

Sexual Harassment

Definitions

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment occurs when unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature is made, either explicitly or implicitly, as a term or condition of an individual's educational status or employment or is used as a basis for education or employment decisions affecting an individual.

Sexual harassment also occurs when such advances, requests, or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's educational or work performance, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or work environment.

Sexual harassment includes any unwanted sexual attention. This definition includes, but is not limited to, sexually suggestive remarks, looks or gestures, sexual teasing or jokes, sexually demeaning comments, pressure for dates or sex, offering a passing grade for sexual favors, deliberate touching, cornering, pinching, or grabbing, attempts to kiss or fondle, and explicit or implied request for sex in exchange for grades, promotions, or salary increases.

Either men or women can be harassed by members of the same or opposite sex, although most harassment involves men harassing women.

Impact

What are the effects?

Sexual harassment can cause confusion, anxiety, self-doubt, guilt, humiliation, and physical stress. It can create a tense and unproductive working or learning environment and may result in failing an examination, dropping a class, changing a major, missing work, quitting a job, or being fired.

You may also be afraid that you will suffer retaliation if you complain, that people will think you "asked for it," that you are somehow responsible for the harasser's behavior, or that you may be imagining or misreading the person's intentions.

Remedies

What can you do?

If you feel you are being sexually harassed, tell the person to stop. Make clear to the offender that the behavior is unacceptable to you. Speak directly. Say something like, "I'd like to keep our relationship strictly professional." Talking to the harasser often stops the behavior, but you are not legally required to confront the individual in order to file a complaint. Take this step only if you feel comfortable doing so.

If you are unable to speak directly to the offender, or if the behavior doesn't stop ...

• Inform the Title 5/EEO/ADA Compliance Office and, if you are comfortable doing so, also inform the alleged offender's supervisor, department chair or dean.

• Keep a record of dates, times, places, witnesses, and nature of the harassment. Such information is critical if you decide to pursue informal charges or a formal complaint.

Sample Strategies

Seek the aid of a sexual harassment advisor.

Rosario goes to see her professor regularly about her assignments. Lately, he has begun to tell her about his divorce and suggests that she could help him through his difficult transition. Now Rosario is uncomfortable about seeking his help during office hours and is worried that her grade might suffer. She is nervous and depressed and is even thinking of dropping out of school. Rosario decides to talk to a sexual harassment advisor.

Talk with your department chair.

Kareem's counselor has just approved his program for the semester. As Kareem starts to leave the office, the counselor tells him that they should get to know each other better outside of school. The counselor then reaches out and gives Kareem a pat and a squeeze and says, "I'm going to help you find a good job." Kareem reports the behavior to the department chair.

Enlist the support of other students.

Mei-Li is in a class in which a student regularly makes demeaning and sexual comments about women. The instructor does nothing to stop these comments. Because of this, she wants to drop the class, but the drop date has passed. She talks to other students who are also angered and frustrated by the sexist comments, and they agree to go with Mei-Li to meet with the professor.

Contact the Dean of Students.

Linda is in a class where the instructor gives a written assignment on family values. She decides to write about her lesbian partner and their adopted daughter. The instructor says those are not acceptable family values and suggests that she find a "real man." Linda goes to the Dean of Students to complain.

Sexual Harassment can be

... as blatant as the offer of an "A" for sexual favors,

... as subtle as constant effort to change a professional relationship into a personal or social one,

... persistent and offensive sexual jokes and comments,

... unwanted physical contact such as touching, patting, or pinching,

Offensive & Illegal

Know Your Rights

The San Francisco Community College District policy prohibits all forms of sexual harassment, in accordance with the law. The policy applies to students, classified staff, faculty, and administrators, and third parties (such as vendors).

City College is committed to a sexual harassment free campus. The College provides ongoing training for teachers and staff to inform them of the law, CCSF policy, and methods for handling sexual harassment situations and complaints.

Advisors are available to assist students in identifying sexual harassment and taking action against it. Your privacy will be respected.

Telephone for help

For support and assistance, contact any of the City College of San Francisco Sexual Harassment Advisors (see insert), or contact one of the following at City College:

Associate Dean – Students Advocacy

Rights and Responsibilities

50 Phelan Avenue, Conlan Hall. Room 106

San Francisco, CA 94122

(415) 239-3762

If you wish to deal with an agency outside City College, you may also contact:

U.S. Department of Education

Office for Civil Rights

Region IX

50 Beale Street, Ste. 7200

San Francisco, CA 94105-1813

(415) 486-5555

Department of Fair Employment and Housing (state government)

455 Golden Gate Avenue, Suite 7600

San Francisco, CA 94102

(800) 884-1684

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (federal government)

San Francisco District Office

345 Spear Street, Suite 500

San Francisco, CA 94105

(415) 625-5600

8/'06