

Solutions for Supervisors

from your

Affiliated Employee Assistance Program

1.800.769.9819
www.affiliatedeap.com

A publication provided by your organization/s EAP (Employee Assistance Program) to help you with common employee dilemmas and/or problems.

January 2009

QUESTION:

In this day and age is sexual harassment still a problem in the workplace?

ANSWER:

Yes. Sexual harassment continues to make headlines and cost employers millions of dollars in legal fees, turnover, and lost productivity. It is also one of the most emotionally charged and legally complex issues facing supervisors. In 2007, 12,510 cases were brought to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and while the majority of complaints still come from women, the number of complaints filed by men is quickly increasing with 16% of cases filed in 2007 by males.

There is no occupation that is immune from sexual harassment. However, reports of harassment of women is higher in fields that have traditionally been male-dominated such as mining, construction, firefighting, surgery, and technology. Sexualized work environments have shown to increase sexual harassment. A sexualized environment is one in which obscenities, sexual joking, explicit graffiti, downloading or circulating of pornography, sexually explicit posters and objects are common. For example, when obscenities are common in the workplace women are 3 times more likely to be treated as sex objects and to be directly sexually harassed than in environments where profanity is not tolerated.

According to the EEOC, prevention is the best tool to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace. There should be clear communication that it will not be tolerated. Supervisors play an important role in modeling and enforcing this for employees and co-workers.

QUESTION:

What is my responsibility as a supervisor when it comes to sexual harassment?

ANSWER:

First, as a supervisor it is crucial that you understand what constitutes sexual harassment and what your employer's policy and procedures are

Remember that EAP is here to help in any way that we can - call on us for consultation and assistance anytime!

Call 1-800-769-9819

Educational Programs for Supervisors

Affiliated EAP offers many educational programs designed to help leaders become more effective in supervising your staff. For a complete course listing or to schedule training contact Liz Ashe, Director of Training at **1-800-648-2727** or visit our website at www.affiliatedeap.com



Solutions

continued



in these situations. An employer's harassment complaint procedure should be designed to encourage victims to come forward. A copy of the policy and complaint procedure should be provided to every employee, reviewed, and redistributed periodically. If you haven't reviewed your policy in a while now is a good time to do so.

If sexual harassment is reported to you it is your legal responsibility as a supervisor to look into the matter and document the steps you have taken to investigate and remedy the situation if necessary. If you witness or suspect that sexual harassment is taking place in the workplace you also have a legal obligation to address the situation. Supervisors are strongly encouraged to enlist the help of their Human Resources personnel in addressing these issues.

Some examples of sexual harassment include:

- Sexual innuendos and comments
- Jokes about sex or males/females
- Letters, notes, emails, phone calls, or material of a sexual nature or disparaging to either gender
- Repeatedly asking someone out on a date, or to have sex
- Physical contact such as a neck/shoulder massage or brushing up against someone
- Spreading rumors about someone's sexuality
- Direct or indirect threats or bribes for unwanted sexual activity
- Suggestive sounds or gestures such as sucking noises, winks, or pelvic thrusts
- Unwanted comments about someone's appearance or clothing

If in doubt about a possible case of sexual harassment consult with your Human Resources staff. You can also call EAP for assistance anytime!

For more information on this topic:

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC):

1.800.669.4000

EEOC TTY number:

1.800.669.6820

Or visit the website at:

http://www.eeoc.gov/types/sexual_harassment.html



For more information about how to best handle employee work performance problems call your EAP at:

1-800-769-9819

TTY dial 711 for

TRS then dial 800-769-9819

www.affiliatedeap.com