain impartial and neutral in the conflict resolution process; and
- Provide informal conflict resolution services, consultation to employees and senior management, presentations to departments, and strategic advice on the promotion of a healthy and respectful workplace culture.

Managers

Managers are responsible for:

- Identifying an individual or work group in need of support and advice on how to constructively manage an interpersonal or workplace conflict and recommend contact with RWP.
- Request confirmation from Coordinators of whether or not an employee is participating in the recommended program.
- Maintaining contact with the Coordinator to confirm whether or not the employee is participating and attending the program.
- Offering the employee workplace support throughout the process.

Clients

The roles and responsibilities of the client user:

- Clients must be interested in improving their effectiveness in dealing with conflict situations. This involves sharing concerns and experiences as well as being open to taking specific actions aimed at meeting their goals; and
- Clients agree to communicate honestly with the Coordinator, be open to feedback and assistance, create the time and energy to fully participate, and provide honest feedback to the coordinator on their perceptions of the resolution supports, services, and options presented.

Types of Services

Issues of disrespect, conflict, and harassment can often be addressed by speaking directly to the other party or with the assistance of your manager. Contacting a Coordinator can also be an appropriate first step in such incidents. Assistance through RWP may be in the form of: personal support, problem solving, help with assertiveness skills, and/or a discussion about the conflict resolution choices available to the individual, group, or workplace.

The conflict resolution services provided under RWP are as follows:

- Consultations: employees and managers can access confidential support, guidance, and coaching on how to constructively respond to situations of conflict and/or explore available avenues of resolution;
- Conflict Coaching: conflict coaching is one-on-one support with a professionally trained coach to help an individual employee deal with a conflict situation. The employee or manager is encouraged to build on their own skills to constructively respond to situations of conflict and/or explore available avenues of resolution. The coach will offer objective, non-judgmental feedback and ask questions so that clients are given the opportunity to reflect on their approaches and consider ways to increase their effectiveness in dealing with a conflict situation;
- Mediations and Multi-Party Mediations: the mediation process is conducted by a trained and impartial mediator who assists two or more parties to reach a resolution to their differences in a respectful manner. Requests for mediation services are made in consultation with the manager and/or department. The mediator will first meet individually with each of the parties involved to assess readiness and provide information on the mediation process. If deemed appropriate, mediation will be scheduled;
- Facilitated Discussions: the process is conducted by a trained and impartial facilitator who assists two or more parties to reach a resolution to their differences in a respectful manner. Initial meetings are required with the team leader and work group to establish expected outcomes. If appropriate, a facilitated discussion will be scheduled;
- Group/Team Interventions: at the request of the department or agency, work groups can access impartial facilitation services for meetings and other problem solving sessions which might benefit from such a process. The focus of such sessions is on building interpersonal relationships rather than resolving labor relations disputes;
- Capacity Building: the RWP Coordinator will collaboratively work with groups to develop RWP initiatives within government departments. The goal is to enhance the capacity of work groups to create a more respectful work environment. This includes RWP committee development, provision of capacity building tools and the skills and knowledge to help create a psychologically safe, healthy, and respectful work environment.

Definitions and Acronyms

Respectful Workplace Program (RWP)	RWP provides mediation, facilitation, conflict coaching, training, and other conflict management services to individuals, workplace teams, and departments.
Employee	Any full time, temporary, part time, contractual service employee or paid student working for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, those scheduled to the Public Service Commission Act, and employees covered by Memoranda of Understanding (MOU's).
Formal Referral	A formal referral to RWP may occur when work performance issues and/or behavior have been identified by the manager and/or supervisor to the employee. The employee is provided with a letter outlining the issues of concern within the workplace and offered the option of RWP to assist in addressing the concern. Participation in RWP is always voluntary.
Eligibility	The program is available to all employees, managers, and departments of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.
Confidentiality	The expectation that information shared in a relationship of trust will not be divulged to others in a manner that is inconsistent with the understanding of the original agreement unless permission to do so is granted. Client confidentiality means that personal health information given to a health care provider will not be disclosed to others unless the client has given implied or explicit consent.

Implied Consent	Consent that is inferred from signs, actions or facts or by inaction or silence, and where the information is clearly used to benefit the individual and the organization's expectations are reasonable.
Explicit Consent	Where an individual is clearly presented with an option to agree or disagree with the collection or disclosure of personal information.
Psychological Health and Safety	A psychologically healthy and safe workplace is one that actively works to prevent harm to workers' psychological health, including in negligent, reckless, or intentional ways, and one that promotes psychological well-being.