

# Policies on sexual aggression



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made sexual harassment a form of sex discrimination that applies to employers with 15 or more employees (The U. S. Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission (EEOC)). The definition of sexual harassment is:

... a form of sex discrimination. The legal definition of sexual harassment is "unwelcome verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is severe or pervasive and affects working conditions or creates a hostile work environment.

(Equal Rights Advocates).

One of my good friends works for a major organization in the area that has a comprehensive sexual harassment policy. Federal and state law prohibits

sexual harassment, therefore, the company where he is employed is

committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of all forms of

intimidation or sexual harassment as legally mandated. Every employee at

the company, both male and female, is covered by the sexual harassment

policy. The company identifies a common form of sexual harassment, quid

pro quo harassment, in the following manner: " If submission to or rejection

of the conduct is used and as a basis for an employment decision affecting

the person rejecting or submitting to the conduct" (Anonymous Company

Sexual Harassment Policy (ACSHP), 2007). The company does not give

specific examples, however, I believe the policy sufficiently explains the

concept. The company also lays out its policy against a hostile work

environment, as it is identified and addressed with: " If the conduct has the

purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an affected person's work

performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work

environment" (ACSHP, 2007). Again, no specific examples are given, which in

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this case may be useful as many individuals may find the language of the policy ambiguous. The company does not specifically address gender-based harassment in the company sexual harassment policy, but probably should, as there are some uninformed individuals that may believe a sexual harassment policy only applies to women, when in actuality it is intended to apply to everyone within the company no matter their gender. The company has a set procedure for filing a complaint, which states: " As a part of our policy to discourage sexual harassment, it is an obligation of each and every employee to report such incidents whenever they occur to their immediate supervisor. Such incidents will be promptly and independently investigated. Individuals found to have committed sexual harassment will be subjected to appropriate disciplinary measures" (ACSHP, 2007). It is unclear after the report of the initial infraction is made to a supervisor, who then handles or is responsible for adjudicating the complaint. The company also indicated in the policy " No person who has made a complaint of sexual harassment or who has assisted in an investigation will be subjected to any form of retaliation" (ACSHP, 2007). Therefore, the policy appears to be fair by protecting the employment of anyone making a claim of sexual harassment. The company sexual harassment policy is communicated clearly in most areas, however, ambiguous areas that I discussed above should be rewritten for clarification. There are no " official" statistics available for sexual harassment charges or complaints within this company. However, according to my friend, a co-worker of his was accused of sexual harassment by another co-worker, and both parties were treated quite fairly, with the claim and behavior surrounding it turning out to be a huge misunderstanding. The accusations against the co-worker accused were determined to be false and

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everyone involved was dealt with accordingly.

Those with the most power will sometimes tend to abuse it. In the workplace, men are more commonly in power positions, therefore, may feel that they are able to " get away" with harassing behavior due to their power position. Horizontal segregation is defined as " the exclusion of a particular group of people from the highest paid and the most responsible positions within the employment hierarchy" (Reeves 11). Vertical segregation is " men and women separated at all levels of the employment hierarchy" (Reeves 13). These types of segregation and inequality in pay and employment level, usually negatively affecting women, have a great deal to do with sexual harassment, as those at the bottom end of the scale may be more willing to put up with objectionable behavior to obtain their " dream job" or achieve a tolerable pay scale. Therefore, due to such inequalities and the male dominated hierarchy in the workplace, women are much more likely to suffer harassment of all types, than are men.

In conclusion, the company for which my friend is employed is attempting to be compliant with Title IV and the EEOC requirements regarding regulations for sexual harassment in the workplace. Overall, I believe the company has made a valiant effort, however, some of the verbiage in the policy needs to be much more straightforward so no ambiguities exist in its interpretation.

#### Works Cited

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