United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

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SUBJECT: NPA 2011 Policy Statement on Diversity/Equal Employment Opportunity

TO: All NPA Employees

FROM: W.H. Blackburn, Area Director W. H. Blackburn

Cultural Transformation is leading change in the USDA and ARS, and in the Northern Plains Area (NPA). According to Secretary Vilsack, the heart of Cultural Transformation *"...is the creation of a high performing organization that values diversity and inclusion."* Achieving the full implementation of Cultural Transformation requires the sincere commitment and active engagement of all NPA employees at all levels. A core value of NPA is that all employees will be treated with dignity and respect.

Discrimination and/or harassment (sexual or non-sexual) based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital/parental/familial status, political beliefs, receipt of public assistance, or protected genetic information will not be tolerated. Additionally, reprisal against individuals who raise issues relating to discrimination and/or harassment will not be tolerated. It is the responsibility of each of us to conduct ourselves in a professional manner, and it is the responsibility of supervisors to pay attention to behaviors and conduct and to take immediate consultative action when and if they perceive potential problems or if such behavior or conduct is brought to their attention. The Cooperative Resolution Program in the ARS Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) provides mediation services, and will work with units to help address problems and settle disputes before such problems become major issues. Barbara King, NPA ODEO Program Manager may also be contacted for questions relating to EEO, civil rights, diversity, and outreach. Supervisors and employees are encouraged to participate in EEO and diversity events and special emphasis programs, serve on location diversity committees, and/or participate in outreach efforts. Additionally, supervisors are expected to lead by example and to actively embrace and seek diversity in hiring, promotion, and career development decisions.

Working together, I am confident that the Northern Plains Area will not only continue to retain a talented workforce but that we will also recruit highly skilled employees who will further enrich the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives and help keep NPA relevant and vibrant.

This policy statement is available on-line: http://www.ars.usda.gov/npa/policies.

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