

DRESS CODE

TO: All DSS-HRA-DHS Staff
FROM: Jill Berry 
Executive Deputy Commissioner
Office of Staff Resources

I. INTRODUCTION

This Dress Code is a guide for all employees of the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Human Resources Administration (HRA), and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) regarding professional standards of dress in the workplace. DSS-HRA-DHS expects all employees to dress appropriately for the workplace to instill confidence in those we serve and to reflect professionalism.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION

DSS-HRA-DHS are social services organizations with a continuing mission to fight poverty, income inequality, and homelessness by providing eligible New Yorkers with essential benefits and services. Appropriate behavior and appearance of staff promotes this mission and fosters a professional atmosphere. Professional attire exemplifies a high standard of service and respect for oneself and for others.

To facilitate consistent operations, staff members are required to dress and groom appropriately for the workday. These standards are consistent with standards of comparable public and private organizations, and appropriate to the services and duties performed by the staff members of DSS-HRA-DHS. Employees are expected to comply with these guidelines.

Under the New York City Human Rights Law, employers and covered entities may not require dress codes or uniforms, or apply grooming or appearance standards, which impose different requirements for individuals based on sex or gender.

III. INSTRUCTIONS

Location Managers are responsible for determining suitable attire for the staff members who are assigned to their work locations. Appropriate dress must be determined based on the nature of the tasks performed and the amount of client-staff contact.

IV. DRESS CODE AND CATEGORIES OF ATTIRE

The categories of attire, identified below, are designated to assist all staff members in adhering to the Dress Code guidelines, and all staff should select clothing items that adhere to the following applicable lists:

1. Appropriate attire for all staff members
2. Inappropriate attire for all staff members
3. Attire for office, administrative and field staff
4. Attire for trades, technicians, transportation, maintenance, and other staff required to wear special work-related or protective clothing.

1. Appropriate attire for all staff members

(Except for employees assigned to duties described in Section 4 below)

- *Slacks*
- *Skirts/dresses (of appropriate business length)*
- *Blazers/jackets*
- *Shirts with collars*
- *Polo shirts with collars*
- *Blouses*
- *Knit tops*
- *Sweaters*
- *V-neck sweaters or crew neck sweaters over collared shirts*
- *Vests over collared shirts/blouses*
- *Neckties*
- *Business-style shoes or boots*
- *Black or dark-colored casual walking shoes*
- *Jeans (blue or black) and denim skirts or dresses (of appropriate business length) – only on Fridays. Baggy jeans, denim leggings, and jeans with holes, tears, stains, or patches are strictly prohibited.*

2. Inappropriate attire for all staff members

- *Jeans and denim skirts or dresses (except on Fridays, as stated within list 1 above).*
- *Torn or ripped clothing*
- *Mini skirts*

- *Tank tops, spaghetti-strap tops, halter tops, tube tops*
- *Clothing that is overly sheer or revealing*
- *Caps/hats (except for religious and/or documented medical reasons)*
- *Sneakers (in cases with documented medical reasons, black or dark-colored sneakers may be worn)*
- *Overalls*
- *Extremely baggy clothing*
- *Shorts, pedal pushers, Capri pants, cropped pants (pants of mid-calf length or longer are acceptable)*
- *Sweatpants, sweatshirts*
- *Jogging suits*
- *Plain or pocket T-shirts*
- *Muscle shirts*
- *Shirts with slogans, offensive language, or images*
- *House slippers, rubber flip-flops*
- *Clothing of extreme fit, such as spandex (jeans or otherwise), leggings, or exercise clothing*

Neither category 1 or 2 is intended to be all-inclusive. Rather, the above items should help to set parameters for proper business attire and allow the employee to make good judgments about items that are not specifically addressed.

Note: Business attire is still required for formal meetings and appointments with external colleagues/vendors, court appearances, press conferences, and related events where business casual dress is not appropriate.

A good piece of guidance is: *If one is not sure if something is acceptable, choose something else.*

3. Attire for office, administrative, and field staff

Maintaining a professional work environment requires that office, field, and administrative staff wear appropriate attire and be well-groomed. **All staff that does not fall into category 4 below must select clothing items consistent with the lists above.**

Field staff are also required to comply with the dress code prescribed above. However, Location Managers may exercise discretion in setting the dress code for their particular location, using the parameters of categories 1 and 2 above as a basis, while incorporating other factors relating to the employees' daily duties (e.g., the amount of walking required, climbing of stairs, work environment, and other factors that the Location Manager may deem relevant).

- *Shelter and Intake Staff that directly service clients* - are required to conform to the attire prescribed for office and administrative staff in Section IV of this Dress Code.
 - Staff involved in activities such as preparing and serving meals and accepting deliveries may be allowed to wear relaxed attire. Staff serving in Community titles who work in shelters may be permitted to wear dark-colored jeans and sneakers.
Note: staff must maintain themselves in a well-groomed, clean, and neat manner, and must be identifiable as agency employees.
- *DSS-HRA-DHS Staff at 4 World Trade Center, 33 Beaver Street, and 250 Church Street* - must conform to the dress code as set forth in categories 1 and 2, except for those assigned to duties as described in category 4.
- *Managerial employees at all locations* - must adhere to the general dress code as set forth in categories 1 and 2.
- *Interns, Consultants, Seasonal, and On-loan employees* - must abide by the dress code as set forth in categories 1 and 2, unless assigned to duties as described in category 4.

4. Attire for trades, technicians, transportation, maintenance, and other staff required to wear special work-related or protective clothing

This category is for non-office staff who are required to wear special work-related or protective clothing/uniforms in the performance of their assigned duties, as well as non-office staff who may need to dress in clothing suitable to their job-specific task. Individuals in this category are allowed exceptions to the dress code for office, administrative, and field staff. Location Managers are responsible for determining appropriate dress, based on industry standards for the work performed and the degree of public visibility of the staff.

Acceptable exceptions are as follows:

- Denim jeans or skirts (blue or black)
- Short- or long-sleeved, plain or pocketed t-shirts (without offensive language, slogans, or images)
- Sweatshirts, with or without hoods
- Flannel shirts with collars
- Sneakers or work boots

Staff in this category includes:

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*The City of New York
Department of Social Services
Human Resources Administration
Department of Homeless Services*

- Facilities operations and maintenance staff, including trades and custodial workers
- Engineering, architectural, and space analysis staff who perform assigned field activities
- Mailroom, copy room, messenger, and stockroom staff
- Print shop and archives staff
- Staff assigned to transportation duties or the operation of motor vehicles, including van and truck drivers.

*Classification: 02
Replaces: HRA Procedure No. 09-12
DHS Procedure No. 14-273*

Effective Immediately