



Approved:

**City of Commerce, California  
Human Resources Policy and Procedure Manual**

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Director of Human Resources  
*[Signature]*  
City Administrator

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*Number: III-1 Effective Date: 1/6/09*

**SUBJECT: CHAIN OF COMMAND**

**PURPOSE:**

In accordance with the City of Commerce Municipal Code, Section 2.04.110, which defines the authority and power in the organization, the purpose of this policy is to ensure a fluid and effective communication system at every level of the organization.

**POLICY:**

This policy consists of rules intended to advance the City's goals of providing efficient and high quality services to its residents and providing a safe and productive work environment for all. Instructions flow downward along the chain of command and accountability flows upward. Adhering to the chain of command will result in a more effective decision making process and greater efficiency in the City.

This policy addresses communication and delegation aspects for the governance of the City and supplements, but does not supplant other laws and rules that prescribe the legal responsibilities of City officials and employees. Those include, among others, the California Constitution, various provisions of the California Government Code (including the Brown Act and the Political Reform Act), California Labor Code, federal laws prohibiting discrimination and harassment, and provisions of the City's own Municipal Code.

City staff is organized in a hierarchical structure, and work under the direction and control of several layers of supervision and management culminating with the City Administrator. When an elected official or employee attempts to direct another employee not within their chain of command, the employee is put in an awkward position and the management structure is undermined. In some cases such actions have the potential for liability. It is expected that all employees and policy makers will communicate their concerns and requests in a manner consistent with the rules that follow, respect the chain of command and act within the bounds of their authority.

1. City officials shall communicate administrative service solely through the City Administrator or his/her designee.
2. City officials and employees shall not attempt to reorganize another employee's priorities outside their chain of command or influence the manner by which City staff performs their assigned functions or duties. City employees are directed in their everyday tasks by their immediate supervisor in accordance with approved work plans. Interference with an employee's work routine, priorities or decision making processes creates confusion and stress and places the employee in the difficult position of either disregarding his or her assigned work or appearing to disrespect the official or other co-worker's request.
3. All requests for work or research should be directed to the appropriate Department Director or City Administrator. Occasionally, a City official or employee may believe that a problem must be looked into immediately, and is tempted to direct an employee to focus on that problem as a priority. City officials should first communicate their concern to the City Administrator or the appropriate Department Director. Subsequently, all employees must communicate their concern to their immediate supervisor within their chain of command.
4. No City official or employee shall retaliate or threaten to retaliate against any employee as a result of disagreements over policy recommendations. It is critical to the success of the City that its employees enjoy a workplace free of the fear of retaliation. The City takes great pride in its creativity and its receptivity to new and different ideas; creativity is fostered by an open and nonjudgmental atmosphere where candor is not penalized. City employees are hired to offer their professional judgments and opinions. Disagreements must not extend to threats or generate fear of reprisal.
5. If concerns arise on the performance of a City employee, these concerns should be expressed privately to the City Administrator or to the employee's Department Director. These issues can then be addressed in accordance with the City's personnel policies and procedures, in a manner that protects the employee's rights and protects the City's authority to properly discipline its employees.
6. If a City employee has any concern regarding the performance, behavior or any personnel related matter regarding another City employee, he/she is to report their concern directly to their immediate supervisor for handling. Should a supervisor be the concern of the employee, they are to report their concern to the next authority in the chain of command.
7. City officials are not authorized directly to give work assignments to employees. An official may ask a routine question of staff; beyond that, concerns about work assignments should be addressed to the City Administrator or to the appropriate Department Director.
8. Employees should not take directions or work assignment from officials and should

inform their Department Director of any such attempts.

9. Employees and officials occasionally speak before other public bodies, neighborhood groups or to the media. To ensure accurate and appropriate communication to the public and within the organization, employees should always be cognizant that they are presenting information authorized by and on behalf of the City. Employees have freedom of speech rights off duty. While serving in the capacity of a City employee, and carrying out a directive or assignment to convey information authorized by the City, the employee is obligated to professionally communicate the information directed by the City without interjecting their own personal opinion or beliefs regarding its content. The employee is also expected for sensitive or controversial issues to inform the City Administrator, or the Department Director to let them know that the media has contacted them. The City Administrator will communicate directly with the Public Information Officer, the appropriate Department Director and other City officials as necessary, including the City Attorney and Director of Human Resources on an as-needed basis to determine an appropriate spokesperson.
10. In accordance with Commerce Municipal Code, Section 2.04.110, The City Council and its members shall deal with the administrative services of the City only through the City Administrator, except for the purpose of inquiry. Neither the City Council nor any members thereof shall give orders to any subordinates of the City Administrator. City officials do not have authority and should refrain from giving directions or instructions to City contractors or consultants working on City projects or programs.
11. The Municipal Code sets forth the subject area jurisdiction of the City's Commissions. The City Council establishes the duties of its advisory boards. These subsidiary bodies are limited to acting and/or making recommendations within the area of their jurisdiction, and in accordance with by-laws approved by the City Council.

The City of Commerce is committed to maintaining a healthy, fulfilling and humane workplace. To that end, every employee and City official is expected to observe the foregoing policy and rules when engaged in City business.

Complaints alleging a violation of this Policy should be directed to the City Administrator or the Department Director. Upon receipt of a complaint, the City Administrator shall determine an appropriate course of action.

The goal of enforcement of this policy is corrective, rather than penal, and a progressive approach to curing violations shall be employed, beginning with informal methods and proceeding to more formal methods as necessary. If appropriate, formal counseling and instruction shall be utilized to ensure a fluid and effective system of communication, performance, and accountability.