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Clerk
District Court

MAY 28 1999

For The Northern Mariana Islands
By _____
(Deputy Clerk)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
OF THE
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN RE:)
)
ADOPTION OF AN EQUAL EMPLOYMENT)
)
OPPORTUNITY PLAN, AN EMPLOYMENT)
)
DISPUTE RESOLUTION PLAN AND A)
)
HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN FOR THE)
)
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT OF THE)
)
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS)
_____)

GENERAL ORDER 99-00001

In conformance with the national policy of the Judicial Conference of the United States to provide equal employment opportunity to all persons or classes of persons regardless of their race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability and/or sexual orientation, and by direction of the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the court adopt the captioned revised Equal Employment Opportunity Plan that includes the Employment Dispute Resolution Plan, and the Health and Safety Plan of May 27, 1999.

Dated this 28th day of May, 1999.



HON. ALEX R. MUNSON, Chief Judge

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

FOR THE

NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY PLAN

EMPLOYMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION PLAN

AND

HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN

PART A - EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY PLAN

PART B - EMPLOYMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION PLAN

PART C - HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN

ADOPTED MARCH 20, 1996

BY THE

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Revised February 5, 1998

Revised May 27, 1999

PART A

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY PLAN UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

§I. PREAMBLE

A. Statement of Policy

The Judicial Conference of the United States in 1987 directed that each court adopt a plan in conformance with the national policy of providing equal employment opportunity to all persons regardless of their race, sex, color, national origin, religion, age, or handicap.

The United States District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands adopts this plan providing equal employment opportunity to all persons or classes of persons regardless of their race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability and/or sexual orientation.¹

Each appointing officer and supervisor will promote equal employment opportunity through a plan encompassing all facets of employment actions and conditions including recruitment, hiring, training, promotion, advancement, and supervision.

Each appointing officer and supervisor will promote a court or office environment free of discrimination and discriminatory harassment. Any instances of discriminatory harassment for which a person seeks relief or assistance should be immediately reported. All employing offices shall address promptly all complaints alleging discrimination or discriminatory harassment and shall pursue resolution of each complaint in accordance with the procedures described in Part B-Employment Dispute Resolution Plan.

Retaliation by an appointing officer or supervisor, or by any other employee against an employee for having filed a discrimination or discriminatory harassment complaint, or against any persons involved in the processing of a complaint such as employee representative or witnesses, is prohibited and constitutes grounds for disciplinary action. The filing of frivolous or harassing complaints, however, may also be grounds for disciplinary action.

This plan, which will be periodically evaluated, is not intended to modify or reduce the qualification standards for employment in the federal courts as such standards have been approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States.

Neither this plan, nor the Employment Dispute Resolution ("EDR") procedures set forth in Part B, shall constitute a contract or create any legally enforceable obligation. No actions taken or documents created or processed pursuant to this plan or the EDR procedures related thereto are discoverable in any court proceeding, except as to final decisions made available to the public pursuant to Chapter VIII, Section 10 of Part B.

B. Definitions.

1. **Age.** At least 40 years of age at the time of the alleged discrimination except for the age restrictions prescribed by 5 U.S.C. Section 8335(b) and 8425(b) and described in the Judiciary Salary Plan and the Court Personnel System, applying to the appointment and retirement of federal probation and pretrial services officers.
2. **Disability.** Formerly referred to as "handicap." Any physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities where there is a record of such impairment and the person is regarded as having such impairment. A qualified disabled person is one who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the position in question without endangering the health and safety of the individual or others and who meets the criteria for appointment.²

Certain other conditions that are temporarily disabling such as pregnancy and childbirth are treated as disabilities for purposes of projections afforded under this Plan.³

3. **National Origin.** National origin includes ethnicity. Employees of the United States courts must be citizens of the United States or citizens of countries with treaty relations with the United States, as defined by the United States Department of State, or persons subject to the Chinese Student Protection Act, 8 U.S.C. Section 1255.
4. **Gender.** Discrimination on the basis of marital status or parenthood is also categorized as gender discrimination.
5. **A discrimination complaint** is any allegation that a person has been denied employment, promotion or advancement, or has been affected in any other aspect of employment, because of his or her race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability and/or sexual orientation.

A discrimination complaint also includes allegations of restraint, interference, coercion, discrimination, or reprisal because a person has raised an allegation of discrimination or has served as a representative, a witness, or an EDR Coordinator in connection with a complaint. It does not include complaints relating to other dissatisfactions with a person's conditions of employment which are commonly known as grievances.

A discrimination complaint may only be filed pursuant to the procedures set forth in Part B.

6. **Sexual harassment** is a form of gender discrimination. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, such as an overture, an offer, or requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when:

- a. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment.
 - b. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
 - c. 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;⁴ and
 - d. Such conduct is engaged in either the workplace or outside the workplace, during working hours or after working hours, where there is a direct connection with workplace matters.
7. **Discriminatory Harassment.** Conduct, threats, insinuations, innuendo, or slurs, or other offensive statements or conduct based on race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability and/or sexual orientation directed at an individual or a specific class or group is considered discrimination.
8. **Employment Actions and Conditions.** Includes all employment and personnel decisions, actions, impacts, terms and conditions of a person's employment. Included are the following: recruitment, hiring, promotions, advancement, work assignments, compensation and benefits, training, education, disciplinary actions, terminations, and other such categories.

§II. SCOPE OF COVERAGE

This Equal Employment Opportunity Plan applies to all court personnel, and applicants for positions, defined as follows:

1. All judges and their staffs;
2. District clerk of court and staff;
3. All chief probation and chief pretrial services officers and staffs.

Article I and Article III judges may not file a complaint pursuant to this plan. Complaints against judges, as distinct from complaint against employing offices pursuant to Part B in which a judge's conduct form the factual basis of the complaint, are filed pursuant to judicial misconduct procedures. 28 U.S.C. Section 372(c)

For the purposes of this Plan, all chambers and offices will be described as "employing offices".

§III. ORGANIZATION

A. Implementation

Each appointing officer shall implement this plan or such equal employment opportunity plan as has been approved by the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit.

B. Appointing Officers

All appointing officers, including the judicial council, the court of appeals, the district court, the bankruptcy court, individual judges, and court unit heads must ensure that all vacancies, [with the exception of chambers law clerk vacancies], are publicly announced⁵ to attract candidates who represent the make-up of persons available in the qualified labor market and that all hiring decisions are based solely on job-related factors. They should make reasonable efforts to see that the skills, abilities, and potential of each employee are identified and developed, and that all employees are given equal opportunities for promotions and for other advantageous employment actions and conditions.

C. Appointing Officers and Supervisors

All appointing officers must apply equal employment opportunity practices and policies in their court units. This includes giving each employee a fair and equal opportunity to demonstrate his or her skills and, where those abilities exceed general performance standards, to be recommended for such personnel actions and awards recognizing such achievements as may be warranted and available.

D. Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator

The chief district judge will designate one person to be the Employment Dispute Resolution (EDR) Coordinator for each district. Additional EDR coordinators may be appointed by the chief district judge in probation and pretrial services offices to facilitate the administration of the plan.

The EDR Coordinator should be a person committed to the goals of equal employment opportunity with the experience and training necessary to perform the investigative and record-keeping aspects of the position. An appointing officer should not be designated as the EDR Coordinator, except in very small courts where there is no one employed in the court unit except the appointing officer who is qualified to carry out the responsibilities of the EDR coordinator.⁶

The EDR Coordinator will be responsible for preparing statements, collecting, analyzing, and consolidating statistical data, and submitting an annual EDR report as described in Sections VI and VII of this plan. The EDR Coordinator will also seek to resolve discrimination complaints informally⁷ and will provide EDR information to the public.

§IV. OBJECTIVES

Each appointing officer will develop annual objectives which reflect those improvements needed in recruitment, hiring, promotions, and advancement, and will prepare a specific plan for the EDR Coordinator explaining how those objectives will be achieved.

§V. PERSONNEL PRACTICES

A. Discrimination-Free Workplace

All appointing officers will provide a discrimination-free workplace for their employees and applicants. No employing office will tolerate discrimination or discriminatory harassment in hiring or in any employment actions or conditions, on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability and/or sexual orientation. Appointing officers should make available to court employees training and education with respect to equal employment opportunity, including, but not limited to, sexual harassment, subject to available funds for such training.

B. Recruitment

All appointing officers will seek qualified applicants who reflect the make-up of all such persons in the relevant labor market. All vacancies, except those for judicial clerkships and externs, will be publicly announced.⁸

C. Hiring

All appointing officers will make their hiring decisions based upon an evaluation of a person's qualifications and ability to perform the duties of the position satisfactorily.

D. Promotion

All appointing officers will promote employees, if promotions are available, according to their experience, training, and demonstrated ability to perform duties of a higher level.

E. Advancement

All appointing officers and supervisors will seek, insofar as appropriate and reasonably practical, to improve the skills and abilities of employees through cross-training, job restructuring, assignments, details, and outside training.

F. Employee Discrimination Complaints

All appointing officers will adopt the procedures for employment disputes set forth in Part B.

§VI EVALUATIONS

The EDR Coordinator will prepare a compiled annual report for each court unit, summarizing the appointing officers' efforts to provide equal employment opportunities in recruitment, hiring, promotions and advancement. The EDR Coordinator will collect this information through evaluations prepared by all appointing officers, addressing these areas of concern:

A. Recruitment

The report will briefly describe efforts made to bring a fair cross-section of the pool available for the position into its applicant pool, including listing all employment sources used (state employment offices, schools, organizations, etc.). Each appointing officer will also explain the methods used to publicize vacancies.

B. Hiring

The report will identify where recruitment efforts resulted in the hiring of a cross-section of the pool available and will, if known, explain those instances where members of the cross-section did not accept employment with the office when it was offered.

C. Promotions

The report will briefly describe promotional opportunities which occurred and will provide an analysis of the distribution of promotions, including a description of those persons who were promoted to supervisory positions.

D. Advancement

The report will describe what efforts were made to improve the skills and abilities of employees through cross-training, job restructuring, assignments, details, and outside training.

In addition, this evaluation should include information on factors inhibiting achievement of EEO objectives, such as no vacancies or minimal numbers of qualified applicants in the relevant labor market, and on all persons in the court who have received relevant training. This report will also include a breakdown according to the race, gender, color, national origin, and disability of the personnel involved on forms to be provided by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts. The report will cover personnel actions occurring in the year ending September 30 and will be submitted to the Administrative Office by November 1 of each year.

§VII. ANNUAL REPORT

The EDR Coordinator in each court will submit to the chief judge of the court for his or her approval the annual report for the year ending September 30. The report for the district will consist of the consolidated reports and data received from each reporting court unit.

The report will describe instances where significant achievements were made in providing equal employment opportunities, identify areas where improvements are needed, and explain factors inhibiting achievement of equal employment opportunity objectives. The report will be the same report as that submitted annually to the Administrative Office of the United States Courts.

The individual court unit reports will be submitted to the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit. The reports for the probation and pretrial services offices of a district will be consolidated with the report for the district court and submitted to the Administrative Office of the United States Courts.

These consolidated reports will be submitted by the chief judge to the Administrative Office of the United States Court by November 30 of each year. A copy of the consolidated reports will be submitted to the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit.

Copies of the annual EEO reports will be made available to the public upon request.

§VIII. DISTRIBUTION AND PUBLIC NOTICE

Copies of these procedures shall be available to all employees and, upon request, to applicants for positions of employment with the United States Courts.

Notes-EEO Plan

1. The federal government, including the federal courts, is bound by 38 U.S.C. Section 4301 pertaining to the employment of individuals with military reserve status. While the federal courts are not required to honor veterans' preference in employment decisions, "the federal courts are prohibited from denying hiring, retention in employment, or any promotion or other incident or advantage of employment because of any obligation as a member of a Reserve component of the Armed Forces." 38 U.S.C. Section 4301(b)(3). Federal court employees are also guaranteed re-employment rights if their employment is interrupted by active military duty in any branch of the armed forces, by reserve training activities, or by reporting for examinations to determine their fitness for military service.
2. Further clarification of this definition can be found in 29 CFR Section 1614.203. That section provides that "major life activities" means functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, breathing, learning and working. Under the standard of "Reasonable Accommodation" the court unit shall reasonably accommodate to the known physical or mental limitations of a qualified disabled applicant or employee unless the court can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the court's operations. Such accommodations may include, but shall not be limited to: (1) making facilities readily accessible to and usable by disabled persons, and (2) job restructuring, part-time or modified work schedules, acquisition or modification of equipment or devices, the provision of readers and interpreters and other similar actions.
3. HIV infection is considered to be a non-interfering disability absent medical and workplace documentation regarding the extent to which the infection may affect job performance, leave, or conduct.
4. Prohibited unwelcome conduct includes offensive sexual flirtations, suggestive comments, sexual innuendo, unwanted physical contact, impeding or blocking movement, repeated requests or pressure for dates, advances, propositions, insults or verbal abuses of a sexual nature, graphic verbal comments about an individual's body, sexually degrading words describing an individual, humor and jokes about sex or gender-specific traits, or the display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures. Prohibited discriminatory conduct also includes non-verbal, suggestive, or sexually insulting actions such as leering, whistling, suggestive sounds, and obscene gestures. Prohibited touching includes any unwelcome touching of a sexual nature, pinching, intentional brushing of the body, sexual assault, and coerced sexual acts.
5. A "public announcement" is a reasonable attempt to notify applicants and potential applicants about the existence of job vacancies. In some situations this will involve the placement of a job notice in a widely circulated publication, whereas in others it may simply involve the posting of a notice on bulletin boards in appropriate places. The purpose of a public announcement is to afford all possible applicants, including women and minorities, an opportunity to compete for the position(s) in question.

6. For purposes of processing discrimination complaints in small courts, it would usually be necessary to obtain the services of an employee of another court unit to fulfill these functions to ensure objectivity and avoid any appearance of conflict of interests.

PART B

EMPLOYMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION PLAN UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

CHAPTER I - GENERAL PROVISIONS

§1 Preamble

This plan shall be known as the Employment Dispute Resolution Plan ("EDR Plan"). It was adopted by the United States District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands in accordance with the Judiciary Model Plan adopted by the Judicial Conference of the United States in order to provide rights and protection to employees of the United States District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands which are comparable to those provided to legislative branch employees under the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995.

The Plan supersedes Appendix I ("Discrimination and Complaint Procedures") of the current Equal Employment Opportunity Plan ("EEO Plan") applicable to this court unit. Claims arising under Chapters II through VII of this Plan, or under Sections I through V of the EEO Plan (Part A), shall be treated in accordance with the procedures set forth in Chapter XIII of this Plan. The duties of the court's EEO Coordinator will be assumed by the Employment Dispute Resolution Coordinator (established in Section 3 of Chapter VIII of this Plan), except that the dispute resolution duties assigned to the EEO Coordinator under the EEO Plan will be replaced by the dispute resolution procedures set forth in Chapter VIII of this Plan.

This Plan is to be implemented in the same manner as the EEO Plan. This court has adopted and implemented this plan based upon the Model Plan adopted by the United States Judicial Conference. All modifications from the Model EDR Plan have been approved by the Ninth Circuit Judicial Council. All future modifications to the EDR Plan must likewise be approved by the Ninth Circuit Judicial Council. A copy of this plan and any subsequent modifications shall be filed with the Administrative Office. This court shall annually submit a report on the implementation of the plan to the Administrative Office, for inclusion in the Director's Annual Report to the Judicial Conference. A copy of this annual report shall also be provided to the Ninth Circuit Judicial Council.

Policies adopted by offices within this district or within this court pertaining to adverse action or general grievance proceedings that do not invoke the rights and protection afforded under this EDR Plan are not affected by the Plan. Further, other local policies relating to rights enumerated under the Plan that are not inconsistent with the rights and procedures established herein will not be affected by the Plan.

This EDR is not intended to duplicate the protection provided for the resolution of complaints of judicial officer misconduct or disability under 28 U.S.C. 372(c) and otherwise is intended to be the exclusive remedy of the employee relating to rights enumerated under the Plan.

§2 Scope of coverage

The Plan applies to all Article III judges and other judicial officers of this district, as well as to all employees of the courts and employing offices in this district including chambers staffs, court unit heads and their staffs, and bankruptcy administrators and their staffs.

§3 Definitions

For purposes of this Plan--

- A. The term "employee" includes all individuals listed in Section 2 of this Chapter, as well as applicants for employment and former employees, except as provided below. The term "employee" does not include externs, applicants for bankruptcy judge or magistrate judge positions, private attorneys who apply to represent indigent defendants under the Criminal Justice Act, criminal defense investigators not employed by federal public defenders, volunteer counselors or mediators, or other individuals who are not employees of an "employing office" as that term is defined below.
- B. The term "employing office" includes all offices of the United States District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands, including the offices of, district court executives, bankruptcy court executives, clerks of court, chief probation officers, chief pretrial services officers, staff attorneys, and any such offices that might be created in the future. This court is the employing office of a judicial officer's chambers staff.
- C. The term "judicial officer" means a judge appointed under Article III of the Constitution, a United States bankruptcy judge, a United States magistrate judge, or a judge of any court created by Act of Congress in a territory or Commonwealth which is invested with any jurisdiction of a district court of the United States.
- D. The term "court" refers to the appropriate court (district or bankruptcy) in which is located in the employing office which would be responsible for redressing, correcting or abating the violation alleged in the complaint.

CHAPTER II - EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION RIGHTS

§1 General - Discrimination against employees based on race, color, religion, sex (including sexual harassment), national origin, age (at least 40 years of age at the time of the alleged discrimination), disability and sexual orientation is prohibited. The rights and protection of Sections I through V of the Equal Employment Opportunity Plan (Part A) shall also apply to employees.

§2 Definition - The term "disability" means--

- A. a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of an employee,
- B. a record of such an impairment, or
- C. being regarded as having such an impairment.

See 42 U.S.C. §12102(2).

§3 Special provision for probation and pretrial services officers - The age discrimination provision of Section I of this Chapter shall not apply to the initial hiring of probation and pretrial services officers. See Report of the Proceedings of the Judicial Conference of the United States (March 1991), pp. 16-17.

CHAPTER III - FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE RIGHTS

§1 General - Title II of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, 29 U.S.C. §2611, applies to court employees in the manner prescribed in Volume I-C, Chapter X, Subchapter 1630.1, Section R, of the Guide of the Judiciary Policies and Procedures.

CHAPTER IV - WORKER ADJUSTMENT
AND RETRAINING NOTIFICATION RIGHTS

§1 **General** - No "employing office closing" or "mass layoff" (as defined in Section 2 of this Chapter) may occur until the end of a 60-day period after the employing office serves written notice of such prospective closing or layoff to employees who will be affected. This provision shall not apply to an employing office closing or mass layoff that results from the absence of appropriated funds.

§2 **Definitions**

A. The term "employing office closing" means the permanent or temporary shutdown of a single site of employment if the shutdown results in an employment loss at the singly site of employment during any 30-day period for 50 or more employees excluding any part-time employees.

B. The term "mass-layoff means a reduction in force which--

1. is not the result of any employing office closing; and
2. results in an employment loss at the single site of employment during any 30-day period for
 - a. (1) at least 33 percent of the employees (excluding any part-time employees);
and
 - (2) at least 50 employees (excluding any part-time employees); or
 - b. at least 500 employees (excluding any part-time employees).

See 29 U.S.C. §2101.

CHAPTER V - EMPLOYMENT AND REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS
OF MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES

§1 **General** - An employing office shall not discriminate against an eligible employee or deny an eligible employee reemployment rights or benefits under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, 38 U.S.C. §4301 et seq.

CHAPTER VI - OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY
AND HEALTH PROTECTIONS

- §1 **General** - Each employing office shall provide to its employees a place of employment which is free from recognized hazards that cause or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees. Complaints which seek a remedy that is exclusively within the jurisdiction of the General Services Administration ("GSA") or the United States Postal Service ("USPS") to provide are not cognizable under this Plan; such requests should be filed directly with GSA or the USPS as appropriate.
- §2 **Court program requirements** - The court shall implement a program to achieve the protections set forth in Section 1 of this Chapter.

CHAPTER VII - POLYGRAPH TEST

- §1 **General** - No employee may be required to take a polygraph test.

CHAPTER VIII - DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCEDURES

- §1 **General procedure for consideration of alleged violations** - An employee who claims a denial of the rights under Chapters II through VII of this Plan shall seek resolution of such claims through the procedures of this Chapter. Generally, the procedural process consists of--
- A. counseling and mediation;
 - B. hearing before the chief judge of the court (or a designated judicial officer) in which the alleged violations arises; and
 - C. review of the hearing decision under procedures established by the judicial council of the circuit.
- §2 **General provisions and protections**
- A. **Prohibition against retaliation** - Complainants under this Plan have the right to be free from retaliation, coercion, or interference because of filing a complaint pursuant to this Plan. Likewise, any person who participates in the filing or processing of a complaint, such as an employment dispute resolution coordinator, mediator, witness, representative, or co-worker, is also entitled to freedom from retaliation.

- B. **Right to representation** - Every individual invoking the dispute resolution procedures of this Plan has the right to be represented by a person of his or her choice if such person is available and consents to be a representative. A court employee may accept the responsibilities of representation if it will not unduly interfere with his or her court duties or constitute a conflict of interest, as determined by the representative's appointing officer.
- C. **Case preparation** - To the extent feasible, every individual invoking the dispute resolution procedures of this Plan may use a reasonable amount of official time to prepare his or her case, so long as it does not unduly interfere with the performance of his or her court duties.
- D. **Extension of time** - The chief judge of the court, or other presiding judicial officer, may extend any of the deadlines set forth in this Chapter for good cause.
- E. **Records** - At the conclusion of formal and informal proceedings under this Plan, all papers, files, and reports will be filed with the court's Employment Dispute Resolution Coordinator ("EDR Coordinator"). No papers, files, or reports relating to a dispute will be filed in any employee's personnel folder, except as necessary to implement an official personnel action.

§3 **Designation and duties of employment dispute resolution coordinator** - The court shall designate a person to serve as the EDR Coordinator. The court may designate more than one EDR Coordinator. The duties of such person shall include the following:

- A. to provide information to the court and employees regarding the rights and protections afforded under this Plan;
- B. to coordinate and organize the procedures and establish and maintain official files of the court pertaining to complaints and other matters initiated and processed under the court's employment dispute resolution plan;
- C. to coordinate the counseling of individuals in the initial stage of the complaint process, in accordance with Section 5 of this Chapter; and
- D. to collect, analyze, and consolidate statistical data and other information pertaining to the court's employment dispute resolution process.

§4 **Disqualification Provision** - Any person seeking disqualification or recusal of an EDR counselor, mediator, or reviewing official shall promptly submit a written statement to the chief judge explaining the reasons for the requested disqualification or recusal. In determining whether disqualification or recusal is warranted, the chief judge shall

consider the factors, circumstances and considerations set forth in 28 U.S.C. §455. If disqualification or recusal is warranted, the chief judge shall designate another individual to act as the EDR counselor, mediator, or reviewing official. Disqualification or recusal of the EDR counselor, mediator or reviewing official of a court shall not be warranted merely because the court is named as a responding party.

§5 Counseling

- A. **Initiating a proceeding; formal request for counseling** - An employee who believes that his or rights under Chapters II through VII of this Plan have been violated must first request counseling.

- B. **Form and manner of requests** - Requests for counseling:
 - 1. are to be submitted to the court's EDR Coordinator;
 - 2. must be made in writing (copy of approved form is contained in Appendix 1); and
 - 3. must be made within 30 days of the alleged violation or within 30 days of the time the employee first becomes aware of the alleged violation.

- C. **Procedures**
 - 1. **Who may serve as counselor** - The counseling shall be conducted by the court's EDR Coordinator, unless the EDR Coordinator is disqualified from serving as counselor under Section 4 of this Chapter, or is otherwise unavailable. In such instances, the chief judge of the court shall designate another qualified individual to perform the counseling function. If the dispute involves an alleged violation of this Plan by a judicial officer, the person who conducts the counseling shall be a judicial officer designated by the chief judge.

 - 2. **Purposes of counseling** - The purposes of the counseling shall e to discuss the employee's concerns and elicit information regarding the matter which the employee believes constitutes a violation; to advise the employee of his or her rights and responsibilities and the procedure of the court applicable to the employment dispute resolution process; to evaluate the matter; and to assist the employee in achieving an early resolution of the matter, if possible.

3. **Confidentiality** - All counseling shall be kept confidential unless the employee agrees in writing to waive confidentiality of the counseling process for the purpose of allowing the designated counselor to contact the employing office or to attempt a resolution of the disputed matter. A written record of all such contacts must be kept by the counselor and made available for review by the affected person(s).
 4. **Form of settlement** - The EDR Coordinator shall reduce the writing any settlement achieved during the counseling process and secure the signatures of the employee, his or her representative, if any, and the member of the employing office who is authorized to enter into settlement on the employing office's behalf.
- D. Duration of counseling period** - The period for counseling shall be 30 days (or a shorter period if counseling is concluded at an earlier date), beginning on the date that the request for counseling is received by the EDR Coordinator.
- E. Conclusion of the counseling period and notice** - The EDR Coordinator shall notify the employee in writing of the end of the counseling period. As part of the notice, the EDR Coordinator shall inform the employee of the right and obligation, should the employee choose to pursue his or her claim, to file with the EDR Coordinator a request for mediation in accordance with Section 6 of this Chapter.

§6 **Mediation**

- A. Initiation** - Within 15 days after receipt by the employee of the notice of the conclusion of the counseling period, the employee may file with the EDR Coordinator a request for mediation. The request must be made in writing and must state the claim(s) presented (copy of approved form is included as Appendix 2). Failure to pursue mediation will preclude further processing of the employee's claim under any other provisions of this Chapter.
- B. Procedures** -
1. **Designation of mediator** - As soon as possible after receiving the request for mediation, the EDR Coordinator shall designate a mediator and provide written notice of such designation.
 2. **Who may serve as mediator** - Any person with the skills to assist in resolving disputes, except the court's EDR Coordinator, may serve as a mediator under this Plan. If the complaint alleges that a judicial officer has violated the rights protected by the Plan, the mediator shall be a judicial officer designated by the chief judge.

3. **Purpose of mediation** - The mediator shall meet separately and/or jointly with the employee and his or her representative, if any, and the employing office to discuss alternatives for resolving a dispute, including any and all possibilities of reaching a voluntary, mutually satisfactory resolution.
 4. **Confidentiality** - Any person or party involved in the mediation process shall not disclose, in whole or in part, any information or records obtained through, or prepared specifically for, the mediation process, except as necessary to consult with the parties or their representatives, and then only with notice to all parties. A written record of all such contacts must be kept and made available for review by the affected person(s). In addition, in the event the employee files a complaint pursuant to Section 7 of this Chapter, the hearing officer shall have access to the record of any claims raised in mediation.
 5. **Form of settlement** - The mediator shall reduce to writing any settlement achieved during the mediation process and secure the signature of the employee, his or her representative, if any, and the member of the employing office who is authorized to enter into settlement on the employing office's behalf.
- C. **Duration of mediation period** - The mediation period shall be 30 days (or a shorter period if mediation is concluded at an earlier date), beginning on the date the request for mediation is received. The employee is required to attend at least one mediation session. Thereafter, he or she may proceed to file a complaint.
- D. **Conclusion of mediation period and notice** - If, at the end of the mediation period, the parties have not resolved the matter that forms the basis of the request for mediation, the EDR Coordinator shall provide the employee, the employee's representative, if any, and the employing office with written notice that the mediation period has concluded. The notice shall also inform the employee of his or her right to file a complaint under Section 7 of this Chapter.

§7 **Complaint, review and hearing**

- A. **Complaint** - Not later than 15 days after receiving written notice of the end of the mediation period, the employee alleging a violation of EDR Plan who participated in the mediation may file a complaint. The complaint must be in the form approved by the court (see approved form in Appendix 3), and must be filed with the chief judge of the court of the employing office which is the respondent to the complaint. The respondent in all complaints shall be the employing office which would be responsible for redressing, correcting or abating the violation(s) alleged in the complaint. No individual shall be named as a respondent in the complaint.

B. Review of pleadings

1. **Reviewing official** - The complaint and any other documents shall be reviewed by the chief judge of the court, or by another judicial officer of the court designated by the chief judge. In the case of a complaint alleging that an Article III judge has violated rights protected by the Plan, that judge may elect to have a hearing conducted by a judge of another court, as designated by the judicial council of the circuit. Any designation of a judicial officer from another court to hear and decide the case shall be arranged by agreement of the chief judges of the affected courts. In the event, the chief judge is unavailable to serve under this subsection or has disqualified or recuse himself or herself pursuant to §4 of this Chapter, the chief judge will designate another judicial officer to serve as the reviewing official.
2. **Review procedures** - After notice to the complainant and an opportunity to respond, the chief judge or designated judicial officer may dismiss in writing any complaint that is found to be frivolous, unduly repetitive of a previous complaint, that fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or that makes claims that were not advanced in mediation.

C. Hearing Procedures

1. **Hearing officer** - If the chief judge or designated judicial officer does not dismiss the complaint under the preceding subsection, the chief judge or designated judicial officer, acting as the hearing officer, shall hold a hearing on the merits of the complaint unless he or she determines that no material factual dispute exists.
2. **Specific provisions** - The presiding judicial officer may provide for such discovery and investigation as is necessary. In general, the presiding judicial officer shall determine the time, place, and manner of conducting the hearing. However, the following specific provisions shall apply to hearings conducted under this Section:
 - a. the hearing shall be commenced no later than 60 days after the filing of the complaint;
 - b. the complainant and the head of the office against which the complaint has been filed must receive written notice of the hearing; such notice shall also be provided to the individual alleged to have violated rights protected by this Plan whenever such individual is a judicial officer or when the presiding judicial officer otherwise determines such notice to be appropriate;

- c. at the hearing, the complainant will have the rights to representation, to present evidence on his or her behalf, and to cross-examine adverse witnesses; the employing office will have the rights to present evidence on its behalf and to cross-examine adverse witnesses;
- d. a verbatim record of the hearing must be kept and shall be the sole official record of the proceeding;
- e. in reaching his or her decision, the chief judge or designated judicial officer shall be guided by judicial and administrative decisions under the laws related to Chapters II through VII of this Plan and by decisions of the judicial council of the appropriate circuit under Section 8 of this Chapter;
- f. remedies may be provided in accordance with Section 9 of this Chapter where the hearing officer finds that the complainant has established by a preponderance of the evidence that a substantive right protected by this Plan has been violated;
- g. the final decision of the chief judge or designated judicial officer must be issued in writing no later than 30 days after the conclusion of the hearing; and
- h. all parties, or any aggrieved individual, shall have the right to written notice of any action taken as a result of a hearing.

§8 Review of decision - A party or individual aggrieved by a final decision of the chief judge or designated judicial officer, or by a summary dismissal of the complaint, may petition for review of that decision. Such review must be requested in writing to the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit no later than 30 days following the date of the final decision of the chief judge or the designated judicial officer or following the date of a summary dismissal of the complaint. Any review will be conducted by the members of the Executive Committee of the Ninth Circuit Judicial Council or their designees. The decision of the Executive Committee shall be based on the record created by the hearing officer, and the decision of the chief judge or designated judicial officer or summary dismissal shall be affirmed if supported by substantial evidence.

§9 Remedies

- A.** Where judicial officers acting pursuant to section 7 or 8 of this Plan find that a substantive right protected by the Plan has been violated, they may order a necessary and appropriate remedy. A remedy may be directed at correcting a past violation, prospectively insuring compliance with the rights protected by this Plan, or both. A remedy shall be tailored as closely as possible to the specific violation involved.
- B.** Remedies which may be provided to successful complainants under this Plan include, but are not limited to:
1. placement of an employee in a position previously denied;
 2. placement in a comparable alternative position;
 3. reinstatement to a position from which previously removed;
 4. prospective promotion to a position;
 5. priority consideration for a future promotion or position;
 6. back pay and associated benefits, including attorney's fees, where the statutory criteria of the Back Pay Act, 5 U.S.C. §5596, are satisfied;
 7. records modification and/or expungement;
 8. "equitable" relief, such as temporary stays of adverse actions;
 9. granting of family and medical leave; and
 10. accommodation of disabilities through the purchase of specialized equipment or the restructuring of duties and work hours.
- C.** Remedies which are not legally available include:
1. payment of attorney's fees (except as authorized under the Back Pay Act);
 2. compensatory damages; and
 3. punitive damages.

- §10. Record of final decisions** - the conclusion of the reviewing panel in any final decisions reached in accordance with the provisions of §8 of this Chapter shall be made available to the public from the Office of the Circuit Executive upon written request. Only in the even the panel determines that all or portions of the entire decision should be made public shall additional portions of the decision be made available to the public. The reviewing panel, in the interests of justice and of fairness to the parties, may determine not to make available to the public the conclusion of any final decision if public disclosure would compromise the integrity or legitimate confidentiality of the parties or the court, or to protect a party or person from annoyance, embarrassment, oppression, undue burden or expense, or for any other reason that the administration of justice may require.
- §11 Election of remedies** - If an employee or an employee representative files an appeal of an adverse action or a grievance in addition to a complaint under this Plan concerning the same or substantively the same subject matter, the employee must elect either (a) the EDR Plan or (b) the grievance/adverse action appeal procedures under which the complaint is to be processed. An employee may not utilize both (a) and (b). Similarly, if a complaint has already been processed under one of these procedures (i.e., the grievance/adverse action appeal procedure or the procedures in this Plan), it may not be the subject of a complaint under the other.
- §12 Determining Time Periods** - The word "days" in all filing and other time periods specified in this plan shall mean calendar days, except that if the deadline date falls on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday, the deadline shall be extended to the following Monday or court business day respectively.
- §13 Annual Report** - The EDR Coordinator will prepare an annual report for the fiscal year, indicating:
1. The number and type of alleged violations for which counseling was conducted.
 2. The number and type of alleged violations for which mediation was conducted.
 3. The number and type of complaints filed;
 4. The number and type of hearings conducted;
 5. The number and type of final decisions rendered reflecting the number for which some relief was granted.
 6. With respect to all the data supplied in items 1 through 5 above, the allegations or complaints shall be reported according to the Chapter(s) of the EDR Plan involved and, with respect to allegations or complaints under Chapter II, according to the type(s) of discrimination alleged.

Appendices

1. Request for Counseling Under EDR Plan
2. Request for Mediation Under EDR Plan
3. Complaint Under EDR Plan

REQUEST FOR COUNSELING UNDER EDR PLAN

Submitted Under the Procedures of the Employment Dispute Resolution Plan for the
United States District Court of the Northern Mariana Islands

Prior to completing this form, please refer to the Employment Dispute Resolution Plan for your court unit. Please complete this form legibly.

1. Full Name of Person Requesting Counseling _____

2. Mailing Address: _____

3. Home Phone () _____ Work Phone () _____

4. If you are a court employee, state the following:
Court Unit in which employed _____
Job Title _____

5. Name and address of the office from which you seek resolution of your dispute.

6. Date(s) of alleged incident or decision giving rise to this dispute: _____

7. Please summarize the actions or occurrences giving rise to this dispute.

8. Are you willing to waive confidentiality in order to permit the counselor to contact the employing office or to attempt a resolution of the disputed matter? () yes () no

9. What corrective action do you seek in this matter?

This request for counseling is submitted by:

Signature

Date

Name of Counselor to whom submitted: _____
Counselor's Signature _____ Date of Receipt: _____

REQUEST FOR MEDIATION UNDER EDR PLAN

Submitted Under the Procedures of the Employment Dispute Resolution Plan for the
United States District Court of the Northern Mariana Islands

Prior to completing this form, please refer to the Employment Dispute Resolution Plan for your court unit. Please complete this form legibly.

Please attach a copy of the REQUEST FOR COUNSELING FORM filed in connection with this matter.

1. Full Name of Person Requesting Mediation _____

2. If any of the information supplied in the REQUEST FOR COUNSELING UNDER EDR PLAN filed in connection with this matter is no longer accurate, please note the number of the entry on the request for counseling form to be changed, and state the (change(s) you wish to make:

3. Date counseling was initiated _____

4. Date of receipt of the notice of conclusion of counseling _____

5. Name of person who provided counseling _____

This request for mediation is submitted by:

Signature

Date

Name of Person to whom submitted: _____

Signature of recipient: _____ Date of receipt: _____

COMPLAINT UNDER EDR PLAN

Filed Under the Procedures of the Employment Dispute Resolution Plan for the
United States District Court of the Northern Mariana Islands

Prior to completing this form, please refer to the Employment Dispute Resolution Plan for your court unit. Please complete this form legibly.

1. Full name of Person Filing Complaint _____

2. Mailing Address: _____

3. Home Phone (____) _____ Work Phone (____) _____

4. If you are a court employee, state the following:
Court Unit in which employed _____
Job Title _____

5. Name and address of the Employing Office against whom this complaint is filed (under the terms of the EDR Plan, all complaints must be filed against an "Employing Office", not an individual): _____

6. Identify the Chapter(s) of the EDR Plan under which your complaint is being filed.
 - Chapter II-Equal Employment Opportunity & Anti-Discrimination Rights
 - Race
 - Color
 - Religion
 - Gender/Sex (includes sexual harassment)
 - National Origin
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Sexual Orientation

 - Chapter III-Family and Medical Leave Rights

 - Chapter IV-Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Rights

 - Chapter V - Employment and Reemployment Rights of Members of the Uniformed Services

 - Chapter VI-Occupational Safety and Health Protections

 - Chapter VII-Polygraph Tests

6. Date(s) of alleged violation _____

7. Date on which counseling was requested _____

Date on which counseling was completed _____

Date on which mediation was requested _____

Date on which mediation was concluded _____

8. Name of person who served as Counselor on this matter _____

9. Name of person who served as Mediator on this matter _____

10. Please summarize the actions or occurrences giving rise to your complaint.
Explain in what way you believe your rights under the EDR Plan were violated.
Identify all persons who participated in this matter or who can provide relevant
information concerning your complaint. (If there is insufficient space below, you
may attach additional pages.)

[Please attach a copy of any documents that relate to your complaint, such as an application form, resume, letters, notices of discipline or termination, etc.]

11. What corrective action do you seek from your complaint?

12. Do you have an attorney or any other person who represents you in this matter?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide the following information concerning that person:

Name _____

Address _____

Work Phone () _____ Fax () _____

I affirm that the information provided in this complaint is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature

Date

PART C

HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

I. Purpose and Scope

A. This Health and Safety Plan ("Plan") is established by the United States District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands in order to carry out the obligations assumed under the court's Employment Dispute Resolution ("EDR") Plan. It is established in order to provide a work environment, work practices and employee conduct that are conducive to a safe and healthful workplace.

B. This plan applies to all employees covered under the court's EDR Plan, and excludes all persons excluded from coverage under the EDR Plan. It is applicable in all facilities operated by this court.

II. Authority and Responsibilities

- A. The employing office is committed to the principle of providing its employees a place of employment which is free from recognized hazards that cause, or are likely to cause, death or serious physical harm to employees. The unit executive has the final authority for the actions and decisions taken pursuant to this plan. The unit executive may delegate his or her authority under this plan. Neither the unit executive, nor any other court employee shall incur or be charged with any personal financial or legal liability by virtue of the authority and responsibilities assigned under this plan.
- B. It is the responsibility of all employees to work in as safe and healthy a manner as is possible. It is also the responsibility of all employees to report any unsafe or unhealthy working conditions.
- C. It is recognized that many aspects of the work environment are not under the control of the unit executive(s) because of the jurisdiction of the General Services Administration ("GSA") or the United States Postal Service ("USPS"). Notwithstanding, the unit executive(s) of the court will endeavor to have one or both of these organizations take corrective actions where such corrective action is deemed

by the unit executive(s) to be in the best safety and health interests of employees. The unit executive will see that appropriate coordination is carried out with the representative(s) of GSA who have been assigned to the facility(ies) occupied by the employees covered under this plan.

- D. Some working conditions, such as the supervision of clients by probation and pretrial services officers, may be inherently dangerous. It is not the intention of this plan to remedy conditions which are necessarily part of a job.

III. Protective Measures and Abatement of Unsafe or Unhealthy Work Environment, Equipment or Practices

- A. The employing office will see that equipment, materials and skills reasonably necessary for a safe work place are available. This should include such items as first aid kits, fire extinguishers, fire and disaster response plans, CPR resources, personal protective equipment (where required) and other matters that are appropriate for dealing with harmful, unsafe or unhealthy conditions.
- B. A means should be provided whereby employees can report any perceived unsafe or unhealthy condition in the workplace. The normal method for such reporting should be as follows: An employee perceiving an unsafe or unhealthy condition in the workplace should complete the Employee Safety Suggestion Form and submit it to the unit executive as soon as the condition becomes known.
- C. When any unsafe or unhealthy condition is brought to the attention of the unit executive, and after due evaluation by the unit executive is thought to require action, the unit executive will take all necessary and feasible steps to abate the unsafe or unhealthy condition.
- D. The employing office may undertake inspections of the work place at appropriate times (e.g., report of unsafe condition, planned occupancy of new work space), and may conduct an investigation of accidents and injuries where the cause of such events is not readily apparent.
- E. Abatement measures are required to be taken by another agency (such as by GSA) or if the abatement requires the expenditure of funds not available to the court, the unit executive should communicate with the appropriate organization(s) to seek to have the necessary actions taken and/or the required funding obtained.

IV. Information and Training

- A. Employees should be informed of this health and safety plan, their responsibilities under the plan, and the method by which they should report perceived unsafe or unhealthy working conditions. Employees should also be informed of the Employee Assistant Plan, and how they may avail themselves of its services. Employees should also be informed of medical attention and physical examinations to which they may be entitled by virtue of their employment by the U. S. Government.

- B. Periodic training should be provided to those employees in positions that expose them to potentially unsafe working conditions on a regular basis. Health and safety information should be provided periodically to all employees, including information about personal health and hygiene. Employees, especially those in jobs which require repetitive motions, should be trained to use work methods and equipment that will minimize strain. In this regard, periodic ergonomic surveys may be conducted. Such surveys should be done by persons qualified in the field of ergonomics.