

For Teaching and Support Staff

Dealing With Sexual Harassment

What is sexual harassment?

According to the U.S. Office of Civil Rights, there are two kinds of sexual harassment:

1) **quid pro quo harassment:** occurs when a student believes unwelcome sexual conduct is necessary in order to pass a course or participate in some school activity

2) **hostile environment harassment:** occurs when sexually harassing conduct affects a student's ability to benefit from an education program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment

When might sexual conduct create a sexually hostile environment?

When the victim has feelings of being confused, guilty, helpless, angry, frightened, hopeless, scared or alone. Other factors to consider are: the nature of the conduct, how long the conduct occurred, was the alleged harasser in a position of power over the student, how old is the harasser, how many harassers were there, how old is the victim, where the harassment occurred, other incidents involving the same or other students.

What are some examples of sexual conduct?

- Sexual advances
- Touching of a sexual nature
- Graffiti of a sexual nature
- Displaying or distributing sexually explicit drawings, pictures and written materials
- Sexual gestures
- Sexual or "dirty" jokes
- Pressure for sexual favors
- Touching oneself sexually or talking about one's sexual activity in front of others
- Spreading rumors about or rating other students as to sexual activity or performance

What does an anti-harassment policy look like?

It spells out (appropriate for age of students) what sexual harassment is.

It spells out what to do if students think they are being harassed.

- If it is safe for you to do so, tell the harasser that his or her behavior offends you and you want it stopped.
- Keep a record of what happened, where it happened and who witnessed it.
- Tell someone. Talk to an adult you trust: your parents, school staff member.
- Avoid being alone with the harasser.
- File a complaint with the school principal.

What will a principal do if a complaint is filed?

- Act immediately. Take every complaint seriously.
- Investigate and act on every complaint.
- Keep accurate records of the investigation.
- Ensure that there is no retaliation against the complainant.
- Follow a consistent policy of enforcing consequences (Some steps may be skipped depending on seriousness of misbehavior.)
 - 1) Verbal warning
 - 2) Written warning
 - 3) Loss of privileges, detention
 - 4) Suspension
 - 5) Expulsion
 - 6) Referral to law enforcement

Ed. Note: For more information, check <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCP/docs/ocershpam.html>.

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