



5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Sexual harassment is a type of sex-based discrimination that can range from sexual jokes or comments about a person's body to unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors. A harasser can be an employer, supervisor, board member, or coworker. In 2018, a [survey of museum employees](#) stated 55-percent of the 500 respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment.¹

- 1. Sexual harassment is illegal.** Federal laws (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) prohibit sex-based discrimination including [two main types of sexual harassment](#)² and additional [state and local laws](#)³ also apply.
- 2. Know your institutional policy.** Employers have a duty to provide a harassment-free workplace and to respond to an employee's complaints about alleged sexual harassment. Talk to your supervisor, manager, or human resource staff and follow the policy set out by your institution so they can take prompt [action](#).⁴
- 3. When it comes to calling out sexual harassment, trust your gut feelings.** The scale of severity seems to play a role when it comes to bringing attention to sexual harassment. Often, harassment is not called out because we invalidate our own feelings or give the harasser the benefit of the doubt when it comes to their intentions. And yet, sexual harassment is not something anyone should consider "just part of the job." If left unattended, sexual harassment can easily become a pattern of unwanted behaviors.
- 4. Call out the behavior.** It is important to tell the harasser to stop. Make it clear their actions or comments are unwanted. Confronting the harasser the very moment a comment/action is made can (possibly) stop future harassment. Be sure to document the behavior so if it continues, you have details to support your claims. Consider reaching out to other employees who have observed the behavior or may have been targets themselves. Building solidarity with others can help you feel less isolated and make it more difficult to dismiss the behavior by showing a pattern rather than just a one time event.
- 5. Seek legal advice.** In some cases, you may need to [seek legal advice](#).⁵ If your institution fails to address your concerns consider talking to a lawyer.

Citations and Resources:

1. nikhil trivedi & Aletheia Wittman (2018), "Facing Sexual Harassment and Abuse in the Feminizing Museum," Journal of Museum Education, 43:3, 209-218, [DOI: 10.1080/10598650.2018.1488126](#).
2. Legal Aid at Work: <https://legallaidatwork.org/factsheet/sexual-harassment/>
3. Sexual Harassment Laws in All 50 States: <https://www.trainingabc.com/sexual-harassment-law-in-all-50-states/>
4. Equal Rights Advocates: <https://www.equalrights.org/legal-help/know-your-rights/sexual-harassment-at-work/>
5. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/sexual_harassment.cfm

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