



# EXECUTIVE ORDER STANDARDS OF CONDUCT, PROFESSIONALISM, AND CIVILITY

E.O. No.

1-20

Effective Date:

Upon Approval

## 1. PREFACE

It is the policy of the City of Houston (City) that all employees will conduct themselves in a positive, cooperative, respectful, and professional manner at any location where City business is conducted, regardless of whether the property is owned or leased by the City, or whether interacting with City employees or citizens.

## 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the conduct of all City employees, whether it occurs during working hours, break and/or lunchtime, or when the employee is off-duty.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

Chain of Command: hierarchy that outlines who reports to whom, as well as the roles each person has within the organization.

Customer: internal and external customers as defined below. All references to “customer” throughout this policy includes both groups.

External Customer: Anyone outside of the City who, in connection with the functions of, or services provided by the City, seeks information, services or assistance.

Internal Customer: Anyone within the City, who at any time, seeks information, services, or assistance in connection with their job duties and/or responsibilities from anyone else within the organization. (Examples: co-workers, city employees, temporary employees, etc.)

## 4. GENERAL PROVISIONS

### 4.1. COMMUNICATION

4.1.1. All employees shall communicate in a positive and respectful manner with co-workers, subordinates, supervisors and citizens.

4.1.2. Employees shall not intentionally make false, untrue or misleading statements (verbal or written; made directly by or authorized by the employee). Any statement or omission of pertinent information which intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly misrepresents facts or misleads others will be considered a false statement and is prohibited.

4.1.3. Whether dealing with emergency situations or normal operations, miscommunication may negatively affect the safety of employees, coworkers, citizens, and/or the operations of the City. Consequently, employees are expected to communicate clearly, concisely, and promptly during an emergency and/or when performing daily job duties.

4.1.4. Inappropriate communication involves making offensive, insulting, hostile, or intimidating comments about a customer and/or employee in the workplace or spreading gossip and/or

Approved: DocuSigned by:

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Page 1 of 6

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rumors that disrupt the workplace. Engaging in such inappropriate communication will not be tolerated. It is expected that employees work as a team and not discredit other team members in the presence of customers, which is also an inappropriate communication.

#### **4.2. CUSTOMER SERVICE AND COURTESY TO THE PUBLIC**

- 4.2.1. Employees should remember that the City is in business to serve the public and that the public always comes first. Employees are expected to serve the public efficiently, effectively and courteously, and to provide excellent customer service to internal and external customers.
- 4.2.2. Employees, who serve in a customer service role or are regularly called upon to provide assistance to internal or external customers or members of the public, are expected to provide assistance in a timely manner without friction, conflict, or undue burden to the customer.
- 4.2.3. When dealing with an internal or external customer and/or member of the public, employees shall do the following (the list below is not all inclusive):
  - 4.2.3.1. Treat them with dignity and respect;
  - 4.2.3.2. Be patient, courteous and polite;
  - 4.2.3.3. Listen carefully to the request before giving an answer and consider the perspective of the customer;
  - 4.2.3.4. Make a good faith effort to assist the customer, rather than referring them to another office or department;
  - 4.2.3.5. If is necessary to refer the customer to someone else for assistance, identify the appropriate office or department, and provide the correct contact information for the employee the customer will be transferred to; and
  - 4.2.3.6. Accurately record the information from the customer if you are taking a message or referring the employee to another employee who can provide assistance.
- 4.2.4. When dealing with an internal or external customer and/or member of the public, employees shall NOT do the following (the list below is not all inclusive):
  - 4.2.4.1. Express anger or be defensive;
  - 4.2.4.2. Keep the customer waiting unnecessarily or for an unreasonable amount of time or ignore the customer;
  - 4.2.4.3. Talk down to the customer or communicate in a rude manner; and/or
  - 4.2.4.4. Redirect the customer intentionally to avoid handling their request or concern.
- 4.2.5. When dealing with an internal or external customer who becomes argumentative, irate or abusive, and the employee cannot properly handle the situation or requires assistance, the employee shall refer the customer to their supervisor and/or follow the established protocol for their department.

#### **4.3. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

- 4.3.1. Employees shall not engage in any conduct, including unlawful conduct that brings embarrassment, dishonor or disrespect upon employees and/or the City. This includes but is

not limited to conduct that may (1) adversely affect the employee's job performance, work, job duties or ability to function in the employee's position; (2) adversely affect the City's or the department's ability to fulfill its mission or to serve the public; or (3) create a hostile work environment

- 4.3.2. Whether on or off duty, the City expects its employees to be truthful, courteous, and respectful toward supervisors, co-workers, citizens, customers, and other persons associated with the City.
- 4.3.3. An employee who is arrested or charged with a misdemeanor or felony or is aware of a warrant for their arrest for a misdemeanor or felony, shall report the incident to their supervisor within 72 hours of the occurrence and provide any available documentation.
- 4.3.4. An employee who is convicted of a misdemeanor or felony while employed with the City shall likewise report the conviction to their supervisor within 72 hours. The supervisor shall advise their chain of command and HR Employee Relations representative.
- 4.3.5. The HR Employee Relations representative, in consultation with members of the employee's chain of command and the Legal Department, if necessary, shall determine next steps, including whether corrective action or suspension during the pendency of the criminal proceeding is warranted. Next steps shall be determined based on a review of all of the factors including the severity and nature of the alleged offense, whether the offense relates to the employee's job duties, and whether the charge or conviction will affect the employee's ability to perform their job duties.

#### 4.4. **CIVILITY**

- 4.4.1. All employees are expected to:
  - 4.4.1.1. Be courteous civil and respectful to superiors, employees, coworkers, and internal and external customers;
  - 4.4.1.2. Treat internal and external customers, coworkers, subordinates and supervisors with dignity and respect;
  - 4.4.1.3. Deliver even the most critical feedback respectfully and courteously; and
  - 4.4.1.4. Act in good faith and be active participants in contributing to a workplace culture of inclusion, civility, dignity and respect.
- 4.4.2. Acts of incivility deal with behaviors including, but not limited to, discourteous language, profanity and offensive gestures.
- 4.4.3. Incivility is prohibited. Employees are encouraged to report incidents of incivility and supervisors shall take prompt and appropriate action reasonably necessary to ensure compliance with this policy.

#### 4.5. **SOUND JUDGEMENT**

- 4.5.1. All employees are expected to exercise sound judgement at all times by acting in a manner that is consistent with the principles set forth within City policies and procedures. Actions that violate City policies or procedures or that otherwise impede the City's mission, reputation, or the harmony of the workplace, will be considered acts of unsound judgement.

#### 4.6. **TRUTHFULNESS**

4.6.1. All employees are expected to be truthful and provide accurate and reliable information with respect to their job duties and responsibilities. Employees will not intentionally make false, untrue, or misleading statements (verbal or written; made directly by or authorized by the employee). Any statement or omission of pertinent information which intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly misrepresents facts of misleads other will be considered a false statement.

#### 4.7. **COOPERATION IN INVESTIGATIONS**

4.7.1. All employees shall cooperate fully and provide truthful information, statements, documents and relative facts in any investigation conducted by and/or or involving claims against the City.

#### 4.8. **PERFORMANCE OF DUTY**

4.8.1. All employees are expected to:

- 4.8.1.1. Meet minimum standards for job performance and produce the quantity and quality of work in relation to the acceptable standards determined for the job;
- 4.8.1.2. Give a productive day's work to the best of their abilities and skills;
- 4.8.1.3. Perform their duties promptly and thoroughly;
- 4.8.1.4. Be attentive to their duties and perform all duties assigned;
- 4.8.1.5. Respond to the call of their supervisor, citizens or other customers in need of assistance; and
- 4.8.1.6. Abide by the laws, policies, procedures and rules applicable to the activities in which employees are engaged. (e.g., State and local laws, ordinances, Civil Service Commission rules, City or Department policy, operational procedure and practice and will comply with regulations related to required licensure, registration, certification, etc.)

4.8.2. All managers and supervisors are expected to:

- 4.8.2.1. Be readily available to their employees, client departments and chain of command, while on duty;
- 4.8.2.2. Take appropriate action when they become aware that an employee may have committed an infraction or may be in violation of a City or department policy, which may include corrective action up to and including a recommendation for an indefinite suspension or termination; and
- 4.8.2.3. Establish and communicate delegated responsibilities and authorizations in their absence to all parties who may need to know (i.e., employees, customers, chain of command).

4.8.3. Supervisors and/or managers who delegate tasks to their employees are ultimately accountable for ensuring the task is properly and timely completed.

#### 4.9. COMPLIANCE WITH ORDERS AND DIRECTIVES; INSUBORDINATION

- 4.9.1. Employees shall promptly and respectfully follow all lawful orders and directives given by supervisors or other superiors acting within the scope of their authority. Failure to follow lawful orders or directives shall be considered insubordination.
- 4.9.2. Employees shall not display disrespect and/or flagrantly dispute a supervisor's orders or directives. Employees receiving an order or directive that they believe is unsafe, unjust or contrary to city or department policy will respectfully notify the supervisor that a conflict exists and follow the order to the best of their ability. Employees may report the matter to a member of their chain of command.
- 4.9.3. Employees shall not demonstrate contempt or scorn toward a supervisor or manager by displaying obvious disrespectful actions or disputing their supervisor's or manager's orders or directives. These actions shall also be considered insubordination. Simply not agreeing with a supervisor's or manager's directions, or feeling they are unfair, does not give an employee the right to disregard the instructions.
- 4.9.4. Notwithstanding the above, employees receiving an order or directive that would create a safety hazard for themselves, coworkers or the public are expected to respectfully decline the directive and notify a member of their chain of command and/or the Human Resources Department's Risk Management Division, so the matter can be investigated. Employees declining directives on basis that are determined to be frivolous in nature will be subject to appropriate corrective action.

#### 4.10. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 4.10.1. Employees may have access to confidential information that is needed to perform their job duties. It is crucial that employees exercise appropriate care with confidential information and adhere to all requirements governing confidentiality. Employees are prohibited from sharing or disclosing any confidential information regarding co-workers, clients, or department matters. Accessing such information for non-business purposes including, but not limited to, for profit, personal gain, personal knowledge, grievances, or to share with others is an abuse of authority and breach of confidentiality. Discussion of confidential information not relevant to business needs is strictly prohibited.
- 4.10.2. All employees having access to confidential information in any form are required to take proper precautions to avoid any breach of privacy of all confidential information in their custody.

### 5. COMPLIANCE

Adherence to this policy is mandatory. Any employee found to be non-compliant with this policy shall be subject to corrective action up to and including an indefinite suspension or termination.

### 6. CONFLICT AND REPEAL

- 6.1. This executive order supersedes Mayor's Policy No. 502.00, Conduct: Courtesy to Public, dated February 14, 1985, which shall be of no further force or effect.
- 6.2. This policy supersedes all other executive orders, administrative procedures, Mayor's policies, or department policies governing conduct of City employees, except for those that govern employees of the Houston Police Department and classified employees of the Houston Fire Department, or those parts of this policy, if any, that are otherwise superseded by law.

## 7. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION

- [Administrative Procedure 3-7: Positive Corrective Action Program](#)
- [Municipal Employee Handbook](#)

## 8. POLICY SPONSOR

**Department:** Human Resources Department