

DATE: OCTOBER 2004  
TO: STAKEHOLDER

FROM: AFSCME/HENNEPIN DIGNITY AND RESPECT COMMITTEE

The AFSCME/Hennepin Dignity and Respect Committee was established during our most recent round of collective bargaining. The committee was asked to discuss dignity and respect issues and, through consensus, to develop a plan to emphasize the value and importance of treating all county employees with dignity and respect. This memo provides a summary of the committee's activities to date.

### COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Since April 21, 2004, the committee has met six times. At the first meeting, members of the committee discussed and listed examples of problems and issues related to dignity and respect in Hennepin County workplaces. The committee also identified healthy workplace behaviors (such as encouragement, teamwork and positive attitude) and abusive workplace behaviors (such as sarcasm, blaming and degrading others) in an effort to become more familiar with and sensitive to issues of dignity and respect in the workplace.

At the second meeting of the committee on May 6, 2004, Mr. Alan Olson, a mediator with the State of Minnesota Bureau of Mediation Services joined the group as its facilitator. Committee members prepared for the meeting by writing a simple declarative sentence characterizing the problem the committee must address, which they shared with the group. After each member of the committee had shared their sentence, members of the group were asked to vote for the sentence that they thought best described the problem before the committee.

The sentences receiving the most votes were:

**There are work environments in the county where disrespectful behaviors by management and/or employees are not addressed.**

**This not only affects the lives of workers, but also our ability to provide consistent quality service to our customers/clients.**

At the end of this meeting, Lynn Stetler, Local 2822, and Karen Marquardt, Office of Budget and Finance, were elected co-chairs to facilitate future meetings.

At the third meeting of the committee on June 10, 2004, Mr. Olson distributed a problem-solving model and asked the members of the group to engage in an exercise called a "Force Field Analysis." During the exercise, committee members identified driving forces, forces that support or enhance an environment of dignity and respect in the

workplace, and restraining forces, forces that tear down or fail to promote an environment of dignity and respect in the workplace.

After determining that it would be helpful to talk to representatives from organizations that have dealt with issues of dignity and respect in the workplace, the committee invited Ms. Deborah Anderson from Respond2 to its fourth meeting on July 8, 2004 to speak about her organization's work with Regions Hospital. Respond2 is a consulting firm that specializes in workplace issues. During her presentation, Ms. Anderson emphasized that if an organization is serious about changing the workplace, it is important to first label and name disrespectful behaviors.

Ms. Anderson asked the group to consider two questions:

How would you want to be approached if perceived as using abusive, disrespectful behavior?

What should be done with someone who would not or could not change their abusive behavior?

Responses from the group to Ms. Anderson's first question were varied. Ms. Anderson pointed out, however, that research suggests 90 percent of individuals would want to be approached one-on-one.

Responses from committee members to Ms. Anderson's second question also varied but the consensus of the group was that every effort should be made to change the behavior of employees who will not or cannot change their abusive behavior on their own.

The county's Affirmative Action Manager, Ms. Syl Booth, presented information at the committee's meeting on Aug. 10, 2004. Ms. Booth reviewed the county's recently revised Diversity, Non-Discrimination and Respectful Workplace Policy with the group and discussed the Complaint Process included in the policy. During her presentation, Ms. Booth emphasized that disrespectful behavior should not be tolerated in the workplace.

The group also reviewed examples of healthy and unhealthy workplace behaviors during the meeting and committee members were asked to place the behaviors on a continuum of healthy to unhealthy. After much discussion, the facilitators reminded the group that there should not be gradations of unhealthy behaviors. Unhealthy behaviors need to be labeled as unhealthy and addressed.

At the committee's meeting on Aug. 26, 2004, group members listed almost 40 potential solutions to the problems identified at the meeting on May 6, 2004, which will be reviewed and discussed in future meetings.

## **FUTURE ACTION**

Additional committee meetings are scheduled for October 7, 2004 and October 21, 2004. Future agenda items include, but are not limited to, additional problem diagnosis, identification of root causes, discussion of possible solutions, and identifying available resources.

We hope you've found this update helpful. Questions about this memo, or about the continuing work of the committee, should be directed to the following numbers: Managers are asked to contact the Labor Relations Office at 612-348-5010. Union members may direct questions to their business representative by calling the AFSCME office at (651) 455-0773.

Your questions and concerns are important to the committee as we work towards our goal of fostering an environment of dignity and respect in the workplace at Hennepin County.

**Please note:** The labor agreement identifies **Sept. 1, 2004** as the deadline for establishing a plan for addressing issues of dignity and respect in the workplace. Members of the committee agree the work that has already been completed is important and that the group should continue to meet in order to develop and distribute a plan to county managers and union members.

## **AFSCME/HENNEPIN DIGNITY AND RESPECT COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

### **UNION MEMBERS**

Lynn Stetler, Local 2822  
Finance Union Co-Chair  
Steve Marincel, AFSCME Council 14  
Matt Nelson, AFSCME Council 14  
Jeff Dains, AFSCME Council 14  
Steve Franks, Local 1719  
Dean Enge, Local 1719  
Molly Malecki, Local 2822  
Solveig Nilsen, Local 2864  
Wellness  
Chalmers Davis, Local 34  
Jan DeSirey, Local 2864  
Patrick Guernsey, Local 552  
Bobbi Lane, Local 552  
Jean Diederich, Local 34

### **MANAGEMENT MEMBERS**

Karen Marquardt, Office of Budget &  
Employer Co-Chair  
Bill Peters, Labor Relations  
Greg Failor, Labor Relations  
Jennifer Peterson, Labor Relations  
John O'Sullivan, Corrections  
Joe Gaspard, Human Services  
Mary White, County Attorney's Office  
Brian Berg, Northpoint Health and  
Wellness  
Victoria DeFord, Library  
Joseph Kucala, Human Services  
Norine Jaros, Human Resources  
Donald Sabre, Human Services  
Cheryl Merritt, Office of Planning &  
Wellness

Develop.

Luanne Laurents, Human Resources  
Syl Booth, Human Resources  
Susan Wray, Human Services  
John Peterson, Public Defenders

Office

Jean Bierbaum, Taxpayer Services  
Jim Ramnaraine, Human Resources