



Health Services
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

May 2, 2016

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TO: All DHS Employees

FROM: Mitchell H. Katz, M.D.
Director

SUBJECT: DIGNITY AND PROFESSIONALISM IN THE WORKPLACE

As the Director of the Health Agency, I'm committed to fostering a healthy and professional work environment for all employees. Treating one another with respect and dignity is critical to creating a healthy workplace, and an essential value of our Code of Conduct for the Department of Health Services (DHS).

We can all demonstrate respect with simple, yet powerful actions. One of the ways I try to do this is by encouraging employees to express their opinions and ideas. Treating a patient or co-worker with courtesy, politeness and kindness is another way to show respect in our workplace. Dignity exists when employees look forward to coming to work and being part of a team with a job to do. As an organization, we foster dignity by giving employees meaningful work and recognizing the connection between their efforts and DHS' mission. Dignity is also promoted when people feel they can disagree respectfully and be heard, without fear of reprisal.

There are bound to be conflicts and problems in working relationships, especially in a large organization like ours charged with the important mission of caring for our patients. I recognize that maintaining respectful relationships during times of stress and conflict can be difficult. Some of the ways I approach this is to guard against making negative assumptions about another's intent, by practicing active listening and looking for opportunities for solution-driven approaches.

In the last month, I've heard concerns from some employees and our labor partner SEIU of supervisors misusing their authority through what they have labeled as bullying behavior, as well as a perception of a double-standard of acceptable behavior for supervisors as compared to what is expected of front-line staff. In these conversations, the employees and SEIU have shared with me that they believe the vast majority of DHS' supervisors are doing a good job and working hard to support our mission. SEIU members have also sought and received my commitment that there will be no retribution for speaking up. We will honor their contract and work by ensuring a healthy and professional work environment free from emotional abuse and intimidation. We will promote dignity for all workforce members.

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Director

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To ensure access to high-quality, patient-centered, cost-effective health care to Los Angeles County residents through direct services at DHS facilities and through collaboration with community and university partners.

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Intimidating, humiliating or abusive behavior is not acceptable in our workplace. This standard applies to front-line employees and supervisors equally.

All DHS workforce members are expected to follow our Code of Conduct and to treat one another with respect and dignity. Activities that do not support a respectful work environment include voicing personal insults and threats, constantly criticizing on matters minimally related to an employee's job performance, repeatedly accusing someone of errors that cannot be documented, and spreading malicious rumors and gossip. Activities that support a respectful work environment and our mission include offering clear performance expectations, meaningful work, accountability, coaching and progressive discipline, teamwork and open communication.

Going forward, I will be encouraging ongoing dialogue at DHS facilities on this topic through one-on-one conversations, small group discussions and larger facility discussions. DHS is also working to embed a model of Safe and Just Culture for all workplace situations and all workplace members. Training on this will start in 2016. Finally, I will be asking every employee and supervisor, starting with my executive team, to join me in a pledge to treat all workforce members with respect and dignity. DHS has a great shared mission, a great workforce and great opportunities ahead of us and you have my commitment to foster a healthy workplace for all employees.

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