Harassment and discrimination are never acceptable. We all play a part in identifying, responding to and preventing discrimination. For more information, search "Connecting with the Public" on OneCity.

Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. The City prioritizes creating an inclusive workplace where everyone feels respected.

As City employees, we may experience challenging interactions as part of our jobs. This document provides information for employees who encounter situations that could cause psychological, emotional, or physical harm, including harassment and discrimination **from the public.** If you face such situations, know that your leaders support you to escalate to a supervisor or exit the situation. Follow the plan that has been developed for your area and talk to your supervisor.

Interactions can be challenging, especially when they involve harassment and discrimination. This document is divided in two sections. The first table provides employees with information on self care and personal resilience. By taking care of ourselves, we maintain healthy balance to our mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well being. The second table provides options for how we can respond to discriminatory comments and harassment and includes examples of the language we can use in our response.

Definitions

| **Harassment** (also described as bullying) | conduct including comments, actions and/or gestures that

 ● are demeaning, offensive, intimidating, threatening, abusive,
 ● the person knows or should reasonably know will or would cause humiliation to another individual, or
 ● adversely or negatively impacts that individual. |
| **Discrimination** | an action that has an adverse impact on an individual for reasons related to a protected ground, including but not limited to race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. |

Complete definitions of Harassment & Discrimination can be found in the Respectful Workplace Administrative Policy.

In situations where *Red Zone* behaviour presents an immediate and serious risk of physical and/or psychological harm to employees or others, and immediate action is needed, you can escalate your response to a supervisor by following the measures outlined in the Violence in the Workplace Prevention Guide.

Self-care Advice for Employees	
When you are being impacted by discriminatory actions or comments and harassment, respond calmly, clearly and respectfully, wherever possible, while practicing self-care, care for co-workers, and care for those we serve. State expectations, maintain boundaries, and seek support when needed. Self-care is important for the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well being of employees, not only practiced to heal from such interactions, but also on a regular basis for overall well-being.	
Focus on self care	Self care improves mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health, and improves morale. Identify how to best do that for your own well-being. Reach out to colleagues to learn their self care steps.
Coping mechanism	Coping mechanisms are strategies we can use when dealing with stress. Identify your most effective coping mechanisms when dealing with discrimination at work. Some common examples include: ● Building personal resilience ● Asking for support from a colleague, supervisor or professional ● Practice positive self talk ● Distance yourself from the source of stress
Practice Empathy	Practice empathy toward yourself and the individuals around you. Empathy is imagining how other people feel and listening patiently to the person. People often need to express their feelings before being open to finding solutions. Self-reflect on your own feelings as well and refer to the self care and coping mechanism above. **Examples of Practicing Empathy** ● *I can only imagine how frustrating this must be for you. I would like to assist you with your inquiry on…* ● *I realize how complicated it is to…What's one thing we can do to get this sorted for you?* ● *I'm so sorry to hear that…* Practice listening without interrupting the person and then redirect to the main purpose of the call.
Exit or Divert	Sometimes, ending the interaction is the right choice. You can end the conversation by disconnecting the call, redirecting to a support person or a supervisor, or removing yourself from the interaction. If you are concerned that physical confrontation may occur, escalate your response to a supervisor by following the measures outlined in the Violence in the Workplace Prevention Guide. **Examples of Diverting or Exiting:** ● *We don't seem to be making any progress together today. Let's end this conversation for now and continue to work through this another time.* ● *I'm going to ask a colleague/supervisor to help us, can you hold on one minute while I transfer you?*
Know you are supported	Know that your leaders support you to exit a situation that is disrespectful or unsafe. After a challenging interaction, speaking to your supervisor and/or peers is a good place to start. As a City of Edmonton employee, there are a variety of supports available to you including: ● Peer Support ● City Chaplain ● Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP)

	• Safety Engagement Lead or Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee • Your Union or Management Association

Options for responding to discriminatory comments and harassment

All employees are supported in responding to discrimination and harassment when they experience it, see it, or are tasked with responding to incidents of discrimination or harassment. Below, you will find options for responding to citizens and sample scenarios you can use in your interactions.

Refocus the Conversation	Offer to help them with their original concern. Ask questions to gain a better understanding of the concern. You can also restate the concern and gain confirmation that you understand their concern. In this option you do not need to address the comment or behaviour. Remember that often citizens are expressing their frustration with the process and not the person helping them. Move forward to finding a solution or completing the service.	*I would like to help you with [insert concern], today. You were asking about…* *So, you were asking about when tax information will be mailed out, is that correct?*
Address the Behaviour	Share the City's position on harassment and discrimination and cultivating a respectful workplace & interaction. Then work to address their concern. Avoid making the conversation personal and refer to the City position. Move forward by stating what their initial inquiry was about and working towards a solution. If the behaviour continues and you no longer feel safe in the interaction, you can exit or escalate the interaction to a supervisor or support person.	*At the City, we work hard to create a caring and welcoming culture for everyone: for the public and employees.* *Comments on origin or accent are not welcome at the City as part of our inclusive culture. I would like to be able to help you with [insert original concern]...* Then give them a chance to change their behaviour. *General comments on anyone's gender are not welcome or helpful at the City. I have the training and skills to help you with...* Then move forward with the initial inquiry.
Escalate	Ask a colleague, supervisor or area support staff for assistance. This could include transferring a call or having them respond to email. **Email response:** If the email uses inappropriate tone and language, you may forward the email to your supervisor and ask for assistance in how to respond to the person.	*Just one moment. I will find someone (co-worker or support person) who can assist you.* **The person who receives the re-directed call/person can say:** *It's great that we have a team and we can support each other and the public to provide the best service. I'm happy to continue this call and meet your needs...*
Exit	If you feel that the situation has escalated to the point that you can no longer speak to the	*Comments on origin or accent are not welcome at the City as part of our inclusive*

	individual, you can end the call or leave the interaction setting. Follow your area plan and talk to your supervisor. **In person**, you may contact your supervisor or, in more extreme cases, law enforcement for support, if needed. **Over the phone**, explain that you will disconnect with the call if the comments/behaviour continue. When disconnecting the call set the phone down gently. **By email,** after advising the individual of behaviour expectations, reaffirm that you will stop replying to emails that are disrespectful or that do not contain new information or requests. Monitor emails from the individual, and only reply to emails that are respectful or contain new information or requests.	*culture. If those comments continue, I will ask you to leave.* Ask a supervisor or colleague for assistance. *As mentioned, if you continue to make comments about ___ I will no longer be able to assist you and I will disconnect the call.* *We are not making progress, I am going to end the call and ask you to call back tomorrow. Then we can try again.* **Email responses:** *Comments on origin or accent are not welcome at the City as part of our inclusive culture. If those comments continue, I will no longer respond to your emails.*
Follow-up	Immediately after a challenging situation, it is important to talk to a supportive person. Refer to the section above for information on self care and seek the help you need. If an interaction has impacted your wellbeing it is important to report the incident to your supervisor who can provide support and help you complete an Incident Data Collection (IDC) form.	

If you experience harassment or discrimination from another City of Edmonton employee, refer to the [Respectful Workplace Procedure](#) for options of how to raise a respectful workplace concern.

References Used
- [Speak Up: Responding to Everyday Bigotry](#)
- [language_matters_cheat_sheet_eng.pdf](#)
- [Violence in the Workplace Prevention Guide](#)
- [Connected City Interaction Spectrum](#)