

# **2023 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

## **Argonne National Laboratory**

### **Creating Transparency and Clarity about Gender and Sexual Harassment by Updating Policies and Procedures**

#### **Relevant Rubric Area(s):**

- Response: Improved Policies
- Response: Improved Communication and Increased Transparency
- Response: Addressing Gender Harassment and Other Harmful Behaviors

#### **Description of Work**

Argonne National Laboratory recognizes the importance of having clear policies and procedures relating to all aspects of gender and sexual harassment to ensure the Laboratory is a physically and psychologically safe work environment for everyone.

The Argonne Action Collaborative Lab Process Implementation Team formed a group to identify potential vulnerabilities related to gender and sexual harassment in Argonne's policies and procedures, and to provide recommendations for addressing these vulnerabilities.

The group prioritized policies and procedures for review by relevancy, based on information gathered through reviews of NASEM (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine) documentation and interviews with Lab stakeholders. After careful review, the group found that many best practices were built into Argonne's policies and procedures including:

- The Lab's clear position on preventing harassment and retaliation;
- Clearly defined expectations for appropriate behavior and examples of unacceptable behavior;
- Alternative methods for reporting, including the availability of an independent reporting service and references to the Lab's Ombuds as a confidential, informal, and independent resource.

Focusing on continuous improvement, the subgroup identified opportunities to strengthen existing policies and procedures and made recommendations to the Leadership team for updating five (5) of the most highly relevant policies to preventing gender and sexual harassment.

#### **Opportunities:**

***Equal Opportunity & Prevention of Unlawful Harassment Policy*** – Assigns managers and supervisors the responsibility of communicating related policies and procedures.

- Add content on consistent methods of communicating expectations.

***Employee Conduct Policy*** – Requires managers and supervisors to proactively identify inappropriate behavior and take action to intervene; does not require managers to provide a

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verbal warning to employees whose actions seriously disrupt operations or involve serious violation of policies, procedures, or standards.

- Add content on consistent methods of addressing inappropriate behavior.
- Connect the policy to positive statements that encourage behavior consistent with Argonne's Core Values.

***Equal Opportunity & Prevention of Unlawful Harassment Policy*** – Requires employees to report harassment.

- Add content documenting how complaints should be processed and retained.

***Employee Concerns Program Procedure*** – Defines the process for addressing concerns raised by employees, including the process for storing complaint records and how/when the information in the complaint can be clarified.

- Add content to address:
  - How complaints should be retained and processed.
  - The process for removing a complaint.
  - How these records will affect promotions.
- This procedure is limited to people working in Department of Energy (DOE) and National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) projects; consider expanding the scope of projects covered under the procedure.
- Consider extending the period of retention for issues that were reported in the Employee Concerns Program (ECP) that did not result in an official ECP case.

***Discrimination, Harassment, or Retaliation Complaints Procedure*** – Defines the process for reporting and resolving unlawful sexual harassment complaints.

- There are forms of harassment that do not cross the legal threshold to be considered unlawful sexual harassment. Add content to the procedure to:
  - Provide guidance on how to raise a complaint that might not cross the legal threshold.
  - Address appropriate measures that may be taken following investigations that determine actions did not fit the legal definition of harassment.

### Next Steps:

Argonne's Employee Relations team is currently revising the five policies and procedures based on the opportunities and recommendations provided. The revised policies are on track to be in place by the end of fiscal year 2023.

**Website for further information (if applicable):** n/a

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