

A work health and safety (WHS) approach to preventing workplace sexual harassment

Let's debunk some myths

1. Sexual harassment at work is uncommon.

Workplace sexual harassment is very common and occurs in every industry, across all occupations and all levels. In the last five years, 1 in 3 people (33%) have been sexually harassed at work.

2. Sexual harassment is only repeated behaviour.

Not always, sexual harassment can be a single incident. It might include unwelcome physical contact, sexually suggestive comments or jokes or sexual assault.

3. Sexual harassment only involves physical contact.

Incorrect. Sexual harassment can include any form of unwelcome sexual conduct such as intrusive personal questions, repeated requests to go out on dates, repeated advances online.

4. I'm not responsible if there is an issue between my workers.

Not true. Under WHS laws you are required to protect your workers from risks to their health and safety. This includes taking steps to eliminate or minimise the risk of sexual harassment so far as reasonably practicable, regardless of whether there has been an incident between your workers.

Under work health and safety (WHS) laws, businesses are required to protect their workers from health and safety risks.

Sexual harassment is a workplace hazard - and it's preventable. Using a risk management approach, here are some steps you can take:



Leadership & Culture

- ✓ Lead by example and demonstrate respectful behaviours
- ✓ Ensure fair and transparent training, recruitment and promotion opportunities that value gender equality, diversity and respectful behaviours
- ✓ Take continuous action to learn about and meet your WHS obligations.



Education & Consultation

- ✓ Have open and regular engagement with workers on sexual harassment risks and expected workplace behaviours
- ✓ Provide regular information, training and support to workers on preventing and responding to sexual harassment
- ✓ Communicate your policies on preventing sexual harassment to all workers (including leaders and supervisors), and communicate them to workers, visitors and customers.



Workplace Design & Environment

- ✓ Regularly assess environmental risks e.g. remote, evening, isolated or client/home visit work, alcohol use
- ✓ Empower workers to refuse or cease services to customers who are disrespectful or unsafe
- ✓ Review your workplace layout and consider restricting public access to areas where staff work alone or at night.



Safe Systems & Reporting

- ✓ Provide clear and confidential (informal and formal) reporting options, address barriers to reporting and offer support anyone who makes a report
- ✓ Ensure timely responses to reports including addressing any inappropriate behaviours immediately
- ✓ Design systems to eliminate or minimise risks of sexual harassment, for example, introducing processes to block and manage online harassment, in consultation with workers.



SafeWork NSW provides free advice and support to help businesses, industry and workers meet their WHS duties.

Request an Advisory Visit (less than 50 staff) or Safety Workshop for business groups.

SafeWork NSW can also monitor compliance, inspect workplaces and prosecute breaches of WHS laws.



For more information visit nsw.gov.au/respect-at-work

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