

PREVENTING HARASSMENT: *Creating A Positive Workplace (in Office Settings)*

This easy-to-use Leader's Guide is provided to assist in conducting a successful presentation. Featured are:

INTRODUCTION: A brief description of the program and the subject that it addresses.

PROGRAM OUTLINE: Summarizes the program content. If the program outline is discussed before the video is presented, the entire program will be more meaningful and successful.

PREPARING FOR AND CONDUCTING THE PRESENTATION: These sections will help you set up the training environment, help you relate the program to site-specific incidents, and provide program objectives for focusing your presentation.

REVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: Questions may be copied and given to participants to document how well they understood the information that was presented. Answers to the review questions are provided separately.

INTRODUCTION

Good communication and respect for others creates a beneficial work environment where employees feel safe and productive. When the workplace is disrupted by someone disrespecting one or more co-workers, anger and resentment can destroy morale. Workplace harassment can damage relationships and destroy lines of communication among employees. This program discusses various types of workplace harassment and how this unwelcome behavior affects the work environment. It also explains what you should do if you are a victim or an observer of disrespectful conduct and how you can avoid having your own behavior interpreted as harassment. Featured are a variety of scenarios where workers exhibit unwelcome behavior to show viewers what types of behavior constitute harassment and how they should respond to such conduct.

Topics include how harassment creates a hostile work environment, types of behavior that are considered harassment, conduct that constitutes sexual harassment, how to respond to unwelcome behavior and preventing your own behavior from being construed as harassment.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

CREATING A POSITIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE

- Our various workplaces are made up of a wide variety of people performing a wide variety of job tasks.
- As we interact with others during the course of our work, we will undoubtedly come into contact with people who do not look like us. We will work side by side with people whose culture and beliefs may be different from our own.
- Our workforce is more diverse than ever. The expression "It's a small world" is literally true.
- In order to maximize the unique talents and skills of each individual, and contribute to a productive and efficient workplace, we must be able to interact and communicate with each other in a professional, respectful manner.
- When employees treat each other with respect and professionalism, a positive workplace culture is created, a working environment that is productive and pleasurable.

HOW A HOSTILE WORK ENVIRONMENT IS CREATED

- While the vast majority of workers conduct themselves respectfully towards their co-workers, it only takes a few disrespectful people conducting themselves in a harassing manner to create a damaging and hostile working environment.

- “We have a very diverse workforce and, unfortunately, some people just won’t work with or share important information with people that don’t look like them. I’m amazed that anybody can learn anything around here. This inability to work together makes us a weaker company,” notes one worker in the program.
- A hostile working environment created by harassing behavior has a very negative impact on workers’ morale and productivity.
- No one wants to work in a place where they are harassed and no one has to.

HOW HARASSMENT CREATES A HOSTILE WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Unwelcome behavior becomes harassment when a person’s conduct is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create a hostile work environment.
- Harassment creates a hostile work environment when unwelcome comments or conduct based on sex, race, religion, age, mental or physical disability or other legally protected characteristics unreasonably interferes with an employee’s work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.
- When we hear the term “workplace harassment,” most people automatically think of sexual harassment, but sexual harassment is just one type of harassment that takes place in our workplaces.
- Harassment doesn’t have to be sexual in nature to be illegal; once the harassment rises to the level of creating a hostile work environment, it becomes illegal.
- It also doesn’t matter if the harasser is not a company employee. Vendors, contractors, visitors or others who engage in offensive behavior can also be guilty of workplace harassment.
- Keep in mind that the victims of harassing behavior are not limited to those people directly involved. Even if the principle parties are not offended by the behavior, the behavior may be offensive to others and may contribute to creating a hostile workplace.
- It is important to understand that that not all offensive behavior is automatically harassment. Harassment defames or attacks the reputation, and in general, is any form of behavior that is unjust and repetitive and makes someone feel humiliated, offended or intimidated.

TYPES OF BEHAVIOR THAT ARE CONSIDERED HARASSMENT

- A common form of workplace harassment is one based on race or ethnic group, using racially derogatory words and phrases.
- In addition, demonstrations of a racial or ethnic nature such as use of drawings, pictures or gestures that would offend a particular ethnic group are also considered harassment, as are comments about a person’s skin color, other racial or ethnic traits, characteristics and stereotypes.
- Also, disparaging remarks about an individual’s gender, even those that aren’t overtly sexual in nature can be construed as harassment.
- Harassing conduct and behavior can affect both male and females. While some may think this type of behavior is just “having fun,” it can be offensive to many and has no place in a work environment.
- Equally offensive are negative comments about another person’s religious beliefs. By its very nature, religion is a highly personal and emotional subject.
- Any disparaging remarks about a person’s religious beliefs or repeated efforts to “share” your personal beliefs with others in your workplace can be offensive to many and harassing in nature.

- Negative comments about a co-worker's age when referring to people over 40 as well as derogatory references to an employee's mental or physical impairment are also forms of harassment.

CONDUCT THAT CONSTITUTES SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- There are many types of workplace harassment; however, sexual harassment is the most publicized and potentially the most damaging form of unwelcome behavior.
- Making offensive remarks about a co-worker's body parts, clothing or looks is an example of sexual harassment which creates a hostile working environment.
- Touching a person in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable, such as pinching, rubbing, patting or intentionally brushing against his or her body is also an example of sexual harassment which creates a hostile working environment.
- Telling lewd jokes, hanging sexually-explicit posters and making sexual gestures can also be considered sexual harassment, especially if the conduct is repeated after it has been made clear that it is unwelcome.
- Displaying, sending or forwarding sex-related images, emails, text messages or similar items can also be considered sexual harassment.
- Be extra vigilant not to participate in any type of inappropriate conduct with computers, phones and other high-tech gadgets. Always think twice before hitting send.
- Keep in mind that sexual harassment doesn't have to involve touching, talking or sharing pictures; something as simple as staring at another employee in a sexually suggestive manner, which is called leering, can bring about complaints of sexual harassment.
- Make no mistake, anytime a manager, supervisor or other person with authority over an employee offers advancement, job security or a positive performance review in exchange for sexual favors, that is considered sexual harassment.
- It is important to keep in mind that sexual harassment is not limited to a male harassing a female. There have been many cases of sexual harassment involving females in positions of authority harassing a male.
- Reports of same-sex sexual harassment cases have been on the rise in recent years. The gender or sexual-orientation of the harasser really doesn't matter. Inappropriate and unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature is considered sexual harassment and should not be tolerated.
- If a manager's or supervisor's unwelcome conduct results in a tangible change in a worker's employment status or benefits such as a denial of a promotion, a demotion, suspension or termination, it is also considered harassment. You cannot be punished for refusing an unwelcome sexual advance.

HOW TO RESPOND TO UNWELCOME BEHAVIOR

- All workers need to understand what action they should take when they are a witness to, or a victim of, unwelcome harassing behavior.
- When you feel harassed or witness harassment, stand up for yourself and your co-workers. Don't ignore it or tolerate it; instead, explain to the person exhibiting the unwelcome behavior that you are offended by their comments or actions.
- Express your desire to work in a professional, respectful workplace. It may be hard to believe, but harassers often don't realize their conduct is offensive until somebody spells it out for them.

- By speaking out against unwanted conduct, you will be setting an example for others who may be hesitant to speak up. As more people become willing to speak out against inappropriate conduct, it will become clear to everyone that this type of behavior is unacceptable in the workplace.
- Of course, simply asking for the conduct to stop will not always work. If the abuse continues after you have challenged the disrespectful behavior, do not let it escalate.
- Do not engage in a verbal or physical confrontation. Instead, stop communication with the individual, leave the area and report the situation to your supervisor.
- As a matter of fact, you have the responsibility of reporting any type of harassment immediately, no matter how the situation evolved or whether you were the victim or a witness. Hostile work environment harassment can only be controlled if management is aware of such behavior so the necessary steps can be taken to put a stop to it.

AVOIDING HAVING YOUR OWN BEHAVIOR INTERPRETED AS HARASSMENT

- To prevent your own behavior from being construed as harassment, you must adopt an attitude that recognizes the differences among all people and be willing to accept the diversity among your co-workers. These differences are actually advantageous to the workplace in that they provide an array of strengths and viewpoints.
- Keep in mind that everyone at your workplace has an equal right to work, and to do so without unwanted interference from co-workers.
- Always be aware that individuals interpret things differently and may be offended by comments that are not intended to offend.
- It's always a good idea to think before you act. Imagine if your words and actions were on public display for all to see, would you be proud of them?
- If your behavior was on center stage and your parents, spouse, children or clergy were in the audience would your performance be well received? If the answer is no, then you shouldn't do it and you shouldn't say it.
- When you display unwelcome behavior, even if it was not your intention to do so, it is still unwelcome behavior. Harassment often starts as an unconscious act or innocent statement not intended to offend; however, once someone objects to your conduct, and that conduct is repeated, it may be interpreted as harassment.
- If anyone informs you that your behavior is unwelcome, no matter what your feelings are on the matter, stop it immediately.
- Do not assume that your behavior is acceptable simply because nobody has directly confronted you about it. Ask yourself if your behavior would be acceptable to everyone in your organization. If you have any doubts that it would, don't do it and don't say it.
- Don't interpret someone's objection to your undesirable behavior to mean that you can repeat the conduct later or do it again in a slightly different manner. Recognize a protest for what it is and understand the boundaries co-workers want you to respect.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A HARASSMENT-FREE WORKPLACE

- Keep in mind that not only is this type of harassing behavior disrespectful, it is also illegal. Various laws and statutes guarantee a workplace free of harassment.
- The workplace should be a refuge where people go to enjoy their jobs and earn a living. Good communication and respect for others creates a beneficial work environment where employees feel safe and productive.

- When the workplace is disrupted by someone disrespecting one or more co-workers, anger and resentment can destroy morale. Workplace harassment can damage relationships and destroy lines of communication among employees.
- Harassment victims are often reluctant to report such behavior because they feel the situation will worsen. In fact, victims of harassment can suffer from severe stress and other related illnesses.
- No matter what type of environment you work in, people should respect each other and be able to work in a place free of harassment.

PREPARE FOR THE SAFETY MEETING

Review each section of this Leader's Guide as well as the video. Here are a few suggestions for using the program:

Make everyone aware of the importance the company places on health and safety and how each person must be an active member of the safety team.

Introduce the program. Play it without interruption. Review the program content by presenting the information in the program outline.

Copy the review questions included in this Leader's Guide and ask each participant to complete them.

Make an attendance record and have each participant sign the form. Maintain the attendance record and each participant's test paper as written documentation of the training performed.

Here are some suggestions for preparing your video equipment and the room or area you use:

Check the room or area for quietness, adequate ventilation and temperature, lighting and unobstructed access.

Check the seating arrangement and the audiovisual equipment to ensure that all participants will be able to see and hear the program.

CONDUCTING THE PRESENTATION

Begin the meeting by welcoming the participants. Introduce yourself and give each person the opportunity to become acquainted if there are new people joining the training session.

Explain that the primary purpose of the program is discuss various types of behavior that constitutes harassment, how to respond to unwelcome behavior and how to avoid having your own behavior interpreted as harassment.

Introduce the program. Play it without interruption. Review the program content by presenting the information in the program outline.

Lead discussions about the importance of creating and maintaining a positive workplace free of harassment at your facility. Use the review questions to check how well the program participants understood the information.

After watching the program, the viewer will be able to explain the following:

- How harassment creates a hostile work environment;
- What types of behavior are considered harassment;
- What conduct can be construed as sexual harassment;
- How to respond to unwelcome behavior;
- How to prevent your own behavior from being construed as harassment.

PREVENTING HARASSMENT:
Creating A Positive Workplace
REVIEW QUIZ

Name _____ Date _____

The following questions are provided to check how well you understand the information presented during this program.

1. Harassment doesn't have to be sexual in nature to be illegal.
 - a. true
 - b. false

2. Because visitors, contractors and vendors aren't company employees, their behavior cannot constitute workplace harassment.
 - a. true
 - b. false

3. Making negative comments about a co-worker's age when referring to people over _____ years old is a form of harassment.
 - a. 30
 - b. 35
 - c. 40

4. Staring at another employee in a sexually-suggestive manner is not sufficient grounds for a sexual harassment complaint.
 - a. true
 - b. false

5. You cannot be punished for refusing a unwanted sexual advance by your manager or supervisor.
 - a. true
 - b. false

6. You have the responsibility of reporting any type of harassment immediately, even if you were just a witness.
 - a. true
 - b. false

7. If your conduct is not intended to offend anyone, it cannot be considered harassment.
 - a. true
 - b. false

ANSWERS TO THE REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. a

2. b

3. c

4. b

5. a

6. a

7. b