

A Special Note to Persons in Positions of Power

Romantic or sexual relationships are inappropriate and may be criminal if it occurs between an offender and employee, contractor, or volunteer. Because of the difference in power, there can never be a consensual relationship. The Iowa Department of Corrections has zero tolerance for such contact.

◆ Some offenders have a history of victimization, particularly in their formative years, which may make them especially vulnerable. Their perception of affection may be skewed by this background of abuse, making it impossible for them to refuse the advances of a person in a position of power.

◆ In some instances, their survival in the community has been directly related to using their sexuality to obtain the means to support themselves.

Coupled with low self-esteem, this carries over into their reactions and conduct while under correctional supervision.

◆ Occasionally, an offender will use attention or affection to coerce an employee, contractor or volunteer into a personal, romantic, or sexual relationship. When this happens, the employee, contractor, or volunteer gives up their position of power and may become vulnerable to additional demands by the offender.

If you question your professional boundaries with an offender or feel uncomfortable with his/her actions towards you, talk to another person you respect or bring the matter to the attention of your supervisor before it gets out of control.

Employee Assistance Program:
(515) 244-6090
(800) 327-4692

Sexual Misconduct with Offenders

A guide for staff, contractors, and volunteers of the Iowa Department of Corrections.





An Issue of Power

The Iowa Department of Corrections has zero tolerance for any activity associated with or that promotes acts of sexual conduct, including sexual harassment, between offenders and staff, contractors, or volunteers.

Sexual Misconduct includes any behavior or act of a sexual nature directed towards an offender whether it appears to be consensual or nonconsensual. This includes any touching of intimate body parts, threatened or requested sexual acts, voyeurism, requiring or allowing others to have sexual contact within the correctional setting, and receiving any type of communication of a sexual or romantic nature from an offender.

Sexual Harassment includes sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, repeated verbal statements, comments, gestures, or actions of a sexual nature directed towards an offender.

An Issue of Law

Pursuant to Iowa Code 709.16, sexual contact with a person under correctional supervision is a crime.

Other Considerations

Sexual misconduct and sexual harassment are an abuse of power. As a DOC staff person, contractor, or volunteer your designated assignments place you in a position of authority over the offenders with whom you interact in a professional capacity. It is not possible to have a relationship of equals because you have a responsibility to maintain custody, evaluate work, treatment, or academic performance and to provide input to issues that affect release dates, return to prison, or other sanctions.

Retaliation against an offender, staff, contractor, or volunteer who reported sexual misconduct or sexual harassment or cooperated with an investigation, regardless of the merits or disposition of the complaint, is prohibited and will lead to discipline up to and including termination.

All allegations and incidents of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, retaliation, staff neglect or violation of responsibilities that may have contributed to such incidents, or that indicate a personal relationship with an offender, shall be reported to the Warden /Superintendent, fully investigated, and treated in a confidential and serious manner.

Safety and Security are the First Priorities

A staff member, contractor, or volunteer who engages in sexual misconduct with an offender is by definition neglecting their responsibilities in maintaining safety and security and places all other people in the facility at risk. Iowa DOC has zero tolerance for such conduct.

For More Information

Contact the PREA Compliance Manager at your institution .

