

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Statistics

- In Fiscal Year 2006, EEOC received 12,025 charges of sexual harassment. Of those, EEOC resolved 11,936 and recovered \$48.8 million in monetary benefits for charging parties and other aggrieved individuals (not including monetary benefits obtained through litigation). 15.4% of the charges were filed by males.
http://www.eeoc.gov/types/sexual_harassment.html, Feb. 2007.
- An interactive study in 2001, conducted in 2,064 public high schools in eighth through 11th grades found that 83% of females and 79% of males reported being sexually harassed, defined as unwanted and unwelcome sexual behavior that interferes with life." *Women's Sense "Study: Both Sexes on Campus are harassed." Sept 2006.*
- Nearly two-thirds of college students say they have been sexually harassed. *American Association of University Women Report, 2005.*

Overview of the Issue

- Sexual harassment is any unwanted, intimidating and pervasive sexual conduct (verbal, written, physical or visual) that affects a person's employment, learning or work performance. It can be sex in exchange for opportunities (quid pro quo), or unwanted and unrelenting sexual behavior, e.g. jokes, posters, touching (hostile environment).
- Anyone can be a victim, but women are sexually harassed more often. The victim can be of the same or opposite sex.
- Sexual harassment is about abuse of power between individuals and among groups. It's part of the continuum of sex discrimination and sexual abuse and can be precursor to sexual assault. School-age offenders need to learn that unwanted sexual conduct is not a prelude to dating but to violence.
- Employer costs of sexual harassment are staff absenteeism and turnover, increased payouts for sick leave, legal costs, lower staff morale and productivity and tarnished company reputation. It is less expensive to train employees about sexual harassment, enact a well-written policy and respond promptly and visibly to any complaints.

What You Can Do

- If you are a victim, do not ignore or excuse inappropriate behavior. Don't blame yourself. Establish in writing to the harasser your opposition to the harassment. Describe the offensive behavior and tell them it must stop. Keep a log of specific dates, times, locations, witnesses and incidents.
- Know your rights. Report to a supervisor or human resources. File a formal complaint. Advocates or counselors can give practical advice and emotional support.
- Do not agree to a leave of absence/vacation. Perceived signs of diminished performance can be used against you.

Impact on Victims

- Sexual harassment victims often have difficulty concentrating at work or school, irregular attendance, withdrawal and may change behaviors like dress, route or schedule. Victims feel alienated, helpless and vulnerable. They may suffer physical and psychological effects of stress.
- Student victims may exhibit lower grades, missed classes, and dropping out. Workers may suffer career displacement, loss of job opportunities and real financial loss. For both, emotional scars may include shame, fear, confusion, loss of self-confidence, acting out and truancy

Quotable

Sexual harassment is part of a cycle of sexual discrimination and violence, especially against women. If you or someone you know is a victim of sexual harassment, you have rights and can report.