

Workplace Conflict Consultation Program Guidelines

Office of Employment Dispute Resolution

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The Office of Employment Dispute Resolution's (EDR) Workplace Conflict Consultation Program is a neutral, independent, informal, and confidential resource that facilitates fair, equitable, and expeditious resolutions to workplace conflicts and concerns raised by Virginia state employees and agency management.

The Workplace Conflict Consultation Program serves as an alternative and informal resource for Virginia state employees and agency management seeking assistance with workplace concerns. By addressing concerns earlier, the outcome will create a work environment of greater satisfaction for all employees and foster more open and effective communication between employees and state agencies.

The Workplace Conflict Consultation Program Director provides feedback and recommendations to the Director of the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) on the overall concerns raised and on any significant trends or issues without identifying any parties to those issues, including policy changes, needs for training, or other procedures that may enhance the statewide workplace climate.

ABOUT THE WORKPLACE CONFLICT CONSULTATION PROGRAM

PURPOSE

The Workplace Conflict Consultation Program serves as an alternative and informal resource for Virginia state employees and agency management seeking assistance with workplace concerns. The Workplace Conflict Consultation Program Director will work directly with an employee or agency manager in a confidential consultation about conflict in the workplace to create a work environment of greater satisfaction for all employees and foster more open and effective communication between employees and agency management.

The Workplace Conflict Consultation Program Director's primary duties are (1) to work with individuals in an organization to explore and assist them in determining options to help resolve conflicts, problematic issues or concerns on their own, and (2) to bring systemic concerns to the attention of the organization for resolution.

The Workplace Conflict Consultation Program Director operates in a manner to preserve the confidentiality of those seeking services, maintains a neutral/impartial position with respect to the concerns raised, provides an informal resource for raising the concerns, and, as an employee of DHRM's Office of Employment Dispute Resolution, is independent of the organizational structure where employees and agency managers are employed.

ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Workplace Conflict Consultation Program Director's role is to:

- Listen carefully to concerns and complaints by employees and agency management.
- Allow an employee or agency manager to safely and confidentially discuss their concerns during one-hour confidential phone consultations.
- Answer inquiries and assist employees and agency management in understanding their rights and the processes available to them for addressing workplace concerns.
- Provide information and resources to employees and agency management in a confidential, informal manner.
- Serve as a neutral party for resolving conflict and help arrange mediation or conflict resolution between employees and agency management. The Workplace Conflict Consultation Program Director does not engage in any situation that could create a conflict of interest and has the sole discretion and authority to terminate a client engagement at any time if/when a particular situation is deemed inappropriate for this program.
- Coach employees and agency managers about their goals that relate to resolving a dispute, preventing an unnecessary one, or generally managing conflict more effectively.
- Help analyze issues and outline possible courses of action in order for the employee or agency manager to have options to move forward.

- Conduct EDR workplace mediations when appropriate under the EDR Workplace Mediation Program Guidelines.
- Train employees and agency management about conflict management, team building, handling difficult people, better communication skills, and other types of soft skills that will foster positive workplace dynamics.
- Identify workplace conflict trends and problem areas facing employees and agency management and advocate system changes when appropriate to senior leadership without disclosing confidential communications.
- Provide Conflict Dynamic Profile (CDP-i and CDP-360) assessment services that help employees and agency managers understand individual workplace dynamics better.
- Issue an annual report summarizing activities which are drafted in aggregate form to preserve confidentiality and prohibit identification of employees or agency managers.

AUTHORITY AND LIMITS OF THE WORKPLACE CONFLICT CONSULTATION PROGRAM DIRECTOR

The Workplace Conflict Consultation Program Director **does**:

- Provide a neutral and safe environment to talk.
- Listen to concerns and complaints.
- Ensure confidentiality by keeping conversations private and in strict confidence unless there is an imminent threat of serious harm to the employee, agency manager, or to others.
- Maintain impartiality and neutrality by listening and not taking sides about a workplace conflict.
- Remain independent and hold no other role that would compromise the Workplace Conflict Consultation Program.
- Provide informal resources, explore options, coach, and help employees or agency managers determine what path is best to move forward.
- Identify trends in workplace conflicts and raise these concerns with the Director of DHRM.
- Train employees and agency management about workplace conflict management and skills.

The Workplace Conflict Consultation Program Director **does not**:

- Represent a party in a dispute, serve as a liaison between the employee and agency management, or participate in formal processes, including lawsuits or grievances.
- Conduct formal investigations.
- Offer legal advice.
- Share confidential facts or disclose identities without permission.
- Testify in any formal or adjudicative process.
- Make management decisions.
- Serve as an agent of notice.
- Offer psychological counseling.
- Replace or supersede existing channels for grievances, complaints, or appeals.
- Make decisions, render judgments, or change/overtake agency decisions on issues.
- Compel or order an employee or agency manager to take a specific action.
- Serve as a witness in an administrative or legal proceeding unless otherwise compelled by law.
- Engage in any situation that could create a conflict of interest. The Workplace Conflict Consultation Program Director has the sole discretion and authority to terminate a client engagement at any time if/when a particular situation is deemed inappropriate for this program.
- Guarantee a resolution.

CONFIDENTIAL CONSULTATIONS

State employees and agency management at all levels can pre-schedule a one-hour, confidential phone consultation with the Workplace Conflict Consultation Program to discuss their workplace concerns. To schedule a confidential consultation, employees and agency management will initially contact the EDR AdviceLine at **1(888)232-3842** to speak with an AdviceLine Consultant. The AdviceLine Consultant will then determine whether the workplace concerns can be immediately addressed through a brief AdviceLine consultation or whether it is appropriate for a one-hour confidential consultation with the Workplace Conflict Consultation Program. If the workplace concerns are appropriate for confidential consultation with the Workplace Conflict Consultation Program, the AdviceLine Consultant will pre-schedule the employee or agency manager for a one-hour session. The AdviceLine Consultant may also refer any AdviceLine call that deemed appropriate for a confidential consultation with the Workplace Conflict Consultation Program at any time.

In order to schedule a confidential consultation with the Workplace Conflict Consultation Program, the AdviceLine Consultant will consider the nature of the workplace conflict the employee or agency manager is calling about. If the workplace conflict has an interpersonal, organizational, emotional, evaluative relationship, or peer relationship dynamic to it, the AdviceLine Consultant will proceed with scheduling a one-hour confidential phone consultation with the Workplace Conflict Consultation Program.

The Workplace Conflict Consultation Program is intended to maintain a level of informality. All workplace concerns and responses are to be absolutely confidential. Only those people essential to the workplace concern or complaint need to know the nature of the concern and names may only be released with permission from the employee or agency manager. An exception to that rule is in the event of threatened harm by an employee or agency manager. In that case, the Workplace Conflict Consultation Program Director has a duty to report and warn of the harm.