

### **What's legal isn't necessarily sensible, equitable, or inclusive**

- Supreme court rulings made it ok to require women to wear makeup saying it does not cause an undue time burden relative to men (seriously!)
- There are legal precedents, however, regarding religious garb so long as it does not pose a health danger.

### **Strictures regarding clothing type force societal norms on women and LGBTQIA individuals**

- Written or office culture mandates to wear skirts, dresses, skirted suits, heels, or makeup are exclusionary and harmful to those who do not identify as 'femme'
- Normative women's clothing (heels, skirts) can pose health hazards (heels) or impinge a woman's ability to perform her job fully (e.g., making it difficult to perform physical labor such as lifting servers or walking an active construction site)
- Normative dress codes discriminate against individuals whose preferred gender expression does not map to traditional, gendered clothing, and force them into uncomfortable situations.
- If a supervisor places dress demands on you that are at odds with, or unaddressed in, the employee handbook/dress code, speak with HR
- If it's not addressed specifically in the code and the determinant is 'professional attire', you have a case to make that your pantsuit or neatly pressed shirt, slacks, and loafers presents a professional look. A supervisor's insistence that only a skirt or dress will do is rooted in their personal preference and not policy. If you are critiqued for being 'too masculine' to wear a dress, that's also discriminatory. You have every right to use channels at work to push back on that.

### **Dress codes with demands for certain types of professional garb (eg, suits) place an undue burden on new employees or employees lower on the socioeconomic ladder**

- That 24 year old intern probably can't afford to run out and buy a wardrobe worth of full suits
- What's regarded as 'suitably dressy and professional' in some cultures may be at odds with entrenched, white, executive expectations.

### **Regulations regarding hair, jewelry, piercings, and tattoos can be racist or biased**

- Avoid vague terms such as 'neat', 'tidy', or 'presentable'. These terms are often invoked in reprimanding African American employees over their hairstyles, and favor natural white hairstyles over the hairstyles of others.
- Many religions and cultures have observances related to hair length or style, facial hair, piercings, other jewelry, and tattoos. Ensure your dress code does not discriminate on these grounds.
  - If an employee brings you a religious objection or issue, treat it sensibly and compassionately.

**It is not a woman's place to police the actions of men**

- Your male employees and peers are responsible for their own gaze and reactions.
- If you are told your style of dress is 'too distracting', make them explain it, in writing.
  - There are many resources out there (often pertaining to gendered school dress codes) on language to use in arguing against this issue.
  - "We are all adults here, and I expect my colleagues to be able to control themselves and focus on the task at hand even if I am wearing a fitted sweater."

**When you're not in your office it's a different ballgame**

- Especially if you are working internationally, there can be cultural norms (or even laws) which affect what you can and should wear.
  - Do your homework!

**What is the office code is old, outdated, and gendered?**

- Sometimes these things just... hang around, forever, unquestioned. Ask the question!
- Be willing to be part of a working group to research best practices and compare codes with other employers.