

CHAPTER:	7 – CONDUCT AND PERFORMANCE	ADOPTED: 3/7/12
SECTION:	15 – CONSCIENTIOUS EMPLOYEE/ WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION	REVISED: 5/22/24

Employees have the right under the “Conscientious Employee Protection Act (CEPA)” to complain about any activity, policy or practice that the employees reasonably believe is in violation of a law, rule, or regulation promulgated pursuant to law. All complaints will be taken seriously and promptly investigated.

The County of Gloucester shall not take any retaliatory action or tolerate any reprisal against an employee for any of the following:

- Disclosing or threatening to disclose to a supervisor, Department Head, Personnel Officer, the Administrator, other official or to a public body, as defined in the Conscientious Employee Protection Act (N.J.S.A. 34:19-1 et seq.) an activity, policy or practice that the employee reasonably believes is in violation of a law, a rule or regulation promulgated pursuant to law;
- Providing information to, or testifying before any public body conducting an investigation, hearing, an inquiry into any violation of law, or a rule or regulation promulgated pursuant to law; or
- Objecting to, or refusing to participate in any activity, policy, or practice that the employee reasonably believes is a violation of a law, rule or regulation promulgated pursuant to law; is fraudulent or criminal; or is incompatible with a clear public policy mandate concerning the public health, safety, or welfare.

In accordance with the statute, the employee must bring the violation to the attention of the County of Gloucester. However, disclosure is not required where (1) the employee is reasonably certain that the violation is known to one or more officials; (2) where the employee reasonably fears physical harm; or (3) the situation is emergency in nature. Employees are encouraged to complain in writing but may make a verbal complaint at their discretion. See the section below titled “Employee Complaint Policy.” Under the law, the employee must give the County of Gloucester a reasonable opportunity to correct the activity, policy or practice. The administration of CEPA/whistleblower complaints is not subject to the limitations in the Grievance Policy.

Employee Complaint Policy:

Employees who wish to complain of any workplace wrongdoing are requested to immediately report the matter to their supervisor, or, if they prefer, or do not think that the matter can be discussed with their supervisor, they should contact their Department Head, or County Administrator. Employees are encouraged to complain in writing, but may make a verbal complaint at their discretion. The Employee Complaint Form (HR

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7.15 Exhibit A) has been provided for employees' use in filing a complaint. If the employee has any questions about what constitutes harassment, sexual harassment, or any other workplace wrongdoing, they may ask their supervisor or one of the individuals listed above. All reports of harassment, sexual harassment, or other wrongdoing will be promptly investigated by a person who is not involved in the alleged harassment or wrongdoing. Please also refer to HR 7.7 "Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment or Hostile Environments" for more information as applicable.

No employee will be penalized in any way for reporting a complaint. There will be no discrimination or retaliation against any individual who files a good-faith complaint, even if the investigation produces insufficient evidence to support the complaint, and even if the charges cannot be proven. There will be no discrimination or retaliation against any other individual who participates in the investigation of a complaint.

If the investigation substantiates the complaint, appropriate corrective and/or disciplinary action will be swiftly pursued. Disciplinary action up to and including discharge will also be taken against individuals who make false or frivolous accusations, such as those made maliciously or recklessly. Actions taken internally to investigate and resolve harassment complaints will be conducted confidentially to the extent practicable and appropriate in order to protect the privacy of persons involved. Any investigation may include interviews with the parties involved in the incident, and if necessary, with individuals who may have observed the incident or conduct or who have other relevant knowledge. The employee will be notified of a decision or of the status of the investigation within a reasonable time from the date of the report an incident.