
HUMAN RESOURCES, LEGAL COMPLIANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT

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The Department of Human Resources, Legal Compliance and Risk Management (Department) partners with municipal departments to align the municipal organization's most valuable resources – *its employees* – with organizational values and goals, while fostering an environment where employees are provided with training and professional development opportunities and prepared for career advancement. In its Legal Compliance role, DEPARTMENT ensures compliance with employment and labor laws, as well as workplace health and safety regulations, by working across departments to develop practical approaches to personnel systems, including but not limited to recruitment and selection, performance and training, compensation and classification, and labor relations. Regarding Risk Management, the Town's Insurance Carrier underwriters have recognized the Department's risk management functions as best practices and attributed organizational practices for the low rate of public officials' liability matters. The Department provides administrative review and support for compliance programs regulated by the Connecticut Occupational Safety & Health Administration, coordinates mandatory safety training and Town Safety Committee activities, and maintains related written compliance plans. For a comprehensive list of Department functions, please view the Department Overview PowerPoint on the Department's home webpage.



The Department maintains an open-door policy across all levels and work groups. Through formal training—but most often through daily interactions with Town employees, Department staff apprise employees and supervisors alike of their rights, responsibilities and trends relative to a host of issues affecting the workplace, including performance management; promotion and career advancement; review of job descriptions in terms of the classification system; and continuing education and tuition reimbursement programs.

The Department works with vendors to facilitate training on team-building, leadership skills, health and safety, and matters related to mental health and well-being. Many of these training sessions are sponsored free of charge by the Town's insurance providers. Department staff provide live training and guidelines to search committees on conducting and documenting objective recruitment and hiring activities, and addressing unconscious bias in applicant review and selection decisions. As an internal resource, the Department Director developed training on a wide variety of topics for both supervisory and non-supervisory employees.

The Fiscal Year presented opportunities for training beyond the Department's annual training requirements and topics. Those opportunities are highlighted as follows:

- Lunch & Learn Seminars were held on topics relating to coping with stress, communication skills, working as a team, time management and managing priorities.
- The Department coordinated training regarding the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Ethics for Boards and Commissions.
- The Department, in conjunction with the BOE, facilitated annually mandated OSHA training for Facilities, Parks and Public Works staff. Topics included Asbestos Awareness, Hearing Conservation, Bloodborne Pathogens, Hazard Communication, Lock out Tag out, Confined Space, Tickborne Illnesses, Respiratory Silica, Ladder Safety, Preventing Sprains & Strains, and Slips, Trips & Falls.
- The Department and the Police Department provided Active Assailant training to Town staff utilizing ALICE Training principles that are recognized as best practices by various federal agencies including the Department of Justice.
- The Department facilitated employees' use of the online training platform sponsored by the Town's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider.
- Employees from the Town and BOE were invited to attend individual meetings with their retirement plan account representative relative to their Defined Contribution Plans and Deferred Compensation Plans.

The Department continued in its role as staff support for the **Commission on Inclusion and Innovation** (Commission), which was empaneled by the Town Council after its unanimous adoption of Ordinance No. 288-21. Town Council charged the Commission with promoting productive dialogues amongst the diverse facets of Rocky Hill; facilitating community-wide education programs that build awareness; basing goals and priorities on community input, data analytics and facts; and modeling best practices in navigating difficult conversations.

The following statistics reference some of the Department's key functions in fiscal year 2022 – 2023:



PERSONNEL TRANSACTIONS, RECRUITMENT AND HIRING PROCESS

The Department ensures that personnel transactions such as hires, promotions, transfers, terminations, compensation decisions and other employment actions are aligned with the Municipal Employees Relations Act (MERA), the Connecticut Fair Employment Practices Act (CFEPA) and other state and federal laws, the municipality's classification system, and collective bargaining agreements. The Department facilitates training and procedures designed to address job vacancies through an objective evaluation and hiring process. Guidance materials developed by the Department are utilized across departments. As a testament to its partnership with departments, Department staff are invited by department heads and search committee chairs to monitor and assist with applicant interviews and evaluations. The Department helps departments balance interests in hiring the best qualified candidate with concerns for speedy outcomes—while ensuring compliance with applicable laws and best practices.

The Department administers the employment process, facilitating key activities and drafting associated documents, including job postings, applicant correspondence, interview questions, offer letters, background checks, payroll authorizations, and other pre-employment related activities such as medical assessments. The Department also facilitates tuition reimbursements, conducts exit interviews, monitors unemployment benefits claims and participates in hearings regarding the same before the Connecticut Department of Labor.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW CASES

The Department investigates internal complaints of discrimination, sexual harassment, hostile work environment, and retaliation, amongst other matters, as directed by the Town Manager. Investigation protocols and standards of review are directly aligned with state and federal oversight authorities' requirements and guidelines (i.e., Connecticut Commission on Human Rights & Opportunities (CHRO), and the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC)). Whenever possible, and if appropriate, the Department mediates employee conflicts through informal means with union representatives and supervisors. The Department Director represents the Town's interests and participates in pre-litigation proceedings, and attends hearings before the CHRO, Department of Labor, and federal and state courts. Early intervention and informal efforts to resolve employee relations issues result in cost savings for the Town by decreasing the number of claims filed.

LABOR RELATIONS, CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS AND GRIEVANCES

The Department values its relationships with union leaders and employee representatives. The Department strives to cultivate collegial, joint problem-solving efforts which lead to improvements in personnel systems and increased morale and productivity across departments. The Department conducts research and prepares proposals for labor contract negotiations, tentative agreements, memoranda of understanding, and new and updated job descriptions. Department staff field questions from supervisors and union representatives regarding compensation, the classification system, performance management, promotions and transfers.

When informal conflict resolution cannot be achieved and grievances are filed, as directed by the Town Manager, the Department Director crafts response briefs and participates in arbitrations before Connecticut's State Labor Board of Mediation and Arbitration.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND OSHA COMPLIANCE

The Department facilitates safety and OSHA-related training programs for employees across departments. The Department partners with department Directors relative to OSHA mandated compliance plans, which are posted for public reference. Additionally, the Department coordinates the activities of the Town's Safety Committee, which is comprised of employee representatives across departments and titles, and includes Board of Education representatives. The Department administers the Town's workers' compensation program. The Department Director attends Workers' Compensation Commission hearings, while the Human Resources Assistant coordinates workers' compensation matter intake, is the liaison with the Town's preferred provider, and facilitates light duty/return-to-work plans. The workers' compensation function is continuously recognized for its low claims pattern and low frequency and severity rates by CIRMA.

Additionally, the Department administers the Town's random drug testing program and Zero Tolerance Drug and Alcohol Policy, and the United States Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse, an online database giving employers access to information about CDL driver drug and alcohol program violations.

The Department is also administers the Town's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

COMPLIANCE WITH AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT & FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

The Town is committed to providing access to its programs and facilities, and is dedicated to assisting employees who are unable to work because of their own serious health condition or the serious health condition of a family member. The Department works across departments and consults with supervisory and non-supervisory employees to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

Through training and facilitating *interactive process* discussions, the Department assists Directors, supervisors and employees with developing reasonable accommodations that balance the needs and rights of employees with the business interests of the municipal organization, thereby ensuring compliance with the ADA. With regard to FMLA, beyond minimal compliance, the Department has adopted best practices in communicating with employees and health care providers. For each employee request, Department staff ensures the use of updated forms and standardized correspondence readily accepted by the federal Department of Labor—which serves to mitigate potential liability for the Town.

The Department Director serves as the ADA Coordinator for Town, in partnership with the Director of Human, Youth & Senior Services. The Department works with local organizations including the Americans with Disabilities Act of Coalition of Connecticut (ADACC) and the New England ADA Center. The Department also works closely with other internal departments to conduct updates of Civil Rights policies and provide guidance regarding the same.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

The goal of the Town of Rocky Hill is to courteously and promptly provide requested information in compliance with the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which

grants public access to all public records maintained or kept on file by the municipality except those records free from disclosure under the FOIA. Most public records are readily available for inspection upon request during regular business hours, such as those maintained by the office of the Town Clerk and other municipal offices. The Department is often called upon when requests relate to records that contain information that may be confidential or private. The Department reviews such requests through the lens of statutory exceptions, exemptions and exclusions to balance public disclosure and individual privacy interests. The Department communicates frequently with FOIA Commission representatives to ensure compliance in this area and participates in hearings before the FOI Commission (FOIC).