Expanding Our Scope

Ensuring Appropriate Responses to Allegations of Harassment

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration

Revised June 2000

What is the "Accountability Board?"

The Board is a cadre of senior executives that oversee management's response to allegations/incidents of harassment or other misconduct that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, as defined in FAA Order 1110.125A. The objectives of the Board are to ensure that all such allegations are responded to in a timely, consistent and appropriate manner.

What specifically does the Board cover?

The Board was established in July 1998 to address allegations of sexual harassment, misconduct of a sexual nature and related reprisal. As of July 1, 2000, the Board's scope will be expanded to also include all allegations/incidents of verbal, written, graphic or physical harassment and other misconduct that creates or that may reasonably be expected to create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age or disability.

The scope of this order does **not** include allegations of discrimination involving non-selections, disciplinary actions, promotions, performance management or other personnel actions.

The Board does not create new policy but provides for oversight of existing agency policy in the area of conduct and discipline, civil rights and model work environment. Agency policy prohibits harassment based on an individual's race, color, religion, gender or sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age or disability. Agency policy also prohibits managers and supervisors from condoning or ignoring such misconduct and prohibits employees from knowingly making false accusations.

How does the Accountability Board work?

The Accountability Board process provides aggressive procedures and timeframes for responding to allegations, from the time an allegation is raised to the time corrective action, if found warranted, is initiated. Overall, the Administrator has established 55 days as the goal for dealing with allegations within the scope of the Accountability Board. These timeframes are goals, however, and will, at times, require flexibility, depending on the unique circumstances of individual situations.

Who is on the Accountability Board?

The Board is comprised of senior FAA officials, including the Associate Administrator for Civil Aviation Security, the Assistant Administrator for Human Resource Management, the Assistant Administrator for Civil Rights and the Associate/Assistant Administrator employing the individual against whom the allegation is made. A member of the FAA Executive System serves as the Board Director on a full-time basis. A representative from Chief Counsel's office serves the Board in an advisory capacity. In addition, an independent member from the Office of the Secretary serves on the Board.

What should I do if I believe I am being sexually harassed or harassed because of my race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age or disability or that such harassment has occurred in my office?

If possible, report it to someone in your supervisory chain. If you are not comfortable doing that, you may use any of the avenues traditionally available to report such allegations, including Civil Rights or the Administrator's Hotline.

For allegations/incidents to be covered within the

Board's scope, they must be reported as soon as possible after the incident occurs, but not later than 60 days after the date the incident is alleged to have occured.

Can I report allegations directly to the Accountability Board?

While we encourage you to use your management chain to report allegations within the scope of the Board, you may also report allegations directly to the Board by calling (202) 267-3065.

What if I do not want management to initiate any action?

Once management becomes aware of such allegations, it has an obligation to act. Management must investigate and, based on the facts, take appropriate action. This is the case even if an employee says, "I want to report this but I don't want you to do anything about it."

FAA is committed to ensuring a workplace environment free of harassment as demonstrated by the oversight of the Accountability Board. Some employees, however, may be concerned about bringing allegations forward, and may even fear reprisal. Reprisal is a serious matter and is also subject to discipline. The FAA is equally committed to dealing aggressively with acts of reprisal.

How does the Board relate to the EEO process?

The EEO process and the Accountability Board process are separate. The EEO process is an avenue for employees to seek redress based on unlawful discrimination, including harassment of a discriminatory nature as well as sexual harassment. The Board, on the other hand, provides senior level oversight to ensure managers and supervisors are held accountable

for responding properly to allegations within its scope.

The existence of the Board, and management's oversight through the Board, does not change or in any way impact an employee's rights or requirements under EEO. The EEO process, for instance, has specific timeframes for reporting issues of discrimination. Reporting allegations under the scope of the Board to management or to the Board does not extend or limit those timeframes. If an employee wishes to pursue such allegations through the EEO process, he or she must contact an EEO counselor within 45 days of the date the incident occurred or the date he or she reasonably should have been aware of the alleged discrimination.

If I go to an EEO counselor, will my allegation of harassment be forwarded to the Board?

Yes, all allegations of sexual harassment or harassment based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age or disability will be reported to the Board, even when reported to an EEO counselor. In cases in which anonymity is requested during the informal counseling period, the allegation will be forwarded to the Board in a sanitized manner without identifying the aggrieved party.

How can I get more information about the Board?

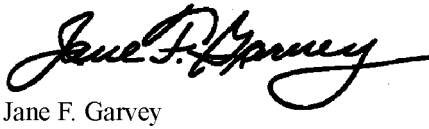
FAA Order 1110.125A, to be published July 1, 2000, provides detailed information about the Board and its process. Information is also available on the Office of Human Resource Management website at:
Interweb.FAA.gov/ahr/account/account.cfm
In addition, you may contact the Accountability Board Office at (202) 267-3065.

A message from the Adminstrator:

In July 1998, the agency established the Accountability Board to ensure that managers responded appropriately to allegations of sexual harassment and related misconduct. At that time, I told you that I was equally concerned about other forms of harassment, and I made the commitment to expand the scope of the Board to include other inappropriate behavior after evaluation of the first year. That is where we are today.

I am pleased that as of July 1, 2000, the scope of the Accountability Board will be expanded to include harassment and other misconduct that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment as a result of one's race, color, religion, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, age or disability. I am also confident that we will be able to apply the same objectives of the current Board process to these types of behavior - that is, to respond to all such allegations and incidents in a timely, consistent and appropriate manner.

Harassment has no place in the work environment. As I told you in June 1998, I want the FAA to be a symbol of excellence in the Federal government. The oversight provided by the Accountability Board has served as an important tool to ensure that we provide our employees a model work environment. Elimination of harassment is critical to ensure such an environment is created and maintained. I continue to ask for your support and commitment to this very important endeavor.



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