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Maintaining Civility in the Workplace

LEFT – RIGHT | RED – BLUE | OLD – NEW | FOR – AGAINST

Our increasingly diverse workplace presents many opportunities for us to experience differences of opinion. Today, more and more individuals appear to be openly expressing those opinions. This can lead to passionate and spirited discussions that at times spill over into the workplace.

Pinellas County expects all who enter our workplace to be treated with dignity and respect. We must maintain this standard and foster a respectful workplace even when reasonable people disagree strongly about matters near and dear to their hearts and their values.

With the daily doses of disrespect in the mainstream and social media and the frequent exposure to partisan rhetoric, it can be challenging to avoid mirroring this potentially disruptive behavior in the workplace. But disrespectful, rude, and discourteous behavior is counterproductive to Pinellas County Government's mission and poses a significant threat to the well-being of employees and their ability to effectively serve our citizens. It can lead to decreased morale, loss of productivity, stress, anxiety, absenteeism, and damaging conflicts. How can we maintain civility in our workplace while it appears to be eroding in the society at large?

First, begin by leading by example. No matter how fundamentally you may disagree with someone's views, you can set the example by treating them respectfully and engaging in calm discussions.

Keep the workplace respectful by:

- Communicating openly, honestly, and courteously
- Treating people as they wish to be treated
- Addressing conflict constructively, and
- Holding others accountable for disrespectful behavior

Pinellas County compensates its employees to engage in their assigned work. Conversations should not

disrupt County operations. It's important to avoid interfering with the productivity or morale of our workplace. Conversations should not become loud, disrespectful, or animated. They should also not draw employees away from their assigned work.

If you are on the receiving end of disrespectful behavior, the first step you can take is to respectfully inform the other party that the conversation offends you or is interfering with your work. Explain why and ask the other party to stop. If the other party does not respect your wishes, inform your management so they have an opportunity to address it.

If you observe disrespectful or disruptive behavior and feel comfortable providing feedback to that individual, do so in a respectful manner. If you are not comfortable, report it to management.

If you are the instigator of disrespectful or disruptive behavior in the workplace, stop as soon as you become aware that your behavior is offending others. If you do not stop, this can lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

If you are management either observing or receiving a report of disrespectful or disruptive behavior, address it immediately through counseling. Consider discipline for more egregious behaviors. Ensure that you are fairly enforcing standards of good behavior by not treating the expression of points of view you disagree with more harshly than those you favor.

Pinellas County's [Anti-Harassment Policy](#) also reminds us that we cannot create an offensive or hostile work environment by disparaging another's race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, age, political affiliation, military status, or any other characteristic protected by law. [Training classes on the updated Anti-Harassment Policy](#) are available for supervisors and employees.

Keep Pinellas County a respectful place to work.