

FRATERNIZATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Illinois Heartland Library System has created this policy to nurture a working environment in which employees maintain clear boundaries between employee personal and business relationships so as to be most effective for conducting business. Illinois Heartland Library System does not prohibit friendships or romantic relationships between employees but seeks to set forth clear guidelines as to how relationships should be conducted in the workplace.

- **Discouraging Workplace Personal Relationships** – Illinois Heartland Library System discourages, but does not forbid, fraternization between managers or supervisors and subordinate employees. Romantic or intimate relationships between managers or supervisors and subordinate employees create an unreasonable possibility of favoritism, conflicts of interest, and claims of sexual harassment. Such relationships may also create serious problems in terms of objective management, accurate evaluations, and discipline.
- **Reporting Workplace Relationships** – For these reasons, any employee who is involved in a romantic or intimate relationship, not necessarily limited to sexual relationships, with any other employee must report the relationship to Human Resources. Such information will be treated by IHLS as confidentially as possible, consistent with the IHLS's legitimate business needs. Failure to report such relationships may result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.
- **Company's Rights** – Where such an intimate relationship exists, IHLS reserves the right to make such employment decisions as are necessary to ensure that the risks enumerated above regarding the relationship will not occur. Such steps include but are not limited to: transfer of one or both parties to the relationship; required resignation of one of the parties to the relationship (in such cases, the decision as to which employee will resign will be left to the two employees); or adjusting lines of reporting or communication.
- **Agreement** – In cases where a consensual personal relationship exists, the parties will be required to sign an agreement acknowledging that the relationship exists and that it is consensual and the agreement will further instruct each party to immediately notify Human Resources should the relationship at any time become non-consensual so that IHLS can ensure that no violation of IHLS's No Harassment policy has occurred and, if it has, IHLS can take prompt, appropriate remedial action to ensure the harassment stops. Moreover, in order to maintain the avoidance of favoritism in the workplace and to ensure that all employees of IHLS are comfortable in the work environment, employees who are involved in a personal romantic relationship are absolutely prohibited from engaging in displays of affection (such as kissing, hand-holding or other similar personal contact) while in IHLS and anywhere on IHLS premises during working time.
- **Refusal of Employment Modifications** – As detailed above, it may be necessary to modify reporting structures, transfer positions, or make other necessary adjustments to employment. Refusal of reasonable modification to an employee's position will be deemed a voluntary resignation.

- **Conduct During Non-Work Time** – During non-working time, including lunch, breaks and before or after work periods, employees may engage in appropriate personal conversations in non-work areas as long as such conversations and behavior do not violate IHLS’s policy against workplace harassment and as long as the employees avoid displays of affection such as kissing, hugging, etc. at all times while on IHLS premises.
- **Off-Duty Conduct** – Employee conduct outside of working hours and outside IHLS premises is generally regarded as private, as long as such conduct does not create problems within the workplace. An exception to this rule is romantic relationships between supervisors and subordinates or between employees, which must be reported as set forth above. In addition, IHLS strongly discourages off-duty fraternization to include attendance at happy hours or similar events involving supervisors/managers and non-supervisory employees.
- **Physical Contact** – Employees are prohibited from engaging in physical contact that would be considered inappropriate by a reasonable person on IHLS property, in the presence of customers, or during any IHLS-related business.
- **Harassment** – Employees should be mindful the organization maintains a strict anti-harassment policy.
- **Employee Appeals** – Any employee who believes that he or she has been adversely affected as a result of this policy, or who believes that this policy is not being adhered to, should speak with Human Resources.