



RESOLUTION 2024-12-11 (5)

Date: December 11, 2024

To: THA Board of Commissioners

From: April Black
Executive Director

Re: Revision to THA Policy HR-10.30 Workplace Attire and Assigned Uniforms

This resolution would revise THA's Workplace Attire and Assigned Uniforms policy. It now serves as a policy for workplace attire and includes detailed values, expectations, and prohibitions. (A new policy for Assigned Uniforms has also been created and will be presented as Resolution 2023-12-11 (6)).

BACKGROUND

THA employees and supervisors shared feedback with the Leadership Team about HR-10.30, "Workplace Attire and Assigned Uniforms". We heard that the policy was subjective, restrictive, and lacked clarity. The consequences were different enforcement standards along with worry or confusion among staff about what they were permitted to wear to work. And after an in-depth review of the policy, the Strategic Advisor found gendered language (i.e., only using "his" and "her") as well as the use of phrases with origins in historical discrimination (i.e., "rule of thumb"). For these reasons, the Strategic Advisor worked with Human Resources to lead an inclusive effort to update the policy. This work also supports the creation of a THA Employee Handbook.

The Strategic Advisor facilitated a comprehensive staff engagement process. It included conversations with the DEIB Steering Committee, presentations and discussions at regular

Department meetings, an online survey, one-on-one and small group conversations, as well as conversations with OPEIU and Trades Union representatives.

The feedback employees shared through the staff engagement process was incorporated into the respective policies. Because this also increased the length of the policy, we decided to divide the policies into one for workplace attire and another for assigned uniforms. The two new policies detail values, standards, expectations, prohibitions, and expressly acknowledge and support expression that aligns with someone's gender identity and/or cultural background.

This change in policy has no impact on THA's finances.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend the Tacoma Housing Authority Board of Commissioners approve the proposed amendments to HR-10.30, "Workplace Attire".



RESOLUTION 2024-12-11 (5)

Update to THA Policy HR-10.30, "Workplace Attire"

A **RESOLUTION** of the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Tacoma

WHEREAS, the Tacoma Housing Authority endeavors to be a great employer; and

WHEREAS, THA is committed to embedding a DEIB lens in all its practices and programs; and

WHEREAS, THA staff have shared feedback about the original version of THA policy HR-10.30; and

WHEREAS, THA staff and Union representatives participated in a comprehensive engagement process to review draft policy updates and share feedback; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Tacoma, Washington that:

1. Employees who are not required to wear uniforms to perform their job functions follow updated values, standards, and prohibitions regarding workplace attire.
2. This resolution supersedes any conflicting policies or resolutions previously adopted by the Board of Commissioners.
3. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

Approved: December 11, 2024



Derek Young, Chair

Workplace Attire Policy

Policy No. HR-10.30

Overview

This policy applies to all employees except Maintenance Technicians. Uniform standards for Maintenance Technicians and Leads can be found in policy HR-10.30.01.

THA's workplace attire prioritizes **safety, authenticity, approachability, and agency representation**. We encourage employees to “dress for the day they will have”, dress for their audience, and be prepared for changes in their days. **Even more, we welcome and appreciate when employees present themselves in ways that balance the four values, is relevant to their culture or background, and is in line with their gender identity or expression.**

This policy is intended to create clear standards of THA's Workplace Attire Policy, while also encouraging employees to present themselves in ways that are authentic, comfortable, and culturally relevant within these standards. By following this policy, residents, visitors, and other partners will find us approachable and trustworthy. We trust our employees to use good judgement when determining how to present themselves at work within the standards set out in this Workplace Attire Policy.

Values for Workplace Attire

Safety means that the clothes we wear prevent and/or mitigate the extend of any harm that may be encountered at work, including workplace accidents.

Authenticity means we encourage employees to bring the version of themselves they're willing to share at work. This may look different for each and every one of us. And we think that's what makes us special.

Approachability means THA residents feel like they can relate to us and come to us for support. Approachability can be conveyed through how we dress and our general demeanor.

Agency representation means that we're asking employees to balance approachability with their roles as ambassadors of the agency and our work. Our work is sensitive and high impact. And we want residents and external partners to know that we at THA can meet the mark every day we show up for work. Like approachability, this can be conveyed through dress and general demeanor.

Typical Roles and Attire Standards

The table below represents the typical roles employees play on a day-to-day basis. This table applies to all employees except Maintenance Technicians. Attire standards are color coded. Definitions for the standards are on the next page. **This table is only a summary.**

	Accepted (A)	Recommended (R)	Required (REQ)	Not Applicable
Role	Casual	Business Casual	Safety Gear	
(1) At a THA property (not in housing unit) and not engaging with residents or visitors.	A	A		
(2) At a THA property (not in housing unit) and regularly engaging with residents or visitors.	A	R		
(3) In a THA housing unit for visit, inspection, tour, meeting, emergency, etc. (not maintenance).	A	A		
(4) Construction site visit.	A	A	REQ	
(5) Community event (hosted by THA or another partner) ¹ .	A	A		
(6) Conference or similar professional gathering.	A	R		
(7) In person or virtual meetings with elected or administrative officials and external partners.	A	R		

Attire Standards Defined

THA Casual

- **Clothing that is moderately informal, comfortable, safe, and clean.**
- **Examples of acceptable items:** jeans², chinos or khakis, track suits, sweatpants, sweatshirts or hoodies, casual tops, moderately casual cultural clothes, shorts, skirts, dresses, yoga (“stretch”) pants, sneakers, boots, and stable sandals.
- **Examples of unacceptable items:** pajamas, lounging clothes, party clothes.

Business Casual

- **Clothing that blends traditional business wear with a more relaxed style.**

¹ There’s a wide variety of community events; if you are unsure what to wear to a work event, ask someone.

² Jeans with holes are acceptable for “casual” wear. However, holes must be sized and placed so they do not reveal undergarments or body parts that traditionally are covered by undergarments.

- **Examples of acceptable items:** slacks, dark jeans, trousers, button-up shirts, polo shirts, sweaters, cardigans, tunics, blazers, somewhat formal cultural clothes, blouses, skirts, dresses, loafers, dress shoes, flats, stable heeled shoes.

Semi-formal and formal business clothing is also acceptable.

Safety Gear: OSHA requirements state any employee visiting an active construction site must wear long sleeves, long pants with no holes, closed toed shoes, and gear such as goggles, hard hat, and high-visibility vest. These items are required for these visits.

Standards, Definitions, and Color Key

Standard	Explanation / Definition	Color
Accepted	This style of clothing is acceptable and allowed.	A
Recommended	A suggested style of dress and presentation. This style of dress can be encouraged or requested.	R
Required	This style of clothing, uniform, or gear is mandatory. Employees not wearing required attire can be asked to change or may be subject to disciplinary action.	(REQ)
Not Relevant	This standard is not relevant to a specific task / role.	

Respecting THA Residents in their Homes

THA residents represent a wide range of cultural backgrounds. And about half of our residents live alone. It's important that we do our best to respect residents who come from different backgrounds and have different needs for safety and comfort.

When visiting a resident in their home please wear at least one article of clothing that identifies you as a THA employee (i.e., ID work badge, THA issued / gifted clothing, etc.), clothes that offer more coverage, and stable shoes with more coverage. If a resident asks you to show your THA ID badge, do so.

Some residents may ask guests to remove their shoes upon entering their home. In these cases, you are required to wear "booties" or "covers" over your shoes. These will be provided by THA. We also encourage you to bring health related PPE (i.e., face mask) to wear if a resident requests you to.

We recommend that employees who may have planned or unplanned visits to a resident's home keep a few items like the ones listed above at their workstation. This will help you be prepared for visits to a resident's home. Maintaining this style of dress, while balancing authenticity and approachability, is one way we can show respect to THA residents and their cultural backgrounds.

Additional Guidance

Casual Wednesdays and Fridays

While casual attire is acceptable on any day, THA still practices “Casual Wednesday” and “Casual Friday”, except for THA employees who wear uniforms. This tradition is for any employee to enjoy. Employees who work in THA offices and engage regularly with residents can also enjoy “Casual Wednesday” and “Casual Friday” because on other days of the week they may choose to dress in a business casual style. This also applies to any other day the lobby is closed.

Prohibited Clothing Items

The following clothing items are prohibited at THA:

- Clothing that reveals undergarments or body parts typically covered by undergarments when sitting, standing, walking, or bending.
- Clothing that doesn’t cover your torso.
- Clothing with holes or short length that reveal body parts typically covered by undergarments.
- Unstable footwear (i.e., low tread, low coverage, very high heel or platform, insecure or no straps).
- “Grab hazard” clothing or jewelry (i.e., anything so loose that may get stuck on furniture, doors, or machinery).
- Clothing items with prohibited statements, graphics, or imagery (see below)

Prohibited Statements, Graphics, or Imagery

Employees may not wear clothing articles or jewelry or display tattoos that contain any of the following references:

- Profanity (all languages)
- Drugs or alcohol
- Sexual or lewd
- Violence
- Weaponry
- Hate speech
- References to political parties, campaigns, candidates, elected officials, or ballot initiatives.

Employees are also required to cover any tattoos that violate this policy.

Other types of statements: Clothing that display references to cultural or social matters is allowable. However, we ask employees to be mindful of the statements they display. When wearing something with a cultural statement consider whether it would make a resident, visitor, or partner feel excluded, unwelcome, or if it might distract from conducting your core duties.

Hate speech is explicitly prohibited. “Hate speech” is defined as abusive, threatening, or derogatory language that expresses a prejudice against someone or a group of people based on an identifying feature. Washington state (WAC 162-04-010 and WLAD) identifies the following protected classes:

race / color, presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability; use of a trained dog guide or service animal; HIV/AIDS and Hep-C status; creed; national origin; sex (including pregnancy); marital status; age (40+); sexual orientation and gender identity; honorably discharged veteran or military status.

Clothing that displays hate speech is prohibited.

Any employee is free to discuss statements or images with the wearer, their supervisor, or the Human Resources Department

Makeup, Jewelry, Hair, and Piercings

Employees may choose how to present themselves regarding makeup, jewelry, hair style, hair color, hair covers (i.e., hats, accessories, cloth covers, etc.), facial hair, or body piercings within the parameters of this Policy. **We welcome and appreciate it when employees express themselves in ways that are authentic, culturally relevant, and in line with their gender identity or expression.**

Tattoos

Employees can display tattoos. Tattoos that display prohibited statements or graphics must be covered.

Perfumes and Scents

THA is not explicitly a fragrance-free workplace. However, we employ individuals with sensitivities to strong scents. **We encourage employees to use their discretion when applying perfumes or other scented products.** If you work near someone with a sensitivity to strong scents, you may be asked to make an adjustment. We encourage open and caring conversations when navigating these dynamics. Those requests and accommodations can be made between employees with support from supervisors or Human Resources.

Cleanliness

We expect employees to use healthy hygiene habits and identify what is healthy for themselves. Employees with distracting odor or dirty clothing will be asked to address the matter. Employees who are distracted by another employee's hygiene or cleanliness are asked to discuss those concerns directly or to contact a supervisor or the Human Resources Department for support.

Accommodations

Any employee who believes they may need a reasonable accommodation concerning THA's Workplace Attire and Assigned Uniform policy for a religious or medical reason should contact the Human Resources Department.

Enforcement

We ask that employees hold open and honest conversations with each other regarding perfumes, scents, cleanliness, and allowable statements on clothing. Supervisors and the Human Resources Department are available for support.

When an employee violates the dress code policy, management may send the employee home without pay to change into acceptable attire and / or may take appropriate disciplinary action.