



ORLANDO FIRE DEPARTMENT
**INCLUSIVITY AND
EQUITY ACTION PLAN**

ORLANDO FIRE DEPARTMENT INCLUSIVITY & EQUITY ACTION PLAN BACKGROUND:

Fire departments across the country have struggled with the recruitment and hiring of minorities for decades. According to Data USA (2019)¹, statistics show 85 percent of those in fire service are white with blacks making up 7.7 percent and women account for only 4.6 percent.

Orlando is internationally recognized as a city that embraces diversity and advances policies and programs that ensure everyone is treated equally and with respect. As a true melting pot, Orlando boasts demographics of 34 percent white, 31 percent Hispanic or Latino and 26 percent black or African American residents.

We must ensure every aspect of our government is reflective of our diverse community and promotes cultural competency. Recognizing that the Orlando Fire Department (OFD), like fire departments across the country, has a low percentage of women and minorities within the agency, Mayor Dyer is committed to improving the Orlando Fire Department as a place for women and minorities to work, prosper and thrive.

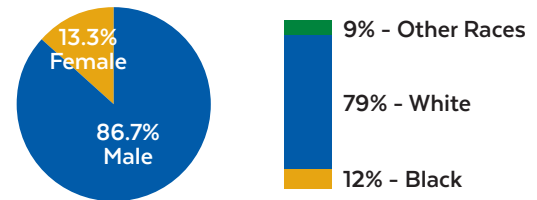
To ensure the Orlando Fire Department is representative of the Orlando community and there is a culture of inclusion and professionalism, Mayor Dyer tasked his Deputy Chief of Staff Heather Fagan and Public Safety Advisor Dave Arnott with developing strategies for increasing the recruitment of women, minorities and veterans in the fire department and to develop and implement professional standards policies that ensure the retention of new firefighters.

This report builds on a number of efforts Mayor Dyer has undertaken in the last two years, aimed at increasing the diversity of the Orlando Fire Department, with a priority over the last year on hearing and learning directly from the females within the agency. This includes:

- Holding a women’s summit that led to prioritizing changes in the areas of facilities, policies, training and recruitment.
- Conducting inclusiveness training for fire leadership.
- Revising the anti-harassment policy, with the involvement of female firefighters.
- Expanding the training division with the additional of a District Chief. A female District Chief is the first person assigned to this position. This new District Chief position is charged with creating and implementing ongoing inclusiveness training and further assisting in the professional development of females and other firefighters.
- Making physical changes at existing fire stations to ensure women have private, secure areas.
- Creating both video and in-person, anti-harassment and discrimination training for the entire fire department.
- Providing consistent, ongoing anti-harassment training for all firefighters.
- Design of new and replacement fire stations will include separate and private areas – including those for restrooms, changing and sleeping. Currently, three stations are in the design/build process – Fire Stations 6, 9, and 11.

OFD Demographics

All personnel



Civilian



Sworn



¹. <https://datausa.io/profile/soc/firefighters>

Methodology

First, to understand the current policies and practices in the areas of recruitment, hiring, internal investigations and discipline, meetings were conducted with Orlando Fire Department personnel responsible for the identified areas. Additionally, meetings were held with the union president and other male and female firefighters who expressed interest.

To identify best practices from within the city government, meetings were held with Orlando Police Department personnel responsible for recruitment, investigations and discipline. To identify solutions being implemented within the Central Florida region, meetings were held with administrators from the Valencia College School of Public Safety and the Orange County Fire Chief. Additionally, diversity initiatives underway in fire departments across the country, including the International Association of Firefighters Diversity Initiative: Achieving and Retaining a Diverse Fire Service Workforce were reviewed and researched. *(full list of meetings in appendix)*

In order to provide an opportunity to gain input and feedback from all the Orlando firefighters, seven Forum in the Field sessions were scheduled, one in each fire district and one at the Union Hall.* (Due to Hurricane Dorian one session had to be cancelled.) The Forum in the Field sessions, which were hosted jointly by Heather Fagan, Dave Arnott, Interim Fire Chief Rich Wales, and IAFF President Ron Glass, sought feedback in three focus areas – professional development – recruitment – internal investigations.

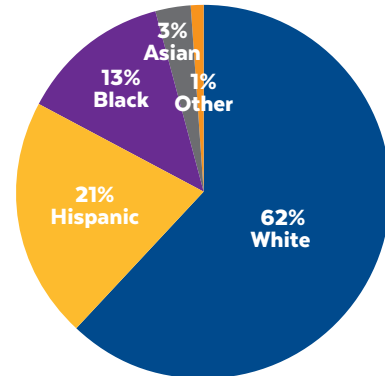
Nearly 150 firefighters attended the Forum in the Field sessions which each lasted approximately 90 minutes each.

Due to women being unrepresented in the initial Forum in the Field sessions, one additional Forum was scheduled with only female firefighters being invited. Thirteen of the department’s 20 women attended a two-hour forum.

In summary, meeting attendees expressed ideas for expanding recruitment events and outreach; supported hiring and the training of non-certified firefighters and cadets; desired supervisory training and expanded education and training opportunities beyond technical firefighting skills; sought consistent investigative and discipline process and wanted improved communications at all levels *(more detailed meeting summary in appendix.)*

Through a series of stakeholder meetings, engaging more than 100 firefighters, and conducting research of best practices within fire departments across the country, the Inclusivity & Equity Action Plan was created to include short, medium and long-term recommendations on how to recruit a more diverse workforce and improve the professional standards of the Orlando Fire Department are outlined in the following pages.

Orlando Police Department Demographics



★ ★ ★ 28% of officers are veterans ★ ★ ★



- AUGUST 14**
9 a.m. - Union Hall - B/C shift
- AUGUST 16**
8 a.m. - Station #11 - A/B shift
- AUGUST 26**
8 a.m. - Station #7 - B/C shift
- SEPTEMBER 4**
8 a.m. - Station #10 - B/C shift
- SEPTEMBER 9**
8 a.m. - Station #1 - A/B shift
- SEPTEMBER 10**
8 a.m. - Station #15 - B/C shift

INCLUSIVITY AND EQUITY ACTION PLAN

I. RECRUITMENT

Summary

The Orlando Fire Department was not engaging in proactive recruitment events, including the Valencia Public Safety College Job Fair, and did not allocate any budgetary resources toward recruitment of firefighters. Currently, if someone is interested in becoming an Orlando Firefighter, they sign up online completing an “Interest Card” however, there is not a standardized system for follow-up of the Interest Card and there is not ongoing communication with the interested party.

The Orlando Fire Department projects that over the next five years, approximately 44 positions will vacate due to retirement. This is less than 10 positions a year. However, approximately 53 percent of the sworn workforce has 15 years or greater of service with OFD. This means that more than half of the workforce will attrition out over the next 15 years. This increase in retirements presents an opportunity to immediately develop recruitment strategies to recruit capable replacements and provides an opportunity to increase the representation of females, minorities and veterans in the department.

In the first quarter of 2019, OFD and the city’s Human Resources Department were preparing to open the application period for new firefighter hires to fill open positions. To ensure the hiring for these 18 positions reflected a process that aims to make the department more reflective of our diverse community, early, short-term recommendations were piloted. This new hire process would include a different test for the civil service portion of the testing that was video-based and aimed at testing judgment and human interaction skills, traits of a successful firefighter.

Short-term Recommendations (0-3 years)

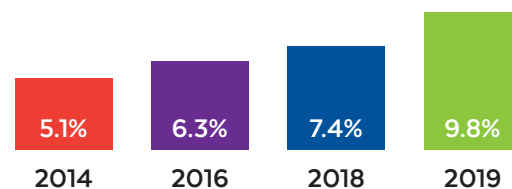
- I. Dedicated additional sworn personnel to recruiting efforts.
 - a. To raise awareness of members of the community who are not typically aware of firefighting careers, identify women, minority and veteran firefighters who can participate in recruiting events.

For the 2019 hiring cycle, six firefighters were identified to serve as recruiters for the department. These six firefighters actively sought applications from certified firefighters who represent the diversity of our community.

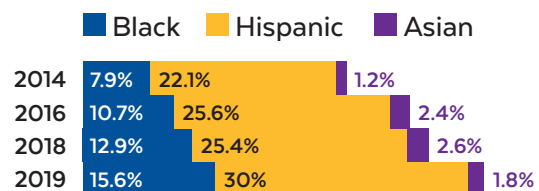
- II. Collaborate with the Orlando Police Department on recruitment efforts and leverage existing resources.
- III. To provide a department focus on recruitment, dedicate a Lieutenant position to manage recruitment.

Recruitment Numbers

Percentage of female applicants



Percentage of minority applicants



- IV. Create marketing and recruitment collateral and campaigns that highlight the department’s diversity and uses language that promotes a message of inclusiveness.

For the first time, OFD used its social media platforms to communicate recruitment messaging. Leveraging a newly created video, OFD was able to reach more than 426,000 people, more than 30 times that of an average OFD post. The video evoked pride from current and former firefighters, and generated excitement for new recruits. As such, this post resulted in more than 40,000 engagements (likes, comments, shares), more that 21 times more than that of a typical OFD social media post.

This video also resulted in a significant increase of web traffic to Orlando.gov, with viewers clicking the shared link to learn more about OFD recruitment efforts. From July 12 – July 18, 2019, the site received more than 11,000 views, including more than 4,500 views on the day it was originally shared, which is 12 times the average daily traffic to that webpage. In fact, more than 30 percent of all of OFD’s Facebook click-throughs originated with this post.



- V. Allocate financial resources for targeted recruitment strategies including advertising and events.
- VI. Evaluate each stage of the hiring selection process to identify barriers to employment.

For the most recent new hiring process, the entrance fee was eliminated to ensure qualified candidates do not face financial barriers to becoming an Orlando Firefighter.

- VII. Successful firefighters demonstrate technical, emotional and social skills while delivering medical aid, facing traumatic experiences and fighting fires. Develop a new hiring testing process that better identifies candidates with these skills and traits.

Comparisons of applicants passing the Civil Service Test			
Females:	2019 vs 2018 77% increase	2019 vs 2016 87% increase	2019 vs 2014 90% increase
Black Male:	2019 vs 2018 99% increase	2019 vs 2016 89% increase	2019 vs 2014 89% increase
Hispanic Male:	2019 vs 2018 88% increase	2019 vs 2016 85% increase	2019 vs 2014 87% increase

A new civil service test was piloted for the 2019 hiring cycle. This new test utilized video simulation to test judgment and human interaction abilities. In 2019, there was an increase in the number of females and minorities that passed the new hire testing process.

- VIII. Develop and implement candidate career preparation and mentoring programs.
- IX. Create a career roadmap that identifies various job assignments and the training and education required for each job level up to Fire Chief.
- X. Ensure all department communications reflect the value of inclusion and reflect the community it serves.
- XI. Increase participation in multicultural community events.

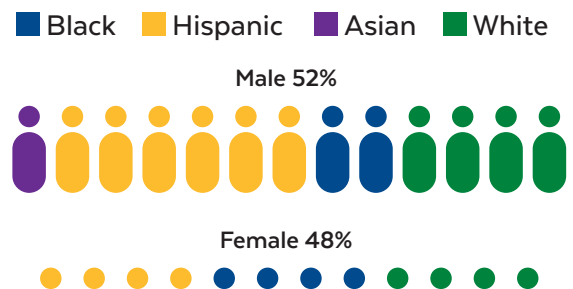
Over the last year, OFD has made a commitment to participation in multicultural events, including:

- Mayor Dyer’s Community Summit
- International Visitor Leadership Program
- Puerto Rican Day Parade pre-gathering and day event
- Love and Kindness on the Lawn
- Sweet Dreams fundraiser
- National Night Out District 2
- Breakfast with the Consuls
- 2019 Prospera Success Stories Luncheon
- City of Orlando’s Hispanic Heritage Month Kickoff
- Asian American Chamber of Commerce - 10th Anniversary Golden Dragon Awards Gala

Mid-term Recommendations (3-5 years)

- XII. Develop recruitment strategies for non-certified/cadet program with local programs and events including:
 - a. Military exit events
 - b. Collegiate sports teams
 - c. OCPS
 - d. Partnership with After-School All-Stars Jobs Academy
 - e. Explorer program
 - f. CrossFit gyms
 - g. Teen Police & Fire Academy

25 OFD Civilian Paramedic EMT Demographics



- XIII. Develop strategies to attract non-certified firefighters, including:
 - a. Establish a career pathway, identifying future firefighters in high school, including:
 - I. Leverage current Explorer program
 - II. Evaluate opportunities for participation in First Responder Magnet Programs
 - b. Create a strategy to provide training to advance from civilian EMT and paramedic positions, already trained in OFD standards and techniques, to Firefighter.
 - c. Develop a cadet program that readies applicants for the openings projected in 2025



- XIV. Create a dedicated recruitment office that is managed by a Lieutenant and includes a dedicated recruiter for firefighters, civilian EMT and paramedic positions and communications positions.
 - a. Add or designate a sworn position and a civilian coordinator to support the creation of the cadet program to position the department for the increased hiring demand projected in 2025.
- XV. Evaluate and increase candidate career preparation and mentoring programs.
- XVI. Increase recruitment budget annually in preparation for hiring needs in 2025.
- XVII. Evaluate strategies to conduct new hiring process more frequently.

Long-term Recommendations (5 plus years)

- I. Establish a full-time Recruiting Office with a budget comparable to fire and public safety agencies of similar size to include salaries, benefits and operating costs.

II. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS - POLICIES, TRAINING AND INVESTIGATIONS

Summary

Currently, the functions of Professional Standards – Policies, Training and Investigations – lie with in different areas of the department and in some cases under different Deputy Chiefs. Additionally, many of OFD’s policies are outdated and when new policies are implemented there is not adequate enforcement to ensure firefighters have signed off on new policies. The current Power DMS online tracking system isn’t being utilized in the most appropriate manner and approximately 60 percent of all policies remain unsigned. This has led to complaints of inconsistencies in the enforcement of policy violation investigations and the associated discipline process.

Training in the department has historically focused on technical firefighting and emergency medical skills. There is not currently consistent training dedicated to professional and leadership development.

Short-term Recommendations (0-3 years)

- I. Complete a review of the department’s policies.
- II. Formalize a process for ongoing policy review that allows input from fire department personnel at all levels.
- III. Create a process for personnel signoff on all policies specifically new or updated policies.
- IV. Ensure consistency of discipline and investigations by civilianizing the internal affairs manager and dedicating an independent investigator to conduct internal investigations for OFD.



The Fiscal Year 2019/2020 budget, allocated funding for a new position to conduct internal investigations in OFD. This position will report to OPD’s internal affairs manager.

- V. Establish a clear, direct process for reporting complaints of sexual harassment.

Sexual Harassment complaints can now be reported directly to the Public Safety Internal Affairs Manager.
- VI. Develop processes that ensure a more consistent issuance of discipline.
- VII. Identify department diversity, veterans and legacy champions who help ensure continued communication and promote inclusion and diversity initiatives.
- VIII. Consider career development programs that promote firefighter participation in community engagement, recruitment events, etc.
- IX. Create mentoring program for existing firefighters.
- X. Increase department participation in supervisory training classes offered through the city. Supervisory training should also focus on management functions including discipline processes, budgeting and conflict resolution.

OFD recently held a Basic Supervisory Skills class for future company officers and participated in the Company Officer Academy at Valencia.



- XI. Explore opportunities to expand educational opportunities including, individual credentialing with accreditation organizations.
- XII. Foster IAFF 1365 executive team and committees that are more reflective of the diversity of the community.
- XIII. Challenge the existing IAFF 1365 Human Relations and Minority Affairs committee to take a more active role with its membership in enhancing equity and inclusion within the department.
- XIV. Create formalized process for coaching and monitoring new hires in first five years to ensure retention.
- XV. Formalize a peer support program that recognizes that no single approach works for everyone and includes a licensed mental health professional that can reduce the mental health effects of discrimination and harassment.

Mid-term Recommendations (3-5 years)

- I. Establish an Office of Professional Standards that includes the functions of Policies, Training and Investigations.
- II. Dedicate a position to manage accreditation and policy review.
- III. Develop professional development training program for all levels of leadership. An emphasis should be placed on leadership training for Lieutenants as they are the supervisory position that has the most interaction within the individual fire stations.
- IV. Enhance new hire orientation with inclusion and diversity training.



NEXT STEPS

- Newly appointed Fire Chief Benjamin Barksdale shall be charged with implementing the Inclusivity and Equity Action Plan.
- Chief Barksdale shall report the progress of implementation quarterly to Mayor Dyer.
- Provide ongoing communications and updates to fire personnel as individual recommendations are implemented.
- Create an annual update on the status of the Inclusivity and Equity Action Plan.



CONCLUSION

Fire departments that are reflective of their populations, are better able to serve their communities. In order to achieve a diverse workforce within the Orlando Fire Department, the agency must focus on recruitment and professional standards and increase opportunities for professional development.

For fire departments that want to diversify their ranks, one critical component of the solution is a new emphasis on community engagement aimed at creating a pipeline of future applicants¹. Hiring only from the certified firefighting pool, which statewide and nationally is limited in females and minorities, restricts OFD's ability to improve the diversity of the department. New strategies including cadet programs and developing career pipeline opportunities through the Explorer and civilian paramedic programs must be created.

Additionally, new hire and promotional testing should reflect that successful firefighters demonstrate a mix of technical, emotional and social skills and traits. Leadership positions should be filled with firefighters who have a commitment to inclusion and equity and will encourage a cultural change within the department.

Organizations that invest in creating a positive culture can increase job satisfaction and retention in the fire service (McDonald, 2016²). This is achieved through the development of new policies that are consistently communicated and enforced and enhanced training and professional development for all ranks.

Chiefs can change the rules, but only peers can change the culture³. We were encouraged following the Forum in the Fields and believe the majority of the department desires change and are supportive of the recommendations.

As L.A. Fire Commissioner Rebecca Ninberg notes, "changing the culture requires a long-term commitment to integrate it into the DNA of the department."⁴ This report should be used as a foundation to build a more diverse department reflective of Orlando's unique community to more efficiently serve the needs of our citizens and visitors. While implementing these recommendations, the department should continue to keep apprised of the latest trainings, research and practices related to recruitment and retention of the workforce.

1. <https://www.governing.com/gov-institute/voices/col-steps-improve-fire-department-diversity.html>

2. https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/emerging_health_safety_issues_women_fire_service.pdf

3. <https://www.firefighternation.com/2011/02/15/working-on-peer-support-programs/#gref>

4. <https://hbr.org/2018/12/making-u-s-fire-departments-more-diverse-and-inclusive>

APPENDIX

BACKGROUND AND INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS:

- March 4, 2019 – IAFF Union Task Force Introduction with President Ron Glass
- March 6, 2019–Meeting with Human Resources Director Ana Palenzuela and Human Resources Assessment Coordinator Michael Flood
- March 11, 2019 – OPD Recruiting process with Sgt. David Allmond and Captain Doug Goerke
- March 12, 2019 – OFD Professional Standards with Assistant Chief Marvin Francis and District Chief Alissa Baussan
- March 13, 2019 – OFD Engineer Jackie Pollock
- March 18, 2019 – Inclusion Initiative Update with Deborah Girard, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Jody Litchford, Deputy City Attorney
- March 19, 2019 – Valencia Public Safety Institute with Dr. Jeff Goltz and former Winter Park RD Chief James White
- March 19, 2019– Meeting with Labor Relations Chief Negotiator Lynne Banks
- March 21, 2019 – OPD Investigations & Professional Standards with Internal Affairs Manager Dwain Rivers and Captain Doug Goerke
- March 22, 2019 – OFD Professional Standards/ Training meeting with Interim Fire Chief Richard Wales, Deputy Fire Chief Ian Davis, Deputy Chief Gary Fussell and Assistant Chief Kevin Preston
- March 28, 2019 – Fire Marshall Tammy Hughes
- March 28, 2019 – OFD Professional Development training programs with District Chief Jeff Day
- March 29, 2019 – Meeting with current female Orlando firefighters Lt. Lori McDonald, Lisa Chantigan and Engineer Renee Bishop
- April 3, 2019 – Recruiting with Kissimmee Police Chief Jeff O’Dell, Deputy Fire Chief Ian Davis and Interim Fire Chief Rich Wales
- April 9, 2019– Progress update with Interim Chief Administrative Officer Kevin Edmonds
- April 11, 2019 – Orange County Fire Recruiting with then Orange County Fire Chief Otto Drozd
- April 23, 2019 – Inclusion Initiative update with Interim Chief Administrative Officer Kevin Edmonds, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Deborah Girard, Human Resources Director Ana Palenzuela and Deputy City Attorney Jody Litchford
- May 9, 2019 – Internal Investigations with Jody Litchford
- May 20, 2019 – Progress update with Interim Chief Administrative Officer Kevin Edmonds and Interim Fire Chief Rich Wales
- May 30, 2019 – Progress update with IAFF President Ron Glass and the Executive Board
- June 14, 2019 – OFD Recruiting with Deputy Chief Ian Davis, District Chief Alissa Baussan, OPD Sgt. Dave Allmond and OPD Lt. Drew Thomas
- June 14, 2019 – Internal Investigations with OPD Internal Affairs Manager Dwain Rivers and Deputy City Attorney Jody Litchford
- June 19th, 2019 – Recruiting Video with IAFF President Ron Glass, Interim Fire Chief Rich Wales and Interim Chief Administrative Officer Kevin Edmonds
- July 19, 2019 – Progress update with Interim Fire Chief Rich Wales and Interim Chief Administrative Officer Kevin Edmonds, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Deborah Girard and Human Resources Director Ana Palenzuela
- July 24, 2019 – Forum in the Field planning with IAFF President Ron Glass, Interim Fire Chief Rich Wales and Public Information Manager Ashley Papagni

APPENDIX

FORUM IN THE FIELD SESSION OVERVIEWS

Date: August 14, 2019

Location: Union Hall – 9 a.m.

Number of attendees: 41

Topics Discussed:

- Pathways for recruitment
- Probation evaluations
- Policy review committee
- Pre-standards before non-certified
- Educational Reimbursement

Date: August 16, 2019

Location: Station 11 – 8 a.m.

Number of attendees: 21

Topics Discussed:

- Bring professional development here – FDIC in house
- Tapping into Explorer program, increase budget
- Partner with Armed Forces
- Connect with School Guidance Counselors
- More communication
- Management options and review policies with a review request
- Gold Program
- Vet Volunteers
- Tuition reimbursement
- Incentives to promote

Date: August 26, 2019

Location: Station 7 – 8 a.m.

Number of attendees: 15

Topics Discussed:

- Partner with Armed Forces
- Increase budgets
- Supervisory evaluations and dismissal of firefighters not meeting standards
- Leadership Classes
- Training and referral programs
- Policy Review Committee

Date: September 9, 2019

Location: Station 1 – 8 a.m.

Number of attendees: 30

Topics Discussed:

- Sponsorships, Cadets, PMO program for year round hiring
- Hiring process
- Not lowering standards

Date: September 10, 2019

Location: Station 15 – 8 a.m.

Number of attendees: 21

Topics Discussed:

- Medical Spanish Classes
- Tracking and Transparency of IRIS outcomes
- Internal Investigations
- Firefighter skills test
- How to invest long-term in firefighters

Date: October 30, 2019

Location: Union Hall – 8 a.m.

Number of attendees: 17

Topics Discussed:

- Medic commitment and retention
- Special operations merit testing
- Pathway for administrative complaints
- Training on call types and who to call for – suspicious package, company inspections
- Goals with specific time frames
- Investment in budget
- Veteran specific recruiters
- Year-round recruiting
- Human Relations Committee
- Accountability in Administration

APPENDIX

HUMAN RESOURCE COMPLETED TRAININGS

Topic: Conversations in Inclusiveness

Provider: Valencia College - Peace and Justice Institute

Delivery Method: Small group training in person with a team of Valencia trainers
Participants Invited: Mandatory for all city employees

Continuing Training: training provided to all new hires. Invited to a 2-hour class.

Topic: Citywide Harassment Training

Provider: Human Resources utilizing KnowBe4

Delivery Method: On-line.

Participants Invited: Mandatory for all city employees. Attendance tracked electronically

Date: April 22 - May 31, 2019

Continuing Training: all new hires required to complete on-line class

Topic: Harassment and City Policy and Procedures

Provider: Legal and HR Departments

Delivery Method: Small group training in person

Participants Invited: Appointed Officials, including Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chiefs

Date: April 13, 2018 Mayor's Sr. Management Team meeting

Topic:

- A. **Overview of Federal EEO Laws.**
- B. **Identifying, Eliminating and Preventing Workplace Harassment, which Includes Sexual Harassment & Hostile Work Environment.**
- C. **EEO Issues Related to Race, Color & National Origin.**
- D. **Leading for Respect: How Supervisors and Managers Can Create Respectful Workplaces.**

Provider: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Training Institute

Delivery Method: Group setting with in person trainer from the EEOC Training Institute

Participants Invited: All Appointed Officials and selected participants from Fire, Police, HR, and Legal

Dates: March 25, 2019: 1 - 5 p.m.
 March 26, 2019: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

FIRE DEPARTMENT COMPLETED TRAININGS

Topic: Anti-Discrimination Training

Provider: City Of Orlando Legal

Participants Invited: New Firefighters

Date: 2014 - Present

Topic: Public Safety Leadership Development Program

Provider: Valencia

Participants Invited: Chief Davis, Plaughter, Fussell, Lewis, Francis, Craft, Spurlin, Fernandez

Date: 2015 - Present

Topic: Conversation in Inclusiveness

Provider: Valencia

Participants Invited: Entire Department

Date: 2016

Topic: Leadership Workshop (Peace & Justice Institute)

Provider: Valencia

Participants Invited: Lieutenants and above

Date: 2017

Topic: Preventing Discrimination in the Workplace

Provider: Target Solutions

Participants Invited: Lieutenants and above

Date: 2017

Topic: Sexual Harassment Awareness for Supervisors

Provider: Target Solutions

Participants Invited: Lieutenants and above

Date: 2017

Topic: EMS Cultural Diversity

Provider: Target Solutions

Participants Invited: Entire Department

Date: 2018

Topic: Medical Ethical and Legal Issues

Provider: Target Solutions

Participants Invited: Entire Department

Date: 2018



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