

## **PRESENTER'S GUIDE**

# **"PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT... FOR EMPLOYEES"**

**Part of the General Safety Series**

# **OUTLINE OF MAJOR PROGRAM POINTS**

# **OUTLINE OF MAJOR PROGRAM POINTS**

The following outline summarizes the major points of information presented in the program. The outline can be used to review the program before conducting a classroom session, as well as in preparing to lead a class discussion about the program.

- **"Sexual harassment" is a form of discrimination in employment that was outlawed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It includes:**
  - Unwelcome sexual advances.
  - Requests for sexual favors.
  - Other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that the victim finds unwanted or threatening.
  
- **Blatant sexual acts such as, sexual assaults, touching a coworker with sexual intent, or requiring them to engage in a sexual act in order to keep their job or advance their career, clearly are considered to be sexual harassment whenever they occur.**
  
- **Less blatant types of sexual behavior usually have to occur repeatedly to be regarded as "harassment", and can include:**
  - Talking about sex or making sexist remarks.
  - Commenting on a coworker's physical appearance.
  - Looking at someone in an inappropriate way.
  - Displaying "sexually suggestive" pictures or objects.
  - Writing sexually explicit graffiti.
  - Making obscene gestures.
  
- **The effects of sexual harassment can be emotionally devastating.**
  - Even "subtle" harassment can slowly "tear down" a victim's self-esteem over time.

- **They may feel afraid that no one will believe or understand what's being done to them, powerless to do anything about it, and even somehow responsible for what is occurring.**
  - In fact, harassers often rely on their victims being afraid to report the harassment to management.
  - If coworkers who witness sexual harassment ignore it or try to "laugh it off", they may actually encourage further incidents.
- **It's very important for both targets and witnesses of sexual harassment to report this behavior to management or your company's Human Resource Department, no matter who the harasser is.**
  - Shutting down offensive behavior in the workplace is everyone's responsibility.
- **Most reported cases of sexual harassment involve males harassing females, but many of the unreported incidents include men who are sexually harassed by women, and men and women who are harassed by people of their own gender.**
  - The harasser's intended "target" is often not the only potential "victim" of sexual harassment.
  - "Victims" can include anyone in the vicinity who doesn't want to be exposed to statements or actions that are offensive to them.
- **It's important to remember that each person is the judge of what they find disturbing, and what they would consider to be sexual harassment.**
  - So it's possible to "harass" a coworker unintentionally when you're simply unaware that your actions or comments are offensive to them.

- **For instance, a friendly waitress may not be offended when a salesman flirts with her in a restaurant, but when he acts the same way with a secretary in his workplace, she could feel that he is sexually harassing her.**
  - The difference is not in what the salesman does.
  - It's in the fact that the waitress feels the flirting is harmless, while the secretary in the office does not.
- **Employers know that sexual harassment is bad for people, and bad for business.**
  - Most organizations create a written sexual harassment policy to make it clear just what types of behavior, language and dress are appropriate in their workplace.
- **It's important for you to know your company's policy and follow it.**
  - You can usually find it in your employee handbook.
- **The policy may discourage or even forbid employees from dating or having romantic relationships with their coworkers.**
  - This helps ensure that employees cannot be coerced into a relationship against their will.
  - Sometimes it's not easy to tell when this is happening.
- **No one should ever have to endure unwanted sexual advances because they're afraid of:**
  - Losing their job.
  - Not getting pay raises.
  - Not being promoted.
  - Facing some type of disciplinary action.

- **You can help prevent harassment in your workplace by not acting in ways that other people might feel are offensive.**
  - For instance, how you look at a coworker could create problems.
  - "Checking them out" in a sexual way or staring at their body definitely qualifies as sexual harassment.

**Placing your hand on a coworker's shoulder to get their attention might seem innocent enough to you, but they may not see it that way.**

- The best policy is to avoid any unnecessary physical contact with other employees.
- **You should never bring "racy" or pornographic magazines or books to your job either.**
  - Don't put up any provocative posters or pictures in your work area, either.
- **Because there is no truly "private" space in any workplace, what you say, write or look at can often be heard or seen by your coworkers.**
  - The conversations that you have, the websites that you visit and the emails that you send are never truly "confidential".
- **Think about what you do and say ahead of time.**
  - That way you can avoid offending or harassing anyone, even inadvertently.
- **Sometimes it can be difficult to tell whether someone's comments or actions are sexually motivated, but if a coworker's behavior offends you, you should call them on it.**
  - Always let people know when their actions or comments bother you.
  - Make it clear that they've "crossed your line" and what they did is unwelcome.

- **You shouldn't accuse a coworker of sexual harassment right off the bat unless you are sure that the person intended to harass you.**
  - Usually, when you let them know that you don't like what they did, they'll change their behavior, and no further action will be necessary.
- **But it's still a good idea to keep a written record of incidents like these, just in case. Make a note of:**
  - The date and time that it occurred.
  - Who was involved.
  - The names of anyone who might have seen it.
- **You should also be sure to describe:**
  - What happened.
  - What was said and done.
  - Why it felt sexually harassing to you.
  - Or why you think it was harassing to a coworker.
- **If you are not satisfied that the person's behavior was really "innocent", or if another incident occurs, your next step should be to report what happened to management or your company's Human Resource Department.**
  - The written record will provide a factual foundation for your report.
- **Reporting a sexual harassment incident can be difficult, because it brings up a lot of feelings:**
  - Embarrassment about the harassment itself.
  - Anxiety about what will happen if you come forward.
  - Concern that people might not believe you.
  - Fear of how the harasser will react.

- **Remember that coming forward regarding sexual harassment is not only the right thing to do, it's also your responsibility.**
  - Whether you are a victim or a witness to an incident of sexual harassment, your company needs you to report it, so they can put a stop to this type of behavior.
  - Remember to bring along a copy of your written incident description when you meet with your supervisor or Human Resources.
- **As you discuss the incident, answer their questions honestly and accurately.**
- **You may be asked to sign a written summary of your conversation.**
  - Read it carefully to confirm that everything is correct.
  - Point out anything that you feel isn't accurate, so it can be corrected before you sign.
- **The manager or HR representative will then talk to the person whose behavior you feel was sexually harassing. They will be:**
  - Informed of the allegations.
  - Questioned about their role in the incident.
  - Advised that the offensive conduct must stop.
- **The company will always try to keep the process confidential, but sometimes it will be necessary for them to interview other people who may have witnessed the events.**
- **How the situation is resolved will depend on the type of harassment, how often it occurred and other factors.**
  - At the very least the harasser will be warned to "cease and desist" or face disciplinary action.



**\* \* \* SUMMARY \* \* \***

- **Know your employer's sexual harassment policies and follow them.**
- **Think about what you say and do, and take care not to behave in ways that might be offensive to your coworkers.**
- **Let others know when their behavior has "crossed your line".**
- **Document any event that you feel may be sexual harassment.**
- **Submit a copy of your documentation when reporting the incident to management.**
- **When you avoid behaving offensively, speak up when someone offends you and report sexual harassment incidents to management... you can help create a healthier, more professional and more respectful workplace for everyone!**