



# FDNY

# Creating A Culture of Inclusion

There is a lot of talk by intellectuals as to why diversity programs do not work. Implicit in many of these discussions appears to be a hope that diversity programs will fail. Many of these intellectuals, however, have never sat at the table of a firehouse, nor appreciated the unique role that diversity plays in an agency that strives to create a culture that both appreciates and supports the City that it serves. The truth is that diversity, whether cultural, professional, socio-economic, or otherwise, does not in of itself work alone. Diversity thrives in tandem with the creation of a culture of inclusion – one that allows leadership to combine a number of tools in our collective tool chest, including but not limited to training, mentoring, coaching, and structured accountability measures to sustain innovative and productive long-term commitment.

Thus, we uplift the contributions of the unique role that each one of us plays. Yet, we also celebrate the united efforts of affinity groups created by FDNY members, including but not limited to the Columbia Association, the FDNY Emerald Society, Fireflag/EMS, the FDNY Hellenic Society, the Hispanic Society, Ner Tamid, the FDNY Phoenix Society Association of NYC, the United Women Firefighters, and the Vulcan Society. With the diverse talents, perspectives and goals that each affinity group brings – which are too



numerous to list here but will be included on our new Diversity and Inclusion electronic platform (to be featured on Diamondplate) – we would be remiss not to mention the newest affinity group: the FDNY's Women's Benevolent Association (the "WBA"), which in many ways reflects in itself the best of all our affinity groups.

The WBA is unique in its infancy and through its openly inclusive mission, which is embodied in its open invitation to all to work with them to support women at FDNY. The founders and leaders of the WBA, EMS Deputy Chief Grace Cacciola, and EMS Captain Kathleen Knuth, recognize that the advancement of women can best be enhanced by the participation of everyone. Therefore, they are working closely with FDNY leadership to help devise new ways to encourage, promote, and advance women who are active in all aspects of fire and emergency medical services at the Fire Department.

Cacciola and Knuth believe that the success of the women at FDNY will be enhanced by supportive fellowship, increased training, better education, creative mentoring, and improved networking. Their goal is to support all women at all levels of FDNY – be they Civilian, Dispatch, EMS, Fire, or Inspection. They recognize the unique nature of FDNY as inclusive and thus accept as members anyone who wishes to support women at FDNY. Some of their first members are in fact men at FDNY, like Fire Chief John Sudnik and Fire Captain Mark Guerra, who are dedicated to the success of women at FDNY.

Both Cacciola and Knuth describe their careers at FDNY as "incredibly rewarding" and are honored by the ability to help all women succeed, explaining that "it is very difficult for any one woman to be successful without the support and success of all women." More importantly, they embrace a multitude of tools to help make diversity efforts work, especially those that are co-creative, proactive, accountable, and committed to the inclusion of all. We are excited by the creation of this new group and invite you to obtain further information regarding the WBA via e-mail to

Grace.Cacciola@fdny.nyc.gov or  
Kathleen.Knuth@fdny.nyc.gov.

**Cecilia B. Loving,**  
Deputy Commissioner  
and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer

## Vision, Mission and Goals for Diversity and Inclusion

### Vision

The excellence of the New York City Fire Department is enhanced by the ability to recruit, hire, retain and promote highly skilled, talented, and motivated members from diverse backgrounds. FDNY prides itself in attracting candidates of diverse gender, age, culture, race, religious preference and sexual orientation because the expression of unique ideas provide for better productivity, efficiency and service to a diverse and multi-faceted community.

### Mission

FDNY's mission is to maintain our high standard of excellence while accomplishing our recruitment, retention and inclusion goals.

### Goals

FDNY's goals are to uphold all federal, state, and local laws, and the FDNY rules and regulations regarding employment, to attract and retain qualified individuals from diverse backgrounds who are committed to the continued excellence of FDNY; to achieve and accept a diverse work force in terms of age, culture, ethnicity, gender, race, religious preference, sexual orientation, and the expression of unique philosophies and ideas; to provide all employees the opportunity for development and growth at every rank in FDNY; and to expect that all employees will treat each other with dignity and respect regardless of perceived differences.



**A WORD FROM FIRE COMMISSIONER DANIEL A. NIGRO:****FDNY Establishes Best Practices In Conjunction With The Equal Employment Practices Commission**

Over the course of the last year, the Equal Employment Practices Commission and FDNY have worked collaboratively to evaluate our equal opportunity program and formulate, develop and implement employment best practices. I am pleased to report the establishment of initiatives that will strengthen our EEO program and ensure that we not only comply with federal, state and local laws, but proactively create an environment that is diverse and inclusive for all.

These initiatives include, but are not limited to:

1. Identifying relevant professional and community organizations serving under-represented groups and collaborating with them when vacancies became available in discretionary-hire positions.
2. Reviewing EEO Complaints to identify barriers to equal opportunity and developing corrective actions.

As part of its proactive stance, the EEO office is training its staff as well as members of the entire Department. The EEO Office is also working directly with Department leadership to create a better awareness within the entire FDNY of both EEO objectives and resources.

3. Reviewing job titles and developing systems to ensure that selection criteria being utilized are job-related.
4. Conducting outreach to organizations serving underrepresented groups to attract interested and qualified candidates.
5. Reviewing the competencies, skills and abilities for available civil service positions to ensure that hiring standards are updated, job-related and required by business necessity.

6. Designating the FDNY Career Counselor.
7. Documenting decisions that impact the administration and operation of the EEO office.
8. Reinforcing the FDNY performance evaluation program by issuing reminders to staff concerning evaluation timetables.
9. Holding managers and supervisors responsible for making employment decisions based on merit and equal consideration through training and evaluations.

As Fire Commissioner, the principles of equal opportunity and diversity in employment are top priorities, as they are not only essential to performance of the best work possible but also to the accomplishment of the FDNY Strategic Plan. Under my leadership and the leadership of all of my executive staff, including but not limited to the First Deputy Commissioner, the Chief of Department, the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, and the Deputy Commissioner for Legal Affairs, the FDNY is committed to compliance with all federal, state and local laws supporting and enhancing best practices in equal employment opportunities, diversity and the most inclusive environment for all. Our objective is to be proactive and co-creative in the recruitment, employment, retention, promotion and advancement of employees on the basis of merit and fitness, and without regard to race, national origin, gender, religion, ethnicity or any other protected characteristics. In addition to preventing discrimination, harassment and/or retaliation in the work place, our goal is to ensure that every employee has an opportunity to contribute their diverse perspectives and talents to the FDNY's overall mission to protect the lives and property of the City of New York.

In April 2016, we adopted a Vision, Mission and Goals Statement (see *Mission Statement on Page 1*) that renews and revitalizes our commitment to embrace the diverse talents and perspectives of our current and prospective employees to fulfill our critical mission, as by so doing, we can only improve upon our stature as the premier Fire Department in the country.

We appreciate your assistance in our ongoing effort to accomplish our goal of maintaining a work environment that ensures equal opportunity, demands diversity and insists on inclusion.

**THE LAUNCH OF THE EEO COUNSELOR PROGRAM**

Over the past year, as we have evaluated and reorganized the EEO office, we have spoken to employees across various bureaus and units to get a sense of what types of changes they thought would benefit the Department. During the course of those discussions, one of the most requested initiatives that employees believed could benefit the Department was a strong and vibrant EEO Counselor program. As such, and in furtherance of its dedication to promote a diverse and inclusive workplace free of discrimination, the Department will be launching an Equal Employment Opportunity Counselor program this fall.

EEO Counselors will provide guidance, information, and other resources on behalf of the EEO Office. Counselors may be the first point of contact for any employee seeking guidance or assistance of the Equal Employment Opportunity Office. The Counselors may guide the employee through the EEO process; provide necessary forms and paperwork, and act as a general point of information and liaison between the EEO office and employee.

EEO Counselors will be trained and knowledgeable in the areas of federal, state, and local equal employment laws, the Citywide and Department EEO Policy, and Alternative Dispute Resolution techniques. We believe that this program will be beneficial to all members of the Department by providing alternative avenues for contact and information from the EEO Office. Counselors interested in becoming trainers will also receive training and opportunities to train other members. Candidates for the position must have a strong commitment to maintaining a fair and equitable work environment.

The Department will be seeking members from all ranks, titles and backgrounds, whether from Fire Operations or EMS, to serve as EEO Counselors for each of their respective battalions, divisions, or other applicable area(s) of employment. The EEO Counselor duties will be in addition to the employee's regular duties, and would not constitute a detail or reassignment. Compensation will be overtime or compensatory time subject to pay regulations for the respective title.

Interested candidates may find an application on the FDNY Intranet or Diamond-Plate. Please print and complete the application, and deliver or mail it to the FDNY Equal Employment Opportunity Office, 9 MetroTech Center, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201, before October 7, 2016.

Interviews will be conducted of selected applicants.

**Additional Resources**

Please access our web-based materials on the FDNY's Intranet.

We welcome your opinions and thoughts on what you would like to see in our newsletter.

Please send us any articles, upcoming events and accomplishments that you would like for us to place in our newsletter.

We will do our very best to try to accommodate you.

Our e-mail address is:

**Diversity.Inclusion@fdny.nyc.gov**