



CLIMATE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY OF EMPLOYEE INTERVIEWS

County of El Dorado

May 7, 2014



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I. INTRODUCTION

The County of El Dorado (“El Dorado”) retained Van Dermyden Maddux Law Corporation to conduct an impartial workplace climate survey at the County of El Dorado. The workplace climate survey commenced on January 27, 2014.

The cultural assessment survey was developed with input from this Firm, consultant Municipal Resource Group, the Board of Supervisors, department heads, and union leadership. The survey was transmitted electronically to County employees on March 11, 2014. Consistent with representations to County employees, results are anonymous. The survey closed on April 2, 2014.

During the survey period, Van Dermyden Maddux sent electronic surveys to 1,934 current and former County employees and received a total of 1,228 responses, yielding a response rate of approximately 63%. Additionally, the undersigned received 21 paper copies of surveys from County employees that did not have access to a computer. These were manually input into the electronic survey tool.

Additionally, **60** interviews were conducted of current and former El Dorado employees who requested either a telephonic or an in-person interview. Interview participants represented 10 County departments.

This Report provides the County a summary of employee interviews that may raise issues related to climate and equal employment opportunity (“EEO”) issues – i.e. harassment, discrimination and retaliation. We furnish this information for assessment purposes only. We have not analyzed, investigated, or reached findings as to any of the allegations contained within this Report.

II. SCOPE OF INTERVIEWS

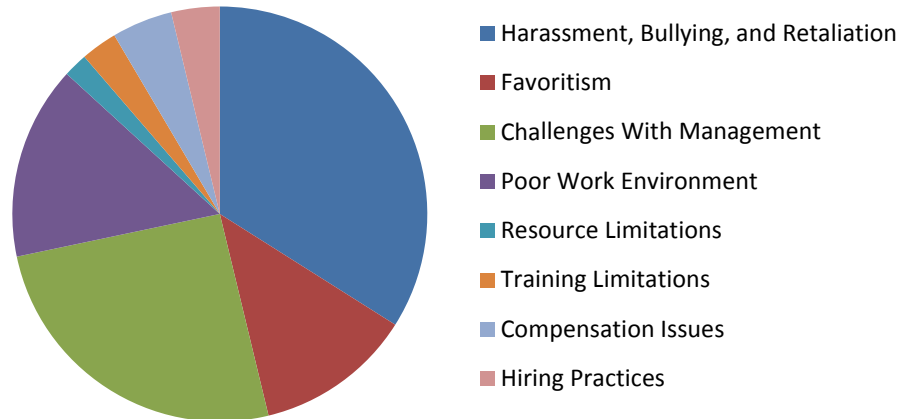
Employees were afforded the option of an in-person or a telephonic interview. The interview invitation was also extended to former employees who expressed an interest. In-person interviews were conducted in Placerville, Cameron Park, and South Lake Tahoe.

The interviews were open-ended in that interviewees were allowed to share their general concerns about their personal experiences working for the County. Interviewees were advised that this was a confidential process and their participation and the information provided would remain confidential unless it fell under El Dorado County policies prohibiting discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. As a result, the identification of the subjects of the complaint are redacted from this Report.

Despite this assurance, even those complaining of non-EEO issues were fearful of identifying the subjects of their complaints due to concerns of retaliation. Of the 46 employees interviewed, 13 raised EEO issues and seven stated they had filed formal complaints with Human Resources in the past.

III. SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS

Four employees expressed some satisfaction with their jobs. The remaining interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with their work environment. Employees pointed to several factors for this dissatisfaction, including the following: harassment, bullying and retaliation; favoritism; challenges with management; poor work environment; resource limitations; training limitations; compensation issues; and hiring practices.¹



Harassment, Bullying, and Retaliation. Approximately 36 employees expressed concerns related to harassment, bullying, and retaliation. Although not meant to be an exhaustive recitation of the comments on this topic, the following are illustrative quotes that demonstrated these concerns:

- “[Management] is a bully and a terrorist, and everyone knows it.”
- “[Management] bullies the department heads.”
- “[Management] is revengeful towards those who challenge [him/her].”
- “I’m afraid to discuss problems because I’m afraid I’ll lose my job.”
- “I’m afraid to complete the survey.”
- “[Management] told me that [he/she] would make my life hell, and [he/she] did.”
- “I’m sure the Survey is inaccurate because I know of many employees who gave politically correct responses due to fear of identification and retaliation.”
- “Employees have been terminated for complaining.”

¹ Quotations in this Report are not verbatim recitations of employees’ statements. Quotations are cited as accurately as possible from the undersigned’s notes.

- “Employees are willing to tolerate this behavior because there are no alternative employment opportunities available in El Dorado County.”

Favoritism. Approximately 13 employees expressed concerns related to favoritism and unequal treatment. Many felt that those favored by management received better treatment, including easier job assignments and faster promotions.

- “There is a lot of favoritism and employees are not treated equally.”
- “My manager and managers’ manager are good friends. Because of this, my manager is treated favorably by our department head.”
- “Supervisors favor certain employees and consequences for various actions are different depending on whether or not your supervisor likes you.”
- “There is a lot of favoritism and ‘Good Ol’ Boy’ mentality.”

Challenges With Management. Approximately 27 employees expressed challenges dealing with management. Many stated they were fearful, distrusting, and felt that their supervisors were abusing their power.

- “There is no one watching the managers and their objective is to set themselves up with the best retirements.”
- “There is a lot of favoritism and employees are not treated equally.”
- “Each person is being micromanaged by the person above them.”
- “[Management] yelled at me and at my supervisor for not doing accounting, but when I began doing the accounting, [the manager] changed [his/her] position and told me that such tasks were for the accounting department.”
- “[Management] forced me to bring clothes to work so that [he/she] could approve my wardrobe.”
- “‘Do as I say, not as I do,’ seems to be the norm with management.”
- “Management is trying to set examples by letting people go without observing protocol.”

Poor Work Environment. Approximately 16 employees expressed concerns related to a poor work environment.

- “People self-demote because of the stress.”
- “Everyone is scared to death of [Management]. I’ve been having anxiety attacks.”
- “Employees only work hard enough not to do anything wrong. We don’t take risks and this hampers growth.”

- “This is more than a cultural problem, this is an infection trickling from top to bottom.”
- “My department is about to implode.”
- “Major cultural issues are driven by poor, but powerful department directors.”

Resource Limitations. Two employees expressed concerns about limited resources.

- “The County needs more staff to handle the workload and protect employees from burnout.”
- “The nature of our work is stressful and I believe a few hours of sheltered time per day would increase productivity.”

Training Limitations. Three employees expressed concerns about training limitations.

- “Safety training is lacking.”
- “The new department directors are unsupported, lack training, and are unclear about what they are supposed to do.”
- “We need more mentoring, training, and conflict resolution.”

Compensation Issues. Five employees expressed dissatisfaction with their pay and believed that they were being paid significantly less than those engaged in similar work in other counties. At the same time, employees believed that there were limited employment prospects available for them within the County.

- “Similar positions in other counties pay \$15, 000 more. This makes El Dorado County a stepping stone job.”
- “Our health care provider was recently changed, which increased the cost to both the county and the employees.”
- “The County switched our healthcare provider at a higher cost to employees and it has affected employee morale significantly.”
- “Adjoining counties pay a lot more for the same jobs – El Dorado County’s actions are speaking so loudly, we cannot hear their words.”

Hiring Practices. Four employees expressed concerns related to hiring practices. Employees believed hiring practices lacked transparency and did not comply with policy.

- “I’ve participated in interviews for which the candidates were already preselected.”
- “I’ve seen a lot of nepotism and game playing in the hiring process.”
- “Management has been forced to pull new interview lists if the names were not agreeable to those already in management positions.”

- "Management positions seldom go to current employees."

IV. CONCLUSION

This concludes the summary of the results of the employee interviews.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sue Ann Van Dermyn