



The Office of Compliance Recognizes Workplace Conflict Awareness Month



April has been recognized as Workplace Conflict Awareness Month, and the Office of Compliance acknowledges the necessity of addressing and resolving workplace conflicts in a timely and professional manner. Workplace conflicts can involve anyone in the office, including supervisors and subordinates, men and women, and employees of any race, religion, or nationality. These conflicts tend to occur for a variety of reasons: i.e., poor communication, misperceptions, and personality differences. They can also occur when supervisors allow inappropriate, discriminatory, and harassing conduct in the workplace. Unresolved, workplace conflicts can cause high stress levels for staff involved in the conflict,

and even those who are not. They can also lead to liabilities under anti-discrimination and anti-harassment laws.

Employees directly involved in workplace conflict are in the best position to resolve the conflict if they can do so professionally. However, when assistance is needed, managers may need to bring the employees together to resolve the issues. There may be a tendency for managers to avoid the conflict, hoping that it will resolve itself or just blow over. Oftentimes, however, this approach can lead to resentment, pent up feelings, increased hostility, and potential exposure to legal claims and damages. It is important to recognize the causes for such conflict and immediately address any potential conflicts before they worsen.

When a situation arises that could potentially result in workplace conflict, outside assistance may be needed to resolve the issues. In the Congressional workplace, employers and employees may call the Office of Compliance (“OOC”) to request assistance in resolving workplace conflicts that may be violations of the Congressional Accountability Act (“CAA”). The OOC can provide confidential counseling and mediation if an employee so requests. The CAA allows an employee 180 days from the date of the alleged violation of the CAA to contact the Office of Compliance to initiate proceedings. A brochure of the Confidential Dispute Resolution Process can be found at <http://www.compliance.gov/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Dispute-Resolution-Brochure.pdf>.

While conflicts in the workplace may be burdensome, they often can lead to creative solutions for problem solving, enhanced communication, and a better understanding of everyone’s role and value in the workplace. The OOC provides training, workshops, and seminars that will help your office gain valuable skills to use when dealing with workplace disputes or disagreements. For more information, please call the Office of Compliance at (202) 724-9250 or visit our website at www.compliance.gov.