

Sexual HARASSMENT

unwelcome sexual advances

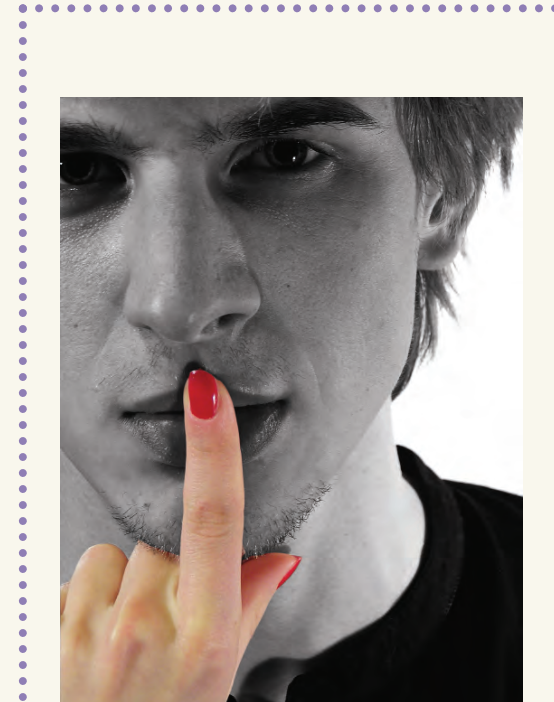
What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is a type of sexual discrimination. Any unwanted sexual behavior – in the form of comments, requests, or physical touch – that makes someone feel uncomfortable in a work environment is sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment can be physical or verbal. Actions which focus attention on a worker's gender rather than on his or her professional qualifications are instances of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment, like other forms of harassment based on age, race, nationality, or disability, violates federal law and the laws of most of the United States.

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) defines sexual harassment as:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.



Actions which focus attention on a worker's gender rather than on his or her professional qualifications are instances of sexual harassment.

Resources

Equal Rights Advocates
<http://www.equalrights.org/>

The United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html?src=mr>

The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund
<http://www.cwealf.org/pdf/sexharschools.pdf>

American Bar Association
<http://www.abanet.org/publiced/practical/sexualharassment.html>

Employer Employee
<http://www.employer-employee.com/sexhar1.htm>

University of North Carolina, Greensboro
<http://library.uncg.edu/depts/docs/us/harassment.asp>

Sexual Harassment Support
<http://www.sexualharassmentsupport.org/>

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Sexual harassment occurs in different forms:

- Men or women can be victims of sexual harassment.
- Men or women can be perpetrators of sexual harassment.
- The victim and the harasser do not necessarily have to be members of opposite gender.
- The victim of the harassment is anyone affected by the offensive actions, and is not necessarily the person directly harassed.
- The harasser may be the victim's co-worker, supervisor, or any other employee or non-employee associated with the workplace.
- Sexual harassment does not necessarily result in economic injury or the termination of one's employment.
- The behavior in question must be unwelcome in order for it to be considered harassment.

What do I do if I am being sexually harassed?

- Don't ignore it! A harasser may interpret a lack of an outward response as encouragement.
- Inform the harasser that his or her actions are unwanted. Be firm. Try not to smile, and state clearly that you are offended by these actions.
- Document the incident. Write a description of what happened including the date, time, and location of the incident. Write down the name of the people involved, including any witnesses. If any letters or notes are involved in the incident, keep these as well.
- Use any available workplace grievance system to report the incident, including speaking with a supervisor or locating an advocate to guide you through dealing with the situation.
- Promptly file a charge of sexual harassment with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

In many cases, charges must be filed within 180 days of the incident.

How do I file a charge with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission?

A charge of discrimination can be completed through the EEOC's Public Portal at publicportal.eeoc.gov

You can also file a charge in person at an EEOC office. Go to www.eeoc.gov/fieldoffice for information about the office closest to you.

You can't file a charge over the phone, but you can start the process by calling 1-800-669-4000 or 1-800-667-6820 (TTY)

To find out information on sexual harassment laws in your state, go to www.de2.psu.edu/harassment/legal/state.html

What do I do if my child is being sexually harassed?

Though girls are the most common victims of sexual harassment, boys may be harassed as well. Incidents of harassment commonly take place in schools as early as elementary school, and they often occur in out-of-classroom settings such as on school buses or during sports practices. Left unchecked, these harassing behaviors can lead to more violent patterns of aggression as children mature into adults. It is therefore crucial that parents support their children in developing ways of dealing with harassment or bullying. Listening to your child and talking through these issues can bring great relief to your child. Speaking with school administrators and teachers can help stop incidents of sexual harassment. Schools, like the workplace, are required by law to protect people from sexual harassment. Schools must have publicized sexual harassment policies as well as procedures for dealing with incidents of harassment. If your child is being harassed, talk with the school administration, your child's teachers, and groups like the PTA. Take an active role in shaping your child's school as an institution which supports learning rather than a place which facilitates harassment.

The law and sexual harassment

According to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, sexual harassment is illegal.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission requires that all businesses employing 15 or more people develop and publicize a sexual harassment policy. The EEOC further requires that organizations train their employees regarding issues of sexual harassment.



In extreme situations, you may want to consult an attorney and take legal action to stop the harassment.

What do I do if I am accused of sexual harassment?

- Take it seriously. Research the laws and regulations in your workplace and state.
- Listen carefully to the accusations and try to understand the accuser's perspective. Do not make jokes. Do not try to "get even" or to aggravate the situation in any way. Stop all behavior the accuser finds offensive.
- If you are being formally charged with harassment at your workplace, contact an advocate in the human resources department and ask for assistance. Fully cooperate with any ensuing investigations into the incident.

