

Sexual Harassment

What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It includes harassment that is not sexual in nature, but occurs because of the gender of the person being harassed.

Sexual harassment is not about sex, but rather it is a tool of power and domination. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination, which is usually directed at women, but may be directed at either women or men.

- The victim as well as the harasser may be a woman or a man. The victim does not have to be of the opposite sex.
- The harasser can be the victim's instructor, advisor, a supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a student, co-worker, or another employee.
- The victim does not have to be the person harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.
- Unlawful sexual harassment may occur without economic injury to or discharge of the victim.
- The harasser's conduct must be unwelcome.

Examples

Sexual harassment may encompass a full range of coercive behaviors from subtly psychological force to physical abuse.

- Undressing a person with one's eyes
- Caressing a person's hand
- Using sexually-explicit language
- "Accidentally" brushing against someone
- Direct verbal abuse and propositions
- Coercion of sexual activity by threat of punishment
- Asking sexual questions
- Talking about sexually explicit movies or TV shows
- Creating a hostile working environment
- General sexist remarks and behavior
- Displaying pornography in the work place
- Solicitation of sexual activity or other sex-linked behavior by promise of rewards--quid pro quo.

If sexually harassed. . .

First, carefully document the harassment behavior recording days, times, locations, and witnesses. Keeping careful notes enhances credibility.

Second, indicate to the harasser what behavior you object to and inform the harasser that the behavior is unwanted and that you want it to stop. State firmly that if the behavior does not stop, that you will take additional action.

Should the harasser fail to stop, take the documentation of the behavior to the appropriate level of administration.

If uncomfortable or unsure of acting on your own, seek out the affirmative action or equal opportunity employment office for support and information.

Are You a Harasser?

Perpetrators bear the burden of preventing sexual harassment. There are many things harassers can do to prevent future harassment, beginning with an evaluation of their own assumptions and behaviors.

Do not assume that colleagues, peers, employees, or students enjoy sexually oriented comments, remarks about their appearance, being touched, or being stared at.

Do not assume that others will tell you they are offended - or harassed by what you say and do.

Be aware that unwelcome sexual humor and innuendoes may violate the University's sexual harassment policy.

Review your attitudes and actions towards others. Do you base your behavior on stereotypes of others? Is your behavior sex neutral and bias free?

Consider the impact you have on others' attitudes toward their work, education, and self - esteem.

Watch and listen carefully to how others respond to what you say and do.

