

HARASSMENT - PREVENTION ESSENTIALS

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Harassment is behavior that bullies, intimidates, embarrasses, coerces, or insults others.

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**Harassment in the workplace
is always unacceptable,
and it's also illegal.**

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Anyone in an organization—or even someone from outside it, like a vendor, patient, or customer—could be the victim of harassment . . .

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. . . or could engage in harassing behavior themselves.

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If the behavior is so pervasive and severe that a “Reasonable Person” would say it’s creating a “Hostile Environment,” it may be grounds for disciplinary action or termination—even a lawsuit.

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Because harassment in the workplace tends to be based on perceived differences, the federal government has enacted nondiscrimination laws to protect specific groups of people.

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That means it's illegal to harass people based on their

- **race**
- **color**
- **religion**

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- **sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity, which includes transgender status)**
- **national origin (including citizenship status and accent)**

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- age (for employees who are 40 or older)
 - disability (physical or mental)
 - genetic information
- family status (including marital and parental status)
 - or political affiliation

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It is never acceptable—and often illegal—to engage in:

- **Insults or name-calling.**
- **Violence or threats of violence.**
- **Making threatening, rude, or dismissive gestures.**

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- Physically intimidating someone by standing in the way or blocking access to equipment, work space, or common areas.
- Posting harassing content and cyberbullying on social media sites.

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- **Sending offensive texts, emails, or images.**
- **Rumor-mongering, gossiping, or otherwise harming a coworker's reputation.**
- **Excluding someone from work-related activities or otherwise isolating them.**

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- Jokes or put-downs because of someone's gender, ethnicity, disability, age, or other personal characteristic.
- Inappropriate touching such as unwelcome hugs or back rubs.

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Sexual harassment is a pattern of unwanted sexual advances, comments, or images.

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Sometimes it's presented in the form of a trade, called "Quid Pro Quo" harassment. For instance, a supervisor might offer a raise or promotion in exchange for sex.

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It is strictly illegal for a supervisor or an organization to retaliate against someone who brings a harassment complaint.

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When we put our best foot forward and always act with professionalism, we create a positive, respectful workplace for us all.

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