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Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

## Sexual Harassment Policy

### Purpose

Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. (ACNC) is committed to maintaining a workplace free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is a form of workplace discrimination. All employees are required to work in a manner that prevents sexual harassment in the workplace. This Policy represents one component of Audubon Community Nature Center's commitment to a discrimination-free work environment. Sexual harassment is against the law, and all employees have a legal right to a workplace free from sexual harassment. Employees are urged to report sexual harassment by filing a complaint internally with Audubon Community Nature Center. Employees can also file a complaint with a government agency or in court under federal, state or local anti-discrimination laws.

### Scope

Audubon Community Nature Center's sexual harassment policy applies to all employees, applicants for employment, interns, whether paid or unpaid, contractors, persons conducting business, and volunteers with ACNC.

### Procedure

This policy and the attached complaint form will be reviewed by both full-time and part-time employees of ACNC on an annual basis. Training related to the policy will also take place every year, commencing in January of 2019. New employees of ACNC will receive a copy of the policy and complaint form in addition to training within 10 days of their first day of employment. The President of ACNC will be responsible for the proper distribution and training related to the policy. The policy and complaint form will also be located in the ACNC Employee Manual.

In addition, a copy of the policy will be made available to all ACNC volunteers both electronically as well as a hard copy located at the Reception Desk. Volunteers will be asked to review the policy, and sign that they have read, understand, and will adhere to the policy's guidelines. The Volunteer Coordinator will also include the sexual harassment policy as a part of the New Volunteer training process.

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 1 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018      Revised –

**This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.**  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

## Policy

1. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated. Any employee or individual covered by this policy who engages in sexual harassment or retaliation will be subject to remedial and/or disciplinary action (e.g., counseling, suspension, or termination).
  
2. Retaliation Prohibition: No person covered by this Policy shall be subject to adverse action because the employee reports an incident of sexual harassment, provides information, or otherwise assists in any investigation of a sexual harassment complaint. ACNC will not tolerate such retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports or provides information about suspected sexual harassment. Any employee of ACNC who retaliates against anyone involved in a sexual harassment investigation will be subjected to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. All employees, paid or unpaid interns, or non-employees working in the workplace who believe they have been subject to such retaliation should inform a supervisor, manager, President, or Board Chairperson. All employees, paid or unpaid interns or non-employees who believe they have been a target of such retaliation may also seek relief in other available forums, as explained below in the section on Legal Protections.
  
3. Sexual harassment is offensive, is a violation of our policies, is unlawful, and may subject ACNC to liability for harm to targets of sexual harassment. Harassers may also be individually subject to liability. Employees of every level who engage in sexual harassment, including managers and supervisors who engage in sexual harassment or who allow such behavior to continue, will be penalized for such misconduct.
  
4. ACNC will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation that ensures due process for all parties, whenever management receives a complaint about sexual harassment, or otherwise knows of possible sexual harassment occurring. ACNC will keep the investigation confidential to the extent possible. Effective corrective action will be taken whenever sexual harassment is found to have occurred. All employees, including managers and supervisors, are required to cooperate with any internal investigation of sexual harassment.

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 2 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018      Revised –

**This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.**  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

5. All employees are encouraged to report any harassment or behaviors that violate this policy. ACNC will provide all employees a complaint form for employees to report harassment and file complaints. This complaint form can also be found attached to this policy.
6. Managers and supervisors are **required** to report any complaint that they receive, or any harassment that they observe or become aware of, to the President. If the complaint is being made against the President, then it should be referred directly to the Board Chairperson for review.
7. This policy applies to all employees, paid or unpaid interns, and non-employees and all must follow and uphold this policy. This policy must be provided to all employees and should be posted prominently in all work locations to the extent practicable (for example, in a main office, not an offsite work location) and be provided to employees upon hiring. ACNC will post this policy and the complaint form in the Employee Manual, as well as at the Reception Desk.

### **What Is Defined as “Sexual Harassment”?**

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is unlawful under federal, state, and (where applicable) local law. Sexual harassment includes harassment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, self-identified or perceived sex, gender expression, gender identity and the status of being transgender.

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome conduct which is either of a sexual nature, or which is directed at an individual because of that individual’s sex when:

- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, even if the reporting individual is not the intended target of the sexual harassment;
- Such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment; or

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 3 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018      Revised –

**This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.**  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting an individual's employment.

A sexually harassing hostile work environment includes, but is not limited to, words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation or physical violence which are of a sexual nature, or which are directed at an individual because of that individual's sex. Sexual harassment also consists of any unwanted verbal or physical advances, sexually explicit derogatory statements or sexually discriminatory remarks made by someone which are offensive or objectionable to the recipient, which cause the recipient discomfort or humiliation, which interfere with the recipient's job performance.

Sexual harassment also occurs when a person in authority tries to trade job benefits for sexual favors. This can include hiring, promotion, continued employment or any other terms, conditions or privileges of employment. This is also called "quid pro quo" harassment.

Any employee who feels harassed should report so that any violation of this policy can be corrected promptly. Any harassing conduct, even a single incident, can be addressed under this policy.

### **Examples of Sexual Harassment**

The following describes some of the types of acts that may be unlawful sexual harassment and that are strictly prohibited:

- Physical acts of a sexual nature, such as:
  - Touching, pinching, patting, kissing, hugging, grabbing, brushing against another employee's body or poking another employee's body;
  - Rape, sexual battery, molestation or attempts to commit these assaults.
- Unwanted sexual advances or propositions, such as:
  - Requests for sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning the target's job performance evaluation, a promotion or other job benefits or detriments;
  - Subtle or obvious pressure for unwelcome sexual activities.

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 4 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018      Revised –

**This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.**  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

- Sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks or jokes, or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience, which create a hostile work environment.
- Sex stereotyping occurs when conduct or personality traits are considered inappropriate simply because they may not conform to other people's ideas or perceptions about how individuals of a particular sex should act or look.
- Sexual or discriminatory displays or publications anywhere in the workplace, such as:
  - Displaying pictures, posters, calendars, graffiti, objects, promotional material, reading materials or other materials that are sexually demeaning or pornographic. This includes such sexual displays on workplace computers or cell phones and sharing such displays while in the workplace.
- Hostile actions taken against an individual because of that individual's sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and the status of being transgender, such as:
  - Interfering with, destroying or damaging a person's workstation, tools or equipment, or otherwise interfering with the individual's ability to perform the job;
  - Sabotaging an individual's work;
  - Bullying, yelling, name-calling.

### **Who can be a target of sexual harassment?**

Sexual harassment can occur between any individuals, regardless of their sex or gender. New York Law protects employees, paid or unpaid interns, and non-employees, including independent contractors, and those employed by companies contracting to provide services in the workplace. Harassers can be a superior, a subordinate, a coworker or anyone in the workplace including an independent contractor, contract worker, vendor, client, customer or visitor.

### **Where can sexual harassment occur?**

Unlawful sexual harassment is not limited to the physical workplace itself. It can occur while employees are traveling for business or at employer sponsored events or parties. Calls, texts, emails, and social media usage by employees can constitute unlawful workplace harassment, even if they occur away from the workplace premises, on personal devices or during non-work hours.

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 5 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018      Revised –

**This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.**  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

## Retaliation

Unlawful retaliation can be any action that could discourage a worker from coming forward to make or support a sexual harassment claim. Adverse action need not be job-related or occur in the workplace to constitute unlawful retaliation (e.g., threats of physical violence outside of work hours).

Such retaliation is unlawful under federal, state, and (where applicable) local law. The New York State Human Rights Law protects any individual who has engaged in “protected activity.”

Protected activity occurs when a person has:

- made a complaint of sexual harassment, either internally or with any anti-discrimination agency;
- testified or assisted in a proceeding involving sexual harassment under the Human Rights Law or other anti-discrimination law;
- opposed sexual harassment by making a verbal or informal complaint to management, or by simply informing a supervisor or manager of harassment;
- reported that another employee has been sexually harassed; or
- encouraged a fellow employee to report harassment.

Even if the alleged harassment does not turn out to rise to the level of a violation of law, the individual is protected from retaliation if the person had a good faith belief that the practices were unlawful. However, the retaliation provision is not intended to protect persons making intentionally false charges of harassment.

## Reporting Sexual Harassment

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 6 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018      Revised –

**This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.**  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

**Preventing sexual harassment is everyone’s responsibility.** ACNC cannot prevent or remedy sexual harassment unless it knows about it. Any employee, paid or unpaid intern or non-employee who has been subjected to behavior that may constitute sexual harassment is encouraged to report such behavior to a supervisor, manager or the President. Anyone who witnesses or becomes aware of potential instances of sexual harassment should report such behavior to a supervisor, manager or President.

Reports of sexual harassment may be made verbally or in writing. A form for submission of a written complaint is attached to this Policy, and all employees are encouraged to use this complaint form. Employees who are reporting sexual harassment on behalf of other employees should use the complaint form and note that it is on another employee’s behalf.

Employees, paid or unpaid interns or non-employees who believe they have been a target of sexual harassment may also seek assistance in other available forums, as explained below in the section on Legal Protections.

### **Supervisory Responsibilities**

All supervisors and managers who receive a complaint or information about suspected sexual harassment, observe what may be sexually harassing behavior or for any reason suspect that sexual harassment is occurring, **are required** to report such suspected sexual harassment to the President. If the complaint is being made about the President specifically, then it is up to the Board Chairperson to conduct an investigation, and hold the President accountable for their actions.

In addition to being subject to discipline if they engaged in sexually harassing conduct themselves, supervisors and managers will be subject to discipline for failing to report suspected sexual harassment or otherwise knowingly allowing sexual harassment to continue.

Supervisors and managers will also be subject to discipline for engaging in any retaliation.

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 7 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018      Revised –

**This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.**  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

## **Complaint and Investigation of Sexual Harassment**

All complaints or information about sexual harassment will be investigated, whether that information was reported in verbal or written form. Investigations will be conducted in a timely manner, and will be confidential to the extent possible.

An investigation of any complaint, information or knowledge of suspected sexual harassment will be prompt and thorough, commenced immediately and completed as soon as possible. The investigation will be kept confidential to the extent possible. All persons involved, including complainants, witnesses and alleged harassers will be accorded due process, as outlined below, to protect their rights to a fair and impartial investigation.

Any employee may be required to cooperate as needed in an investigation of suspected sexual harassment. ACNC will not tolerate retaliation against employees who file complaints, support another's complaint or participate in an investigation regarding a violation of this policy.

While the process may vary from case to case, investigations should be done in accordance with the following steps:

- Upon receipt of complaint, the President or Board Chairperson will conduct an immediate review of the allegations, and take any interim actions (e.g., instructing the respondent to refrain from communications with the complainant), as appropriate. If complaint is verbal, encourage the individual to complete the "Complaint Form" in writing. If he or she refuses, prepare a Complaint Form based on the verbal reporting.
- If documents, emails or phone records are relevant to the investigation, take steps to obtain and preserve them.
- Request and review all relevant documents, including all electronic communications.
- Interview all parties involved, including any relevant witnesses;
- Create a written documentation of the investigation (such as a letter, memo or email), which contains the following:

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 8 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018      Revised –



**This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.**  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

- A list of all documents reviewed, along with a detailed summary of relevant documents;
  - A list of names of those interviewed, along with a detailed summary of their statements;
  - A timeline of events;
  - A summary of prior relevant incidents, reported or unreported; and
  - The basis for the decision and final resolution of the complaint, together with any corrective action(s).
- Keep the written documentation and associated documents in a secure and confidential location.
  - Promptly notify the individual who reported and the individual(s) about whom the complaint was made of the final determination and implement any corrective actions identified in the written document.
  - Inform the individual who reported of the right to file a complaint or charge externally as outlined in the next section.

### **Legal Protections and External Remedies**

Sexual harassment is not only prohibited by ACNC but is also prohibited by state, federal, and, where applicable, local law.

Aside from the internal process at ACNC, employees may also choose to pursue legal remedies with the following governmental entities. While a private attorney is not required to file a complaint with a governmental agency, you may seek the legal advice of an attorney.

In addition to those outlined below, employees in certain industries may have additional legal protections.

#### **State Human Rights Law (HRL)**

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 9 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018      Revised –

**This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.**  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

The Human Rights Law (HRL), codified as N.Y. Executive Law, art. 15, § 290 et seq., applies to all employers in New York State with regard to sexual harassment, and protects employees, paid or unpaid interns and non-employees, regardless of immigration status. A complaint alleging violation of the Human Rights Law may be filed either with the Division of Human Rights (DHR) or in New York State Supreme Court.

Complaints with DHR may be filed any time **within one year** of the harassment. If an individual did not file at DHR, they can sue directly in state court under the HRL, **within three years** of the alleged sexual harassment. An individual may not file with DHR if they have already filed a HRL complaint in state court.

Complaining internally to ACNC does not extend your time to file with DHR or in court. The one year or three years is counted from date of the most recent incident of harassment.

You do not need an attorney to file a complaint with DHR, and there is no cost to file with DHR.

DHR will investigate your complaint and determine whether there is probable cause to believe that sexual harassment has occurred. Probable cause cases are forwarded to a public hearing before an administrative law judge. If sexual harassment is found after a hearing, DHR has the power to award relief, which varies but may include requiring your employer to take action to stop the harassment, or redress the damage caused, including paying of monetary damages, attorney's fees and civil fines.

DHR's main office contact information is: NYS Division of Human Rights, One Fordham Plaza, Fourth Floor, Bronx, New York 10458. You may call (718) 741-8400 or visit: [www.dhr.ny.gov](http://www.dhr.ny.gov).

Contact DHR at (888) 392-3644 or visit [dhr.ny.gov/complaint](http://dhr.ny.gov/complaint) for more information about filing a complaint. The website has a complaint form that can be downloaded, filled out, notarized and mailed to DHR. The website also contains contact information for DHR's regional offices across New York State.

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 10 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018      Revised –

**This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.**  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

### **Civil Rights Act of 1964**

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces federal anti-discrimination laws, including Title VII of the 1964 federal Civil Rights Act (codified as 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.). An individual can file a complaint with the EEOC anytime within 300 days from the harassment. There is no cost to file a complaint with the EEOC. The EEOC will investigate the complaint, and determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that discrimination has occurred, at which point the EEOC will issue a Right to Sue letter permitting the individual to file a complaint in federal court.

The EEOC does not hold hearings or award relief, but may take other action including pursuing cases in federal court on behalf of complaining parties. Federal courts may award remedies if discrimination is found to have occurred. In general, private employers must have at least 15 employees to come within the jurisdiction of the EEOC.

An employee alleging discrimination at work can file a “Charge of Discrimination.” The EEOC has district, area, and field offices where complaints can be filed. Contact the EEOC by calling 1-800-669-4000 (TTY: 1-800-669-6820), visiting their website at [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov) or via email at [info@eeoc.gov](mailto:info@eeoc.gov).

If an individual filed an administrative complaint with DHR, DHR will file the complaint with the EEOC to preserve the right to proceed in federal court.

### **Local Protections**

Many localities enforce laws protecting individuals from sexual harassment and discrimination. An individual should contact the county, city or town in which they live to find out if such a law exists. For example, employees who work in New York City may file complaints of sexual harassment with the New York City Commission on Human Rights. Contact their main office at Law Enforcement Bureau of the NYC Commission on Human Rights, 40 Rector Street, 10th Floor, New York, New York; call 311 or (212) 306-7450; or visit [www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/html/home/home.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/html/home/home.shtml).

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 11 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018 Revised –



1600 Riverside Road  
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This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

### Contact the Local Police Department

If the harassment involves unwanted physical touching, coerced physical confinement or coerced sex acts, the conduct may constitute a crime. Contact the local police department.

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 12 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018      Revised –



1600 Riverside Road  
Jamestown, NY 14701

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This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

## Audubon Community Nature Center Sexual Harassment Complaint Form

New York State Labor Law requires all employers to adopt a sexual harassment prevention policy that includes a complaint form to report alleged incidents of sexual harassment.

If you believe that you have been subjected to sexual harassment, you are encouraged to complete this form and submit it to Leigh Rovegno, President, email: [lrovegno@auduboncnc.org](mailto:lrovegno@auduboncnc.org). You will not be retaliated against for filing a complaint.

If you are more comfortable reporting verbally or in another manner, please schedule an appointment to meet with the President, and they will complete this form, provide you with a copy and follow its sexual harassment prevention policy by investigating the claims as outlined at the end of this form.

If the complaint is being against the President, please contact the Board Chairperson directly.

For additional resources, visit: [ny.gov/programs/combating-sexual-harassment-workplace](http://ny.gov/programs/combating-sexual-harassment-workplace)

### Complaint Information

Name:

Work Address:

Work Phone:

Job Title:

Email:

Select Preferred Communication Method:

Email  Phone  In person

### Supervisory Information

Immediate Supervisor's Name:

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 13 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018 Revised –



1600 Riverside Road  
Jamestown, NY 14701

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This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

Title:

Work Phone:

Work Address:

### Complaint Information

1. Your complaint of Sexual Harassment is made about:

Name:

Title:

Work Address:

Work Phone:

Relationship to you: Supervisor Subordinate Co-Worker Other

2. Please describe what happened and how it is affecting you and your work. Please use additional sheets of paper if necessary and attach any relevant documents or evidence.

3. Date(s) sexual harassment occurred:

Is the sexual harassment continuing? Yes No

4. Please list the name and contact information of any witnesses or individuals who may have information related to your complaint:

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 14 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018 Revised –



1600 Riverside Road  
 Jamestown, NY 14701

auduboncnc.org  
 (716) 569-2345

This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.  
 Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

*The last question is optional, but may help the investigation.*

- 5. Have you previously complained or provided information (verbal or written) about related incidents? If yes, when and to whom did you complain or provide information?

If you have retained legal counsel and would like us to work with them, please provide their contact information.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 15 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018 Revised –

**This policy and its addendums, appendices and forms may not be altered.**  
Contact the executive reviewer(s) listed in this policy's footer regarding requests for revision

## Instructions for Employers

If you receive a complaint about alleged sexual harassment, follow your sexual harassment prevention policy.

An investigation involves:

- Speaking with the employee
- Speaking with the alleged harasser
- Interviewing witnesses
- Collecting and reviewing any related documents

While the process may vary from case to case, all allegations should be investigated promptly and resolved as quickly as possible. The investigation should be kept confidential to the extent possible.

Document the findings of the investigation and basis for your decision along with any corrective actions taken and notify the employee and the individual(s) against whom the complaint was made. This may be done via email.

<b>CHAPTER –</b>	Manual: Audubon Community Nature Center, Inc. Employee Manual	
Section(s):	Application:	
Regulatory Reference:	Attachment(s):	
Computer Ref:	Executive Reviewer(s): Leigh Rovegno	
Page 16 of 16	Administrative Review: Board	Approved: 12/10/2018      Revised –