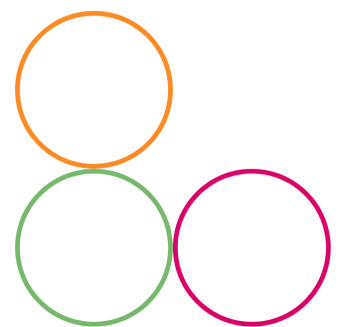# 5 Best Practices to Prevent Sexual Harassment at Your Workplace
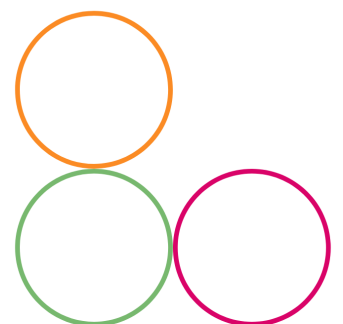
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Disclaimer

This e-book is not a comprehensive guide to maintaining a sexual harassment-free workplace; it provides five suggestions as best practices. The contents of this e-book should not be relied upon as professional advice. For professional advice related to preventing sexual harassment and maintaining safety in the workplace, connect with us at connect@munimconsulting.com.

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1. Conduct Effective Training

Effective sexual harassment training serves two purposes. First, effective training educates employees on what sexual harassment is. For instance, it gives employees the clarity to recognize the difference between consensual conversations, i.e., conversations that are welcome by both parties, and harassing conversations, i.e., conversations that are unwelcome by one party. Second, training empowers employees to speak up if/when sexual harassment occurs. Good training will teach employees how to recognize sexual harassment, how to report it, and who to report it to.

You might ask, what constitutes "effective" training? Effective training reflects at least three criteria. First, it's not a passive learning experience, i.e., it forces employees to engage critically with the training course so that they clearly grasp concepts related to sexual harassment. Second, it's recurring: it should not only be provided to employees when they first start their jobs, but on a recurring basis, e.g., yearly. Finally, it's relevant: it reflects current laws and best practices on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace.

2. Develop a Comprehensive Policy

A comprehensive anti-sexual harassment policy outlines clear procedures to report sexual harassment. Additionally, the person or team to whom sexual harassment is reported should be confidential and independent, i.e., removed from management and other employees.

Having a confidential, independent reporting process under the policy is _very_ important. Here's just one reason why: if a manager is sexually harassing a junior employee, that junior employee must be able to approach someone other than management about the manager's harassing conduct. In other words, power dynamics may be engaged when sexual harassment occurs. An independent reporting mechanism can ensure that employees who report sexual harassment are not retaliated against for reporting a more senior employee's harassing conduct.

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3. Shut Down any "Sex Talk"

Some workplaces (unfortunately) have a prevailing culture of sexual jokes and comments, i.e., "sex talk." This can include the tendency for employees to make jokes about other employees in sexual ways, or the tendency for employees to have sexually explicit conversations, even if they are just talking about their own experiences.

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"Sex talk" in the workplace should not be acceptable, generally, but it's especially unacceptable when there are employees who don't want to engage in any "sex talk" while at work (and rightly so). They are subject to unwanted, unwelcome sexual conversations—which can constitute sexual harassment and a toxic workplace environment. To avoid this, it's important for employers to: (1) shut down any kind of "sex-talk" and enforce a zero-tolerance policy towards it and (2) foster a safe, non-toxic workplace culture that ensures that no one has to tolerate sex-related jokes or comments while they are at work.

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4. Enforce Disciplinary and Safety Measures

If/when an incident of sexual harassment occurs in the workplace,* take steps to prevent it from happening again. First, enforce effective disciplinary measures against the harasser. Enforcing effective discipline serves as a deterrent —not just for the harasser but also for other employees—and ensures that employees are aware that sexual harassment is taken seriously at your workplace.

*Allegations of sexual harassment in the workplace should always be taken seriously and investigated (internally or externally). If you have questions about investigating allegations of sexual harassment, connect with us at connect@munimconsulting.com.

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Second, implement safety measures for the employee who was sexually harassed. Ensuring victims' safety sends a clear message that sexual harassment is taken seriously at your workplace, and that steps are taken to ensure a harassment-free, safe workplace for all your employees.
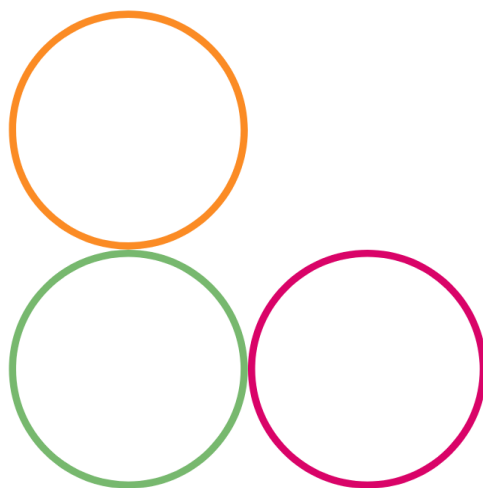
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5. Offer Support Resources

In addition to ongoing training, ensure that adequate mental health resources are available to employees, even before an incident of sexual harassment occurs. Offering support resources to employees sends the message that the employer "has their back" in the event that sexual harassment occurs, not only in terms of ensuring a harassment-free workplace for employees, but also in terms of helping employees with healing and trauma recovery. This is important because sometimes employees may choose not to report incidents of sexual harassment right away but may still want to avail themselves to supportive resources that can help them process difficult experiences and feelings.

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For comprehensive training on sexual harassment in the workplace, connect with us:

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