The Department of Human Resources and Legal Compliance (HRLC) 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, HRLC 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. For a comprehensive list of Department functions, please view the HRLC Department Overview PowerPoint on the Department’s home webpage.

HRLC maintains an open-door policy across all levels and work groups. Through formal training—but most often through daily interactions with Town employees, HRLC 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.

HRLC works with vendors to facilitate training on team-building, leadership skills, and health and safety matters. Many of these training sessions are sponsored free of charge by the Town’s insurance providers. HRLC 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 HRLC Director developed training on a wide variety of topics which was rolled out to both supervisory and non-supervisory employees.

Fiscal Year 2019 – 2020 brought several opportunities for training beyond HRLC’s annual training requirements and topics. Those opportunities are highlighted as follows:

- HRLC partnered with OneDigital to develop a series of employee focused seminars to introduce the new High Deductible Health Plan and Health Savings Account.
- Based on the Times Up Act passed in 2019, the HRLC Director designed multiple training sessions, specialized for either supervisors or employees, regarding the topic of sexual harassment. These trainings were held for both Town and Board of Education employees and over 400 employees were trained.
- Police Department Representatives and HRLC held a training session for members of the Senior Center for active shooter response training. In coordination with Information
Technology and CIRMA, HRLC coordinated Cyber Security Training sessions to educate employees about risks.

Fiscal Year 2019 – 2020 had a unique impact in the workplace due to COVID-19. Municipalities and employers across the state had to shift priorities from “business as usual” to keeping employees safe from the spread of COVID-19. The Governor’s Office issued several Executive Orders from “Stay Safe, Stay Home” to mask mandates, a travel advisory, and several other Executive Orders impacting business. Departments united together using collective resources and created a safe place for everyone – residents, vendors and employees. In consultation with the Town Manager, HRLC distributed employee communications regarding the latest guidance and best practices from federal, state and local authorities relative to COVID-19.

The following statistics reference some of HRLC’s key functions in fiscal year 2019-2020:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee Relations and Administrative Review Cases</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Medical Leave Act and Americans with Disability Act Cases</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of Information Act Requests</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searches to Fill Vacancies</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PERSONNEL TRANSACTIONS, RECRUITMENT AND HIRING PROCESS

HRLC ensures that personnel transactions such as hires, promotions, transfers, terminations, compensation decisions and other employment actions are aligned with 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. HRLC facilitates training and procedures designed to address job vacancies through an objective evaluation and hiring process. Guidance materials developed by HRLC are utilized across departments. As a testament to its partnership with departments, HRLC staff are invited by department heads and search committee chairs to monitor and assist with applicant interviews and evaluations. HRLC helps departments balance interests in hiring the best qualified candidate with concerns for speedy outcomes—while ensuring compliance with applicable laws and best practices.
HRLC 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

HRLC 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, HRLC mediates employee conflicts through informal means with union representatives and supervisors. The HRLC 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

HRLC 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. HRLC conducts research and prepares proposals for labor contract negotiations, tentative agreements, memoranda of understanding, and new and updated job descriptions. HRLC 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 HRLC Director crafts response briefs and participates in arbitrations before Connecticut’s State Labor Board of Mediation and Arbitration.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND OSHA COMPLIANCE

HRLC facilitates safety and OSHA-related training programs for employees across departments. HRLC partners with department Directors relative to OSHA mandated compliance plans, which are posted for public reference. Additionally, HRLC 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. In FY ’19 – ’20, HRLC assisted the Police Department to create a Respirator Program and Public Works to create a Crystalline Silica Program in accordance with OSHA requirements.

HRLC administers the Town’s workers’ compensation program. The HRLC 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. In FY ’19
- '20, HRLC shared information with public safety leadership to build awareness of the new Post Traumatic Stress Disorder laws surrounding workers compensation.

Additionally, HRLC administers the Town’s random drug testing program and Zero Tolerance Drug and Alcohol Policy. In FY '19 – '20, the United States Department of Transportation’s Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration established a Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse, an online database giving employers access to information about CDL driver drug and alcohol program violations.

Also, HRLC is the Town’s liaison with the 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. HRLC 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, HRLC 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, HRLC has adopted best practices in communicating with employees and health care providers. For each employee request, HRLC 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 HRLC Director serves as the ADA Coordinator for the Town in partnership with the Director of Human, Youth & Senior Services. HRLC works with local organizations including the America 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. HRLC is often called upon when requests relate to records that contain information that may be confidential or private. HRLC reviews such requests through the lens of statutory exceptions, exemptions and exclusions to balance public disclosure and individual privacy interests. HRLC communicates frequently with FOIA Commission representatives to ensure compliance in this area and participates in hearings before the FOI Commission (FOIC).