

Ohio Public Safety

Fact Sheet



Sexual Harassment in the Workplace/Learning Environment

What is sexual harassment? Sexual harassment is any unwanted attention of a sexual nature from someone in the workplace that creates discomfort and/or interferes with the job. It can take the form of verbal abuse such as insults, suggestive comments and demands. It can also consist of leering and subtle forms of pressure for sexual activity, physical aggressiveness such as touching, pinching and patting and can end up as attempted rape and rape.

It often presents itself in various ways.

Quid Pro Quo harassment exists when submission to or rejections of sexual demand becomes the basis for employment decisions directly affecting an employee (i.e. a manager tells an employee

that his/her job is dependent upon how sexually cooperative he or she may choose to be).

A Hostile Working/Learning Environment is created when continued sexual harassment produces an intimidating and offensive work atmosphere which negatively impacts an employee's work performance (i.e., sexual conduct or materials present in the workplace/learning environment which result in an abusive environment for an employee or student).

Victims face harassment from employees, supervisors, co-workers, clients or customers.

(Source: Ohio Civil Rights Commission)

Examples of Sexually Harassing Behaviors

(not an exhaustive list)

- Sexual jokes, innuendos and gestures
- Unsolicited and unwelcome flirtations, advances or propositions, however subtle
- Graphic or degrading comments about an individual's appearance, dress or body
- Staring at an individual or focusing upon a particular area of the body
- Elevator eyes—looking someone up and down
- Whistling, cat calls, leering
- Terms of address such as "honey," "baby," "chick," "hunk," or "dear"
- Giving personal gifts such as flowers or candy

to a student is something that can often be construed as sexual harassment. Instructors should be extremely cautious about giving any gifts to a student.

- Display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures
- Sexual or intrusive questions about an individual's personal life
- Descriptions of the harasser's own sexual experiences
- Neck or shoulder massages
- Pressure (however subtle) for sexual activity
- Explicit offers of sex for grades, money or other rewards
- Be careful of inappropriate use of lesson time such as having students drive on personal errands as part of the lesson.
- Physical or sexual assault, including rape

Employer's Responsibilities

Have a sexual harassment policy in place and within this document include a procedure for how complaints of sexual harassment should be made and how they will be resolved.

Post and disseminate the policy to all employees

Non-employees

An instructor may also be liable for sexual harassment of one student by another student. If an instructor knows, or should know based on circumstances, that a student is being sexually harassed, the instructor must take appropriate action to address the harassment.

Failure to act appropriately in this situation may result in liability for the instructor.

(Source: The Ohio State University, Office of Human Resources)

