

What is Sexual Harassment?

Behavior that is:

Unwelcome



Sexual in
Nature

Respect others personal body space!



Crisis Connection

24-Hour Hotline
1.800.245.4580

www.crisisconnectioninc.org

What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual comments, gestures, jokes, looks, behavior, requests for sex, rumors, being touched in a sexual way, or being forced to do something sexual.

Sexual harassment is against the law at work and at school. In schools, it is illegal for a teacher or any school employee to sexually harass a student or another school employee and for a student to harass a teacher, a school employee or another student.

The most common kind of sexual harassment in schools is student to student harassment and it usually happened in public. Both male and female students report being victims of harassment.

What is meant by unwelcome?

Whether or not behavior is unwelcome depends upon how an individual person feels about the way the other person is behaving.

Two people may experience the same behavior differently. One may take it as a compliment or may not feel offended by it. The other may not want to be treated that way or may feel uncomfortable about it.

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If you do not want to harass another person, it helps to understand the difference between flirting and harassment:

**Flirting:** wanted, welcome, returned feels good, compliment, legal

**Harassment:** unwanted, unwelcome, unreturned, feels bad, put down, illegal

Even if you are embarrassed, uncomfortable or afraid, it is important that you speak up. The harassment only gets worse if it is ignored.

The students who are doing the harassing may think their behavior is O.K. if they are never told otherwise.

When you do speak up have a close friend, parent or other adult with you for emotional support.

### **How can someone know if their behavior is sexually harassing if they are not told their behavior is unwelcome?**

If the answer is "no" to two or more of the following questions, there is a good chance the behavior is unwelcome.

- Would I say or do the same to someone of the same sex?
- Would I say/do this if my parent, girlfriend, boyfriend or teacher were present?
- Would I want someone to say/do this to my sister, brother, parent or boy/girl friend?
- Do my words and actions show respect for the other person?

### **Two Types of Sexual Harassment**

#### **Quid Pro Quo**

"Quid pro" behavior involves express or implied demands for sexual favors in exchange for some benefit (a promotion, a raise, a good grade or recommendation) or to avoid some detriment (termination, demotion, a failing grade, denial of a fellowship) in the workplace or in the classroom. By definition, it can only be perpetrated by someone in a position of power over another. Because the organization, as the employer, has given supervisory power to the harasser, one instance of "quid pro quo harassment" is enough to result in liability. This is true even if the organization had no knowledge of the behavior.

Quid pro quo harassment may be as undisguised as a direct solicitation ("sleep with me or else..."). It may take the form of more oblique sexual propositions or dating invitations ("discuss your project over a glass of wine at my house,"). The law does not require a showing that the perpetrator actually made good on his or her demands or insinuations to impose liability.

## Hostile Environment

Sex harassment may also arise from unwanted conduct which is so severe or persistent that it creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or working environment. Conduct may be physical, verbal or nonverbal. For example, the following types of behavior may constitute harassment: touching; hugging; kissing; sexual remarks about a person's clothing, body or sexual relations; repeated requests for a date; conversations of a sexual nature or similar jokes and stories; the display of sexually explicit materials in the workplace; and the use of sexually explicit materials in the classroom which are without defensible educational purposes.

## What To Do If You Are Harassed

If you are being harassed, it is not your fault!

Sexual Harassment might make you feel scared or embarrassed. Don't ignore the problem. It may only get worse. It is your right to go to school in a safe and comfortable environment. However, you may need to take action to protect these rights. Before you decide what action you want to take, discuss the problem with your parents or another adult you trust.

If the harassment is not serious and involves another student, it often can be resolved by telling the harasser that his/her behavior bothers you and that you want him/her to stop. Sometimes a person feels safe confronting the person alone. If not, it may help to bring a friend or adult along. Ask an adult to inform the person for you

If you don't feel ready to tell someone, keep notes about the harassment: what happened, when, where, who else was there.

If the harassment is coming from a teacher or another adult, you should not confront that person alone. It is harder and scarier to make a complaint against a teacher. You might want to bring a parent or supportive adult.

## Sexual Harassment

If you have experienced:

- Unwanted sexual comments, looks, or gestures;
- Requests for sexual favors;
- Offensive or graphic pictures or jokes;
- Unwelcome advances or touches; or
- Intimidation or threats to job status or school grade,

you have been the victim of sexual harassment. Sexual Harassment is against the law in the State of Indiana.

Checklist:

| <b>Sexual Harassment</b> | <b>Flirting</b>  |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Feels bad                | Feels good       |
| One-sided                | Reciprocal       |
| Feels unattractive       | Feels attractive |
| Is degrading             | Is a compliment  |
| Feels powerless          | In control       |
| Power-based              | Equality         |
| Unwanted                 | Wanted           |
| Illegal                  | Legal            |
| Invading                 | Open             |
| Demearing                | Flattering       |
| Sad/angry                | Happy            |
| -self esteem             | +self esteem     |

Sexual Harassment can and does happen anywhere, at any time, and to anyone.

For education and more information, please visit: [www.crisisconnectioninc.org](http://www.crisisconnectioninc.org)

## How to Confront and Stop Sexual Harassment and Harassers

- Do the unexpected: Name the behavior. Whatever s/he's just done, say it and be specific of your displeasure, directly to the harasser.
- Hold the harasser accountable to his/her actions. Don't make excuses for him/her; don't pretend it didn't really happen. Take charge of the encounter and let people know what s/he did. Silence protects harassers, visibility undermines them.
- Make honest, direct statements. Speak the truth (no threats, no insults, no obscenities, no appeasing verbal fluff or padding). Be serious, straightforward and blunt with the harasser.
- Demand that the harassment stop immediately.
- Make it very clear that all people have the right to be free from sexual harassment. Your objecting to sexual harassment is a matter of your rights and principles.
- The harasser's behavior is his/her issue and responsibility. Say what you have to say, and repeat it very clearly if needed.
- Respond at the appropriate level. Use a combined verbal and physical response toward your harasser.
- Reinforce your statements with strong, self-respecting body language; eye contact, head up, shoulders back, a strong and serious stance. Don't smile. Any timid, submissive body language will undermine your message.
- Stick to YOUR agenda. Don't respond to the harasser's excuses or diversionary tactics. S/he is totally responsible for her/his own behavior, NOT you!

If you have questions or need an advocate to help you deal with sexual harassment, please contact Crisis Connection at 1-800-245-4580.

### Other Resources

- American Association of University Women (Hostile Hallways & Crossing the Line) [www.aauw.org](http://www.aauw.org)
- [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault [www.taasa.org](http://www.taasa.org)
- U.S. Department of Education "Sexual Harassment: It's Not Academic" [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/orc/docs/orcshpam.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/orc/docs/orcshpam.html)