



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

April 28, 2010

SUBJECT: NPA 2010 Policy Statement on Diversity/Equal Employment Opportunity

TO: All NPA Employees

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

I fully embrace the principles of diversity and equal opportunity expressed by Secretary Vilsack and Dr. Knipling. With your help and support, we in the Northern Plains Area can continue to ensure a workplace free from discrimination and harassment, and have a workforce that reflects the increasingly vibrant and rich diversity of our nation.

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. 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 leverage diversity in hiring decisions without bias. The Cooperative Resolution Program within the 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.

Achieving a workforce that reflects the rich diversity of our nation, and that is truly inclusive and respectful, requires the commitment of every employee. Institutions that lack diversity risk becoming irrelevant to an increasingly diverse population. 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 new highly skilled employees who will further enrich the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives and help keep our workforce relevant and vibrant.

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

