

Formal Report of Sexual Harassment and Workplace Misconduct

I am writing this report to document the sexual harassment I experienced while employed by the Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County (VACWC), as well as other workplace misconduct that I witnessed and experienced during my employment.

During the initial investigation that was opened in response to allegations made by [REDACTED], I was interviewed by the investigator, Eric Borneman. During that interview, Mr. Borneman asked whether I had experienced any sexual harassment while working at VACWC. In response, I informed him of an incident involving my supervisor, Interim Superintendent Willie Borden Jr., that occurred behind closed doors.

Although I disclosed the incident to Mr. Borneman, I did not provide a complete account of what occurred. Due to circumstances that I will discuss later in this report, I did not feel safe sharing the full details at that time. Instead, I minimized the severity of the incident and attempted to downplay what had occurred.

Furthermore, I was informed by Willie Borden that [REDACTED] personally knew Eric Borneman. According to Mr. Borden, [REDACTED] told him that Mr. Borneman had indicated the investigation would likely result in an unfounded finding. This conversation allegedly took place after [REDACTED]'s interview. I cannot verify the accuracy of this statement and do not know whether it was truthful or fabricated. However, hearing this information, combined with my own experiences following Mr. Borden's interview with Mr. Borneman, further reinforced my belief that remaining silent was the safest course of action.

March 25, 2026 – Sexual Harassment Incident

On March 25, 2026, Willie Borden and I had a meeting that lasted until approximately 5:00 p.m. During my employment, it was common for us to have lengthy meetings between approximately 4:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. Because Mr. Borden was the only Veteran Service Officer (VSO) at the time while also serving as Interim Superintendent, it was often difficult to find time to discuss office operations, employee concerns, workplace disputes, and matters directly related to my position. At that time, I felt comfortable having meetings like this with him.

The conversation began with a discussion about [REDACTED]. Earlier that morning, I had a conversation with [REDACTED] that left me feeling upset and disrespected. During that conversation, she stated that she had been offered both my position and a VSO position and had been given the option to choose between the two. Based on both her tone and the way she presented the information, I understood her comments to mean that she had declined the Office Manager position because she no longer wanted the

stress and responsibility associated with that role and was past that phase of her career.

The implication I took from the conversation was that I had only received the Office Manager position because she did not want it, rather than because I had been selected based on my own qualifications and merits. Her comments left me feeling as though my position and accomplishments were being diminished and that I had merely received a role that someone else had rejected. I found both her comments and attitude disrespectful.

During my meeting with Mr. Borden, I raised this issue and explained why the conversation had upset me. Mr. Borden told me that what [REDACTED] had said was not accurate. He explained that recruiter Rob Lockard may have informed her that the Office Manager position was available, but that he had never directly offered her the position. According to Mr. Borden, [REDACTED] had only been given the choice between serving as a traditional Veteran Service Officer (VSO) or as the General Assistance (GA) VSO. Mr. Borden then stated that he hated when people "put words in his mouth."

Mr. Borden then stated that he did not want to offend me with what he was about to say. He explained that, because of what had happened with [REDACTED], he wanted me to hear certain information directly from him before hearing it from someone else. He specifically referenced [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] as individuals from whom he did not want me to hear this information.

Mr. Borden then told me that I had almost not been hired because he was so attracted to me. He stated that he had discussed his internal struggles regarding my employment with [REDACTED], the Commission Secretary. According to Mr. Borden, he had told [REDACTED] that I was "going to be a problem" and that he was unsure whether he could hire me or work with me because of his attraction to me. He again stated that he did not want me to be offended by what he was saying.

After hearing this, I responded, "It's okay, I could kind of tell."

Mr. Borden replied, "No, you didn't."

I then asked, "Really? How so?"

Mr. Borden responded, "Well, I thought I almost gave it away when I said I would have given you more money if you had asked me for it."

Prior Salary Conversation Referenced by Mr. Borden

The conversation Mr. Borden was referring to had occurred approximately within my first month of employment. We had been discussing the salaries of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] which led to a discussion about my own compensation. During that conversation, I commented that I was earning \$60,000 annually but felt that, given the workload and specialized nature of the position, I should be making more. At the time, I believed I

had been hired for a traditional Office Manager role and had not yet realized the extent of the operational responsibilities involved in rebuilding and managing a neglected office.

In response, Mr. Borden stated, "I would have given you more if you had asked for it."

At the time, I was surprised by the comment and laughed it off. However, his facial expression and demeanor caused me to feel that the statement was about more than salary alone. I felt uncomfortable and uncertain about the nature of the comment, but I dismissed those concerns and attempted to move past the interaction.

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I responded, "No, I could tell then."

Mr. Borden replied, "No, you didn't. You couldn't tell when we did our interview and my eyes didn't leave you."

I responded, "No, I thought you were just intense."

Reference: Interview Discussion

The interview Mr. Borden was referring to took place on February 19, 2026. I was initially contacted by recruiter Rob Lockard on February 18, 2026, for a phone interview and received my offer letter on February 23, 2026.

During my interview with Mr. Borden, I did notice that his attention remained fixed on me throughout the meeting. At the time, I did not believe he was looking at my body or behaving in an overtly inappropriate manner. Rather, I perceived him as unusually intense. I remember feeling somewhat uncomfortable with the level of attention he was giving me, but I attributed it to his personality, his passion for the Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County (VACWC), or his enthusiasm about the position and the organization.

I was also frustrated during portions of the interview because Mr. Borden did most of the talking. He asked relatively few questions about me, my experience, my qualifications, or my management style. I found this unusual because the Office Manager position works closely with the Superintendent, and I believed it would have been important to determine whether our leadership styles and personalities were compatible. Throughout the interview, I often felt as though I had to compete for opportunities to speak.

Despite these concerns, I left the interview feeling confident about my prospects. Because Mr. Borden spent much of the interview discussing the organization and the position rather than evaluating my qualifications, I interpreted his behavior as a sign that he was highly interested in hiring me. Prior to the interview, recruiter Rob Lockard

had informed me that [REDACTED] would also be participating. However, when I arrived, the interview consisted only of Mr. Borden and myself.

At the time, I viewed this as further indication that I was a strong candidate and that the organization was highly interested in hiring me. I specifically asked Mr. Borden when I would be interviewing with [REDACTED] I do not recall his exact response or why those interviews ultimately did not occur. Later during my employment, Mr. Borden explained that they had not participated because of the demands of the office and their day-to-day responsibilities.

When I left the interview, I felt confident that it had gone well. Although I found Mr. Borden's demeanor somewhat unusual and intense, I did not interpret his behavior as being related to personal attraction. At the time, I believed he was simply passionate about the organization, excited about filling the position, or naturally intense in his communication style.

It was not until the March 25, 2026 conversation, when Mr. Borden stated that his eyes "didn't leave" me during the interview and admitted that he was highly attracted to me, that I began to view the interview differently. His comments caused me to reconsider my earlier discomfort and question whether the attention he gave me during the interview had been professional in nature.

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The conversation then shifted to [REDACTED] Mr. Borden stated that women often do not realize when they are being flirted with, or that many women are unable to recognize when someone is flirting with them. I asked him why he believed that.

Mr. Borden then described an interaction he claimed to have had with [REDACTED] According to him, he had flirted with her, but she either did not recognize it or did not reciprocate. He stated that the following day he approached her and asked about her lack of reaction. According to Mr. Borden, [REDACTED] told him that she had not realized he was flirting with her. He stated that the two of them laughed about the situation and that she told him she was not offended. I am not certain whether this alleged interaction occurred while Mr. Borden was serving as a Veteran Service Officer (VSO) or after he became Interim Superintendent.

The conversation then shifted to Mr. Borden's personal life and his experiences dating in the Rockford area. During this discussion, he disclosed that he and his wife have an open relationship. He then commented that dating in Rockford was difficult because, in his opinion, most of the people in the area were unattractive.

Mr. Borden then referenced an older married couple who frequented Don Carter Lanes in Rockford. He described a situation in which he believed the wife was openly flirting with him while her husband was sitting nearby. He expressed surprise at how

comfortable she appeared to be flirting with him in front of her husband. He then commented that he would never pursue her because she was missing many of her teeth. He further stated that he had noticed similar physical characteristics among a number of women in the area.

Mr. Borden also indicated that the woman was either related to a veteran or otherwise connected to the Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County (VACWC). I am not certain of her identity or the nature of her connection to the organization, but I understood her to be someone connected to our work or someone Mr. Borden knew personally through VACWC-related activities.

Mr. Borden then made jokes about the woman and referred to "breaking her off."

Reference: Prior Discussions Regarding Mr. Borden's Relationship

This was not the first time Mr. Borden had discussed his open relationship with me. Within approximately my first three weeks of employment at VACWC, we were walking to our vehicles after work and discussing aspects of our personal lives. I recall speaking about my parents' divorce and how they appeared happier afterward. I do not remember exactly how the conversation transitioned to relationships.

During that discussion, Mr. Borden began talking about his wife and stated that they were involved in what he described as a "fetish." He repeatedly used the term "fetish" without initially explaining what he meant. At the time, I was uncertain whether he was referring to a specific sexual practice or to a non-monogamous relationship. I eventually asked whether he meant an open relationship, and he confirmed that he did.

This was the first time Mr. Borden had disclosed details about his relationship dynamic to me. The conversation introduced sexual and intimate aspects of his personal life that I did not feel were necessary or appropriate to discuss with me as a subordinate employee. I responded by stating that what consenting adults chose to do in their relationships was their own business, provided everyone involved was happy and healthy. I then redirected the conversation back to discussing my parents and their relationship.

Following that interaction, I felt uneasy about the nature of the conversation and became concerned about maintaining appropriate professional boundaries. I remember thinking that I needed to be cautious regarding future personal discussions with Mr. Borden.

Additionally, on a separate occasion prior to the conversation described above, Mr. Borden told me that his wife had almost not moved to Illinois with him because they had been experiencing marital difficulties. He stated that he was unsure at the time whether he even wanted her to relocate with him. I believe this conversation referred to the period when he first came to Illinois to work as a Veteran Service Officer while [REDACTED] was serving as Superintendent of the VACWC.

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Mr. Borden continued discussing his relationship with his wife and mentioned that [REDACTED] a former Administrative Assistant, used to come into his office frequently when he was a Veteran Service Officer (VSO) and attempt to act as a relationship counselor regarding issues in his marriage.

Mr. Borden then commented that I was his type. In response, I asked whether any of the other employees at VACWC were his type as well.

Mr. Borden proceeded to discuss the physical attractiveness of several current employees. He stated that [REDACTED] an incoming VSO, was not his type. He then stated that [REDACTED] also an incoming VSO, was not his type. He further stated that [REDACTED] was not his type and that [REDACTED] was not his type either, although he said he could understand why other people might find her attractive.

Mr. Borden then discussed [REDACTED]. He stated that she was not his type, but that there had been a time when she did something that caused him to become attracted to her and that, for a period of time, he had "a thing" for her. When discussing this, he was unable to clearly explain what she had done that caused him to become attracted to her and did not further clarify the statement.

The conversation then shifted to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], both former VACWC employees who have since been terminated. Mr. Borden began discussing what he described as their alleged relationship. He stated that during the previous year's NACVSO event there had been considerable gossip about the two of them and that people had observed them sitting unusually close together at a bar.

While discussing this, Mr. Borden stated, "I am not going to do this to you, I am just going to show you." He then pulled up a chair and sat noticeably closer to me than he had been previously, although he did not physically touch me.

In an effort to stop the demonstration and maintain distance, I responded, "You mean they were sitting at a bar close together and her leg was between his?"

Mr. Borden replied, "Yes," then stood up and stepped away from me.

At the time this occurred, I was seated at my desk in front of my computer. Prior to this interaction, Mr. Borden had been seated on the opposite side of my desk. He moved closer to me in order to demonstrate the position he was describing. Although he eventually stepped back and returned to the opposite side of my desk, he remained standing near me briefly before doing so.

Mr. Borden then continued discussing the alleged relationship between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. He stated that many people at VACWC believed they were involved in a

romantic relationship. At that time, [REDACTED] was serving as Superintendent and [REDACTED] was serving as a VSO and Lead VSO.

According to Mr. Borden, employees would frequently observe [REDACTED] standing together by [REDACTED] vehicle in the parking lot for extended periods of time. He stated that [REDACTED] would often lean against the hood of his vehicle while talking with her. He also claimed that the two of them frequently went to Starbucks together and would occasionally disappear from the office for extended periods.

Mr. Borden further stated that he believed he could tell when they were having disagreements because [REDACTED] would come into the office angry and refuse to speak with [REDACTED] would appear to be in an unusually bad mood when [REDACTED] was not speaking with him. He stated that these behaviors led him to believe they were having arguments outside of work.

Mr. Borden also commented on [REDACTED] clothing and work attire. He specifically discussed the length of her skirts and stated that he made an effort not to look. He further commented that his mother would not consider that style of dress to be "ladylike" and suggested that [REDACTED] was therefore not behaving in a ladylike manner.

Reference

This was the first time Mr. Borden had used the phrase, "I am not going to do this to you, I am just going to show you," before physically demonstrating something by moving closer to me. He has used similar demonstrations with me on other occasions when he believed I did not understand what he was describing or when he had difficulty explaining a concept verbally. I do not know whether he uses this approach with other employees, but he has done so with me multiple times.

Additionally, with regard to the alleged relationship between [REDACTED] [REDACTED] have also discussed this topic in the office on multiple occasions. They have similarly referenced the perceived relationship dynamic between the two individuals and have also commented on the length of [REDACTED] skirts and clothing choices.

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I do not fully recall how the conversation ended. It concluded either because we both realized the time or because Mr. Borden received a call from his wife. I recall that he needed to leave and did not wait for me to gather my belongings or leave at the same time.

After the meeting, I began driving home and understood that my supervisor had sexually harassed me during the course of the interaction. I was unsure how to process

what had occurred. I drove home in silence and felt on the verge of crying, but I consciously held back my emotions and attempted to suppress the incident from my immediate thoughts. At the time, I minimized the situation and attempted to rationalize it in order to move forward.

General Reference / Context

Between March and April 2026, I recall discussing the incident with a person I was seeing at the time. I believe this conversation occurred around March 29, 2026, or in early April 2026, during which I described what had happened with Mr. Borden.

Additionally, Mr. Borden's prior comments regarding his wife and their open relationship, which he described as a "fetish," were not the first time I had concerns about the appropriateness of his conduct. On March 23, 2026, Mr. Borden remained at the VACWC late to complete work and texted me at approximately 9:08 p.m. to inform me that he was leaving.

Throughout my early employment, I generally maintained a friendly professional relationship with Mr. Borden. However, I was surprised by the late-night text message, as I was not accustomed to receiving non-emergency communications from a supervisor at that hour. After seeing the message, I recall thinking that the level of contact felt unusually personal and that I should be cautious moving forward.

This, combined with earlier conversations regarding his personal relationship, contributed to my awareness that boundaries in our professional relationship may not be clearly defined. Although I recognized this concern at the time, I also questioned my own interpretation and attempted to downplay it.

I did respond to his text by stating that he was likely the hardest working director at the VACWC.

March 26, 2026 – Willie's Apology

When I arrived at the office that morning, Mr. Borden asked me to step into his office. I went in, and he asked me to close the door.

He told me he wanted to apologize for what had happened the previous day and acknowledged that it was inappropriate. He stated that he was not sure why he had felt comfortable sharing that information with me or why he had done so, but that he was sorry if he had made me feel uncomfortable. He also stated that he did not want me to think that my boss was trying to "hit on" me, and again apologized.

I told him it was fine and that I was actually flattered that he had shared that with me. At the time, I was unsure how to respond and had processed the prior day by reframing it to myself as a compliment. I again stated that I was flattered and that there were no hard feelings.

The workday continued as normal; however, I did feel that there was a different dynamic between Mr. Borden and I afterward. I would not describe it as flirtatious, but it did feel more familiar and less formal than before.

Toward the end of the day, Willie, [REDACTED] and I were in the back office talking about the upcoming NACVSO event and alcohol tolerance. Willie made a comment that he is a "lightweight" when it comes to alcohol and joked that if he got too drunk, someone would have to walk him back to his hotel room.

Immediately after this, [REDACTED] responded, "That's a [REDACTED] job."

I laughed slightly, but I felt stunned by Willie's comment. It felt pointed toward me, and I was very aware of the implication behind it in light of everything that had happened the day before with Willie. I did not know whether [REDACTED] was aware of what had occurred, but the comment felt different in context because of Willie's prior sexualized comments toward me.

Willie and I left the office together that day. At the elevator, he let me go first and made a comment under his breath that I did not fully hear, but I understood it to be related to me going ahead of him after I had initially offered for him to enter first. While we were in the elevator, there was light conversation. Afterward, we each went to our vehicles and left for the day.

The Investigation

During the investigation, I informed Mr. Borneman of what had occurred, but I provided limited detail and minimized the situation because I was concerned about potential repercussions related to my employment and whether the information would remain confidential. At the time, I did not feel fully secure in the reporting process.

Willie had not been physically aggressive with me; however, I felt intimidated by the circumstances and uncertain about how reporting the full extent of the situation might affect my position or how I would be treated at work. I also had concerns about confidentiality and how the information might circulate within the workplace.

At the time of the investigation, I had been employed for less than three months and was still learning the workplace dynamics, reporting structure, and interpersonal relationships within the office. I was still assessing how different individuals interacted with one another and how concerns were typically handled.

I understood that I needed to answer questions truthfully, and I did acknowledge that the incident occurred. However, due to my concerns and discomfort with the reporting process, I did not initially provide a full account of what had happened.

The Week of Willie's Interview

During the week of Willie's interview with Eric Borneman, Willie returned to VACWC after his interview appearing visibly upset. He expressed anger toward [REDACTED] and toward me. [REDACTED] was present and witnessed this interaction.

Willie stated that he felt Mr. Borneman had been aggressive during the interview and described feeling as though he was "on trial" due to the nature of the questioning. I responded that I was sorry he had that experience and noted that Mr. Borneman previously worked as a prosecutor, which I believed may have influenced his interviewing style.

Willie then began discussing what he claimed Mr. Borneman had said during the interview regarding me. He stated that Mr. Borneman had indicated that I felt uncomfortable at work and did not feel safe around him. I was not aware of having made those specific statements and became concerned about the accuracy of what was being relayed. Despite this, I initially attempted to reassure Willie that I had not said those things and that there may have been a misunderstanding.

Willie became increasingly agitated and began pressing me repeatedly about what I had reported to Mr. Borneman. He continued insisting that Mr. Borneman had told him I felt uncomfortable around him and would not accept my explanation that I had not made those statements.

As the conversation escalated, Willie's tone and intensity increased, and he continued to question me in a way that felt persistent and overwhelming. I became increasingly distressed and felt pressured and unable to de-escalate the situation on my own. I was actively trying to reassure him and get him to stop pressing me about something I had not said. At that point, [REDACTED] intervened and stated, "It's not [REDACTED]'s fault, she didn't do anything."

Following this intervention, Willie stopped pressing the issue. In that moment, I became concerned about the level of escalation and pressure within the workplace environment.

After this incident, I began distancing myself from Willie due to concern about further confrontations or being questioned again about statements I had not made. I did not immediately report this interaction to Mr. Borneman because I felt that the investigation process had already placed me in a vulnerable position and I was concerned about further repercussions.

On a separate occasion during this same timeframe, Willie was observed by myself and Dana Verfuert aggressively packing up his office. Efforts were made to encourage him to stop and to de-escalate the situation.

Social Media Comment (May 25th – May 29th)

Right before our trip, I ordered the team a variety of VAC-branded tops and sweaters to wear to the event in Reno. While standing in the back office, we were discussing the upcoming trip and the clothing. Willie then interjected into the conversation and stated, "You can't tell me you don't look good in red."

The conversation stopped immediately. The room became silent. Willie's tone was suggestive, and I felt an immediate shift in the atmosphere.

I asked him what he meant, as I felt my stomach drop for several reasons.

The tone and manner in which he made the comment was consistent with prior inappropriate comments he had made to me, including references to me carrying him back to his hotel room while intoxicated and the initial incident in which he sexually harassed me.

At the time of the comment, the individuals present in the room included [REDACTED]

I understood the comment to be referencing a recent social media post of mine. Willie also referenced content from my Instagram, including a caption referencing a "charcuterie board" post I had made ("Shark Coochie Board"), which was an inside joke between me and my friends. The post was private on Facebook but was publicly visible on Instagram at the time.

Mr. Borden had previously stated multiple times that he used a third-party background search tool (Spokeo) and other online searches to locate employees' social media prior to hiring, and that he had been able to find most staff online. He had also previously indicated that he had searched for my social media accounts. In a prior conversation, I had jokingly responded that I knew he would not be able to find mine. At that time, he was not aware that I used a different name on social media for privacy reasons.

Willie then began describing a red outfit I had worn, and I immediately understood that he had located my Instagram. He then stated that I looked good, again in a suggestive tone. The room remained silent during this statement.

He then referenced that his wife had commented that she liked a leopard print outfit I had worn. He also stated that she liked it a lot and joked that he had to remind her of her age, then corrected himself by referencing my age and stating that I was 28 and could wear things like that.

For reference, I am 27 years old. Mr. Borden has repeatedly misstated my age in conversation despite being corrected multiple times.

██████ then asked what Willie was referring to. I attempted to de-escalate the situation by stating that he was referring to my Instagram and that it was not something to worry about. I also attempted to redirect the conversation, but Willie continued speaking about it.

Willie stated that he found my social media through the VACWC shared Facebook page and emphasized that he was not trying to be “creepy.” I acknowledged his statement but remained uncomfortable with the direction of the conversation. He also made a joke stating there was “not a pole,” attempting to minimize and deflect from the nature of his comment.

Eventually, the conversation ended. Later that day, ██████ stated that Mr. Borden’s comment and tone were “sort of weird” and acknowledged that the interaction felt awkward. Willie attempted to backtrack but did not escalate further.

I am aware that social media is public and that individuals should be mindful of what they post. I am not embarrassed by my social media content and have professional connections through those platforms. However, I was uncomfortable with my supervisor interjecting into a workplace conversation to make suggestive, appearance-based comments about me in front of multiple staff members, followed by silence and no immediate correction in the moment.

Following this incident, I restricted access to my social media accounts by blocking Willie and his wife and setting my accounts to private, due to concern over continued unwanted attention. For reference, I was not connected with anyone at VACWC on social media, nor did I share my accounts with staff.

Conclusion (Part 1)

This section of my report documents the primary instances of sexual harassment I experienced while employed at the VACWC, as well as related conduct necessary to understand the context and pattern of behavior surrounding those incidents.

Due to the length and complexity of my experience, I have organized additional workplace misconduct, including retaliatory behavior, escalation following the above incidents, and conduct occurring during the Reno trip, into a subsequent section of this report, which is currently being completed. These additional events further reflect the pattern of conduct described in this section and will be provided as Part 2.