

LOSS CONTROL

Information Bulletin

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT AT THE WORKPLACE

This safety bulletin should be presented to managers, supervisors and commissioners.

INTRODUCTION

Violence and harassment include behaviors such as:

- Physical assault or aggression,
- Unsolicited and unwelcome conduct, comment, gesture or contact which causes offense or humiliation, and
- Physical harm to any individual which creates fear or mistrust, or which compromises and devalues the individual.

Violence and harassment can come from anyone in the workplace and be directed at anyone. It can be subtle or overt. Abuse may be deliberate or unintended. The test is whether a reasonable person knows, or ought to know, that the behavior would be considered unwelcome or inappropriate by the recipient. It may be a single event or may involve a continuing series of incidents. It may involve the abuse of authority or position, or it may involve relations among co-workers and affiliated personnel. Abuse can victimize both men and women, and may be directed by or towards workers, clients and members of the public.

PERSONAL VERSUS SEXUAL HARASSMENT

“*Personal*” harassment, which differs from “sexual” harassment, includes the following:

1. verbal abuse or threats
2. unwelcome remarks, jokes or innuendoes or taunting about a person’s body, attire, age, marital status, ethnic or national origin, religion, etc.
3. displaying pornographic, racist or other offensive or derogatory pictures
4. practical jokes which cause awkwardness or embarrassment
5. unwelcome invitations or requests, whether indirect or explicit, or intimidation leering or other gestures
6. condescension or paternalism which undermines self-respect
7. unnecessary physical contact such as touching, patting or pinching, or punching
8. physical assaults.

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“Sexual” harassment, being discrimination on the grounds of gender, is a violation of the *Individual Rights Protection Act*. Unwanted sexual advances, unwanted requests for sexual favors, and other unwanted verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or a condition of an individual’s employment.
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual affects that individual’s employment.

Sexual harassment can include such things as pinching, patting, rubbing or leering, dirty jokes, pictures or pornographic materials, comments, suggestions, innuendoes, requests or demands of a sexual nature.

Workplace violence and harassment are recognized as a serious threat to companies and county entities. Many employers are recognizing the existence of workplace violence and harassment and developing solutions and strategies to address the problem. An increase in awareness is usually accompanied by a decrease in tolerance for incidents of abuse.

The county should have a written program addressing Violence in the Workplace and Harassment. Safety videos are available from our Loss Control Library that addresses these two topics. You can contact Jerry Gill at Meadowbrook Insurance at 334-954-7260 to check out these videos.

✓Important Phone Numbers

Meadowbrook Loss Control

(334)954-7260

800/536-7702 ext. 7260

Note

This document is not intended to be legal advice. It does not identify all the issues surrounding the particular topic. You are encouraged to review your policies and procedures with an expert or an attorney who is knowledgeable about the topic.

April 2012