

## **What is Sexual Harassment?**

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance or conduct on the job that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, sexual harassment is considered sex discrimination. There are two major categories of sexual harassment, quid pro quo, and hostile work environment.

### ***Quid Pro Quo***

*Quid pro quo* harassment occurs when a person in authority makes requests for sex or other inappropriate relations in exchange for favors (e.g., advancement, wage increase) or they make such requests and threaten to taken adverse actions (e.g., firing, demotion) against the employee if they do not cooperate.

### **Hostile Work Environment**

When certain conditions are prevalent in the workplace that make an employee feel intimidated or offended at work they may have a claim for sexual harassment. Examples of this would be a pattern of inappropriate remarks or exposure to suggestive pictures.

In addition to these types of sexual harassment, states can identify their own criteria for bringing a sexual harassment claims. An individual considering a sexual harassment claim should review both state and federal law.

## **What should I do if I am being harassed?**

Dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace is a tough proposition. Below are some suggestions about how you might approach a sexual harassment problem, but the fact is, it can be very difficult to carry out some of these suggestions. Most people will find that getting the support of a friend, an attorney, or someone else in the workplace will help them to take the necessary action.

### **Steps to take**

- Tell the person to stop
  - If the person doesn't stop put your request in writing to let the harasser know that you are serious. If this does not stop the behavior, it may serve as evidence later.
- Don't participate in the unwelcome activity
  - This can sometimes be difficult if you are uncomfortable and you don't want to confront the issue, but if you appear to acquiesce in the behavior it could be hard to prevail in a lawsuit.
- Learn about your company's harassment policy and report the behavior using the appropriate channels.
  - Often, you must use this process before you will be able to sue.
- Find out if you need to file a claim with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC).
  - You may have to file an administrative claim with this office before filing a lawsuit and the EEOC can help you learn more about the laws in your state.
- Depending on your situation you may want to talk to your human relations or union representative about the situation - they may be able to help.
- Keep in mind that there may be deadlines for taking certain actions so don't delay in learning about your rights - consult with an attorney.

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