

What is Sexual Harassment:

A complete definition of sexual harassment is printed on the back of this brochure. But, briefly, sexual harassment is when someone makes you think you'll get in trouble or lose your job, or be discriminated against in obtaining or benefiting from public accommodations, public services, employment, education, or housing, if you do not give in to his or her sexual advances or put up with sexual remarks.

Here are some examples of cases in Michigan:

Joann:

Joann just took a "nontraditional" job in the skilled trades. The men on the job whistle and hiss when she walks by and yell out what they'd like to do to her when she's alone. They stare at her body and touch her when no one is looking. Pornographic pictures are pasted on her locker and objects from a local sex shop are attached with obscene notes to her work bench. Her supervisor says if she can't "take a little fun" she should get out.

Karen:

Karen was still in school when her professor offered her an "A" in a course if she'd sleep with him. She didn't and got a "C." She appealed to the university's review board and her mark was changed to an "A." Nothing was done to the professor. Karen has been working for several years and getting promoted with no trouble. Now her new boss asks her to stay late at work and "discusses" her upcoming promotion with his arms around her. He asks her to bring completed work to his apartment on the weekend. Karen is afraid that she has a record as a troublemaker because of her college experience and she's afraid no one will believe her again.

Molly:

Molly works in a factory and wears an apron filled with bolts for the assembly line. Her supervisor "checks" the bolts by reaching into the apron and feeling around. He does not "check" the aprons of male workers. He also waits until Molly is alone in the cloakroom and backs her up against the wall. When Molly protests, he says he's being "friendly" and she shouldn't be "uncooperative" or she'll lose her job.

Susan:

Susan works in an insurance office and has to travel to other cities with her boss. He wants to share a hotel room "to save the company some money." When Susan refuses he tells her to "smarten up" or he'll give her a poor rating on her next job review and demote her to a clerical job. In the meantime, he doubles Susan's workload and complains that she "can't keep up."

Who are the Victims?

Although the majority of victims are women harassed by men, the following cases of sexual harassment on the job have been reported:

- Men sexually harassed by women
- Women sexually harassed by women
- Men sexually harassed by men

Victims range from young to old, from executives to unskilled workers, from married to single, and from attractive to unattractive. No one knows why a certain person is singled out for sexual harassment while co-workers are left alone. Often, workers who need their jobs most desperately, to support their children or spouses, are singled out because they are most likely to fear losing their pay.

What Can I Do?

First, be sure that the harasser knows you do not welcome these advances. State your objections clearly when harassment first begins. Don't just hope the problem will go away.

If the harassment continues, don't keep it to yourself. Put your objections in writing and ask for a written reply. Talk to your co-workers and tell them what is happening to you. Ask if they have had similar problems with your harasser. Keep notes on when your problem occurred and what you did and said. You may need these notes if you have to go to court.

If initial efforts fail, go higher. Use your grievance procedure, if any, to write to your supervisor's supervisor. Ask for written answers to your complaints.

If your union steward or other grievance takers shrugs off your complaint or say it is not a "grievance," do not become discouraged and drop your complaint. Go higher and exercise every right to appeal. Under the National Labor Relations Act section on the duty of fair representation, your union has the duty to represent you on issues of sexual harassment.

Why Has it Been Kept Quiet?

Like rape, most sexual harassment goes unreported because the victims are somehow made to feel ashamed of what has happened to them. They are afraid that other people will say they "asked for it," or that no one will believe them, or they won't be able to prove it and will be branded as troublemakers. Rather than face embarrassment and reprisals, many victims who are lucky enough to transfer, or get a new job elsewhere, quietly leave without saying anything. This leaves the harasser free to victimize other workers.

How Can I Prevent Sexual Harassment?

Share the information in this brochure with others. Be supportive of people you know who are facing this problem. Encourage them to resist and take action. If you observe sexual harassment, be courageous enough to offer to be a witness. Put yourself in the victim's place and remember that you will need encouragement and support if this ever happens to you. Above all, don't be forced into "going along with the crowd" and accepting sexual harassment as "the way things are" or as a joking matter. Support legislation that seeks to prevent sexual harassment. Ask your company or union if they have a specific policy against sexual harassment. If not, work toward getting one. Talk with your co-workers about things like appropriate dress on the job, joking around about sex, personal relationships on the job and other things that people may try to use against you if you are ever a victim of sexual harassment.

Where To Go For Help

Michigan Department of Civil Rights
1-800-482-3604
TTY users: 1-877-878-8464
www.michigan.gov/mdcr

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
1-800-669-4000
TTY users: 1-800-669-6820
www.eeoc.gov

Definition

Sec. 103(h) Discrimination because of sex includes sexual harassment which means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature when:

- (i) Submission to such conduct or communication is made a term or condition either explicitly or implicitly to obtain employment, public accommodations or public services, education, or housing.
- (ii) Submission to or rejection of such conduct or communication by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting such individual's employment, public accommodations or public services, education, or housing.
- (iii) Such conduct or communication has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's employment, public accommodations or public services, education, or housing, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive employment, public accommodations, public service, education, or housing environment.

Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act 453 of 1976 as Amended by Public Act 202 of 1980.



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Unlawful Sexual Harassment

How to recognize it

How to stop it

Where to go for help