



EEO Gender Identity

DEP prides itself on maintaining a safe, productive, and healthy working environment. The Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) office promotes this effort by ensuring that the workplace is free of discrimination. At the EEO office, we recognize that informing and educating the workforce about anti-discrimination laws is crucial to achieving this goal.

Discrimination against individuals on the basis of race, color, creed, age, national origin, religion, alienage or citizenship status, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, and genetic disposition is both illegal and against DEP policy.

The law affords protection against discrimination in employment based on arrest or conviction record, as well as status as a victim of domestic violence, stalking and sex offenses. But did you know that discrimination on the basis of gender identity is also a protected category? In the State of New York, it's been illegal since 2002 to engage in discriminatory practice on the basis of one's gender identity with regard to recruitment, hiring, firing, promotions, wages, job assignments, training, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment.

"Gender" is not synonymous with "sex." While sex refers to the born-with female or male anatomical or physical markers, "gender" is constructed by social ideas of what roles, behaviors, and actions are associated with each sex.

Gender identity is an individual's sense, or internal self-conception, of identifying with a particular gender. It is important to note that a person's view of his/her gender varies from person to person, and may not necessarily conform to societally expected standards.

A familiar example is a transgender individual. While this person may be born with female or male reproductive organs, he or she might identify with a gender identity that does not match society's expectations of how that individual should behave. These individuals might make simple outward expressions — such as a change in attire and the use of personal pro-

nouns— or they may seek medical/surgical procedures to modify their physical features.

A person's gender identity is an integral part of one's sense of self, and important to the person's life and wellbeing.



Partnership Profiles: Deputy Commissioner Vincent Sapienza

Vincent Sapienza began his career with DEP as a college intern in 1981. After nearly three decades of service at the agency, in 2009 he was named Deputy Commissioner of DEP's Bureau of Wastewater Treatment (BWT). Today, he is responsible for leading one of the most advanced and complex wastewater treatment facilities, while striving for excellence and progress every step of the way.

Beyond his operational success at BWT, DC Sapienza has demonstrated a strong commitment to the agency's EEO mission. He combines this dedication with a solid understanding of employee dynamics and has provided effective solutions to workplace challenges and initiatives.

DC Sapienza embraces his role as the head of a multi-faceted and diverse bureau. He emphasizes that in such an environment, it is particularly important that all employees are tolerant of their coworkers' differences, and he has partnered with EEO to improve BWT's work environment. He has taken a personal approach to resolving conflicts, and says that DEP is not trying to "change values or beliefs." Rather, its focus is on "making sure that everyone follows established laws and regulations."

DC Sapienza frequently visits the various plants; he listens to employee concerns, and provides biannual EEO presentations for all bureau employees. He recognizes that everyone, including EEO representatives, are part of one unit that must work together to achieve the best results for the department as a whole. Since his appointment as Deputy Commissioner, EEO complaints have declined and the bureau appointed its first female deputy superintendent.

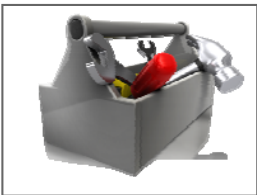
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With state-of-the-art equipment and technology, he points out the need for people with a particular skillset and his bureau's desire "to find the best people for our facilities." He stresses that it is essential that BWT create a safe and EEO compliant environment in order to attract and retain a highly skilled and diverse workforce.

For the future, DC Sapienza hopes to further strengthen his bureau's relationship with EEO personnel and find new solutions to potential future challenges. Part of this requires ensuring that all employees understand that every member of the bureau, from engineers to plant workers to EEO personnel, are part of one big unit. He compares this to a working mechanical structure, viewing EEO enforcement as a necessary component that must be maintained in order to have a strong functioning organization.

Tips and Tools for Career

Advancement: Interview Techniques



It is DEP's mission to recruit and retain the best and brightest. DEP realizes that its success depends on developing its own employees, who are best situated to become the agency's future leaders. While diligence

and skill are essential to advancing your DEP career, being able to communicate your qualifications during an interview is equally important.

Helpful interview tips include:

Due diligence: Being prepared and doing research beforehand shows the employer you're serious and interested. Use the vacancy notice as a guide. Look at the listed notice, qualifications, employee expectations, and know how your experience relates.

Listen carefully: Pay close attention to all of the interviewer's instructions and questions. If you did not hear a question in its entirety, ask your interviewer to repeat it. Make sure that you fully understand the question and ask for clarification if needed.

Take your time when answering: It is good practice to pause for a second or two before delivering your answer. Keep your answer short, yet complete and to the point.

Take advantage of open-ended questions: Interviewers provide an opportunity for you to share any other qualifications you

may have. Take advantage of this. Prepare a statement in advance. In doing so, take into account your accomplishments and specific experiences that make you a strong candidate.



Diversity Corner

Hispanic Heritage Month - September

In 1968, Congress first designated the week including September 15 and 16 as National Hispanic Heritage Week. This week was chosen because the date corresponds with the anniversary of independence for five Latin American countries—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico declared its independence on September 16, and Chile did so on September 18.

In 1988, Congress expanded this heritage week to a full 31-day period beginning September 15. Hispanic Heritage Month also celebrates the long and important presence of Hispanic Americans in North America.

Disability Employment Awareness Month - October

In 1945, in an effort to assist disabled veterans, Congress designated the first week of October as National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week. In the 1970s, a historic shift in disability public policy occurred. For the first time, the exclusion of people with disabilities was viewed as discrimination.

The efforts of disability activists led to significant changes in the law, such as the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 and the designation of a full month to recognize the potential of America's millions of working-age people with disabilities.

German American Heritage Month - October

Beginning on October 6, 1987 as German-American Day, we now celebrate the culture and achievement of Americans of German descent during a month long period between September 15 and October 15. Established in 1995, German American Heritage Month spans these dates so as to encompass festivals like Oktoberfest and Stueben Day parades.

The celebration takes place in October as it is centered on German-American Day, October 6, the date on which the first German settlement was established in America at Germantown, Pennsylvania. It was officially declared German-American Day in 1987 by President Reagan.

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National Italian Heritage Month - October

Set in October to coincide with Columbus Day, Italian Heritage Month celebrates the many achievements and successes of Americans of Italian descent, as well as Italians living in America. The country was even named after the Italian explorer and geographer Amerigo Vespucci. It is also important to note that language plays a very large part of this celebration as it is thought of as an intrinsic part of Italian culture.

More than 5.4 million Italians immigrated to the United States between 1820 and 1992. Today, there are more than 26 million Americans of Italian descent in the United States, making them the fifth largest ethnic group.

Polish American Heritage Month – October

Since 1608, when the first Polish settlers arrived at Jamestown, Virginia, Polish people have been an important part of America's history and culture. Polish American Heritage month is celebrated each year in October to commemorate the contributions to American society made by those of Polish descent.

The first Polish settlers were glass blowers hired by the Virginia London Company to establish a glassmaking industry in the new colony. The glass products they made were the first manufactured in the fledgling American nation and the first to be exported to Europe for sale.



EEO FAQs

When should an employee consider a request for a reasonable accommodation?

The general rule is that an employer will provide an employee a reasonable accommodation for a disability or religious observance unless doing so would cause significant operational difficulty or undue hardship. The purpose of the accommodation is to enable the employee:

- ◆ To perform the essential functions of his/her particular job.
- ◆ To enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment.

To discuss EEO related concerns or learn about the resources available through this office, contact the EEO Office at (718) 595-3400 or EEOffice@dep.nyc.gov or visit us on [Pipeline](#).

Can you file an EEO claim if you are the victim of a hostile working environment?

A hostile work environment is one in which an employee is intimidated or offended by the unwelcome conduct of another employee or employees.

However, a hostile work environment is actionable in the EEO process *only* when it is based on allegations of discrimination based on a protected class. It is not discrimination, for example, if one employee is rude to another employee just because they have had an argument.

When can retaliation be an EEO issue?

Retaliation occurs when an employer engages in any adverse employment action against an employee because he/she engaged in a legally protected activity. However, retaliation becomes an EEO issue when the adverse employment action is because an employee engaged in certain EEO-protected activities. Examples of these activities include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Complaining about on the job discrimination;
- ◆ Filing a discrimination claim;
- ◆ Participating in an employment discrimination proceeding, such as an investigation.

Adverse employment actions may include a negative job action, such as demotion, discipline, termination, salary reduction, or job reassignment.

Important Contacts to Remember

Herb Roth, Career Counselor.....HRoth@dep.nyc.gov

Michael Walczyszyn, Investigator.....MichaelW@dep.nyc.gov

Tanika Thomas, Investigator.....TanikaT@dep.nyc.gov

Cavita Lewis, 55a Coordinator.....Cavital@dep.nyc.gov

James Cuggy, FMLA.....jimcuggy@dep.nyc.gov

Employees Assistance Program.....(718) 306-7660

Department of Investigation.....(212) 825-2413

DEP Workplace Violence Coordinator.....(718) 595-5266

NYC Domestic Violence Hotline.....(800) 621-HOPE