

**PREVENTING HARASSMENT OF EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS
IN EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES**

**Guidelines for Schools
Area Education Agencies and Community Colleges**

**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUREAU OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND ACCREDITATION
1991**

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The Department provides civil rights technical assistance to public school districts, non-public schools, area education agencies, and community colleges to help them eliminate discrimination in their educational programs, activities, or employment. For assistance, contact the Bureau of School Administration and Accreditation, Iowa Department of Education.

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EMPLOYEE HARASSMENT IN THE WORK PLACE

1. What Is Harassment?

Harassment consists of unwelcomed actions or language of a sexual nature or with demeaning intent related to gender, race, national origin, disability, religion, or marital status made by one employee to another which is affecting work related decisions or creates a hostile working environment. Harassment is one form of illegal discrimination.

Key Issues

- A. Is it sexual in nature or with demeaning intent related to gender, race, national origin, disability, religion, marital status or age?
- B. Is it made from one employee to another?
- C. Is it unwanted?
- D. Is it affecting work related decisions or creating a hostile work environment?

2. Who is liable for harassment?

Schools and educational agencies are almost always liable for the acts of administrators. Schools and educational agencies are liable for acts of co-workers, if the administration knows about the activity, or should have known about the activity given reasonable administrative oversight.

3. What are the primary institutional steps that can be taken to prevent harassment in the work place?

- A. A clearly defined board policy which defines harassment, its illegality, its negative impact on productivity and the disciplinary steps that will be taken when harassment occurs.
- B. Periodic dissemination of the policy to all employees.
- C. Staff training on harassment related issues for supervisory and non supervisory staff.
- D. Sensitizing staff to the damaging effects of harassment on productivity in the work place, and work place morale
- E. Encouraging employees to notify administration when they feel they are the victims of harassment or when they are aware of the harassment of other employees. Notifying employees that it does not have to be tolerated.

- F. Role modeling of expectations by board members and administrators.
- G. Staff development on positive human communications in a diverse work place.

4. What should you do if you are a victim of harassment?

- A. Don't ignore it.
- B. Confront the harasser. Request that she/he stop.
- C. Document each incident. Who? When? Where? Witnesses?
- D. Discuss your experience with others. Find out if others have had similar experiences.
- E. Write letter to harasser describing specifics. Keep a copy.
- F. Report the incident to appropriate administrative personnel.

5. What should individual supervisors/managers do to prevent harassment?

- A. Be pro-active in speaking to issues of harassment before they occur.
- B. Periodically speak to staff about the board policy.
- C. Include policy in all employee handbooks.
- D. Provide training for the employees you supervise on the prevention of harassment.
- E. Insure employees that they will receive a fair investigation of complaints and that no retaliation will be taken against them because of a harassment complaint.
- F. Investigate complaints immediately taking the proper precaution to protect the privacy of the parties involved.
- G. Enforce institutional sanctions when acts of harassment are discovered.
- H. Walk your talk. Be the change you want to see happen. Be a positive role model.

STUDENT HARASSMENT IN SCHOOLS

1. What is harassment?

Harassment consists of unwelcomed actions or language of a sexual nature or with demeaning intent related to a student's gender, race, national origin, disability, religion, marital status, or age made by one student to another or from an employee to a student which is affecting academic related decisions or creating a hostile learning environment.

Key Issues

- A. Is it sexual in nature or with demeaning intent related to gender, race, national origin, a disability, religion, marital status or age?
- B. Is it made from one student to another or from an employee to a student?
- C. Is it unwanted?
- D. Is it affecting academic related decisions or creating a hostile learning environment?

2. Who is liable for student harassment?

Schools and educational agencies are almost always liable for acts of employees, if the administration knows about the activity or should have known about the activity given reasonable staff supervision. Schools may be liable for acts of students, if staff knows about the activity and the school has not taken steps to prevent it.

3. What are the primary institutional steps that can be taken to prevent harassment in the work place?

- A. A clearly defined board policy and discipline policy which defines harassment, its illegality, and its negative impact on student achievement and the disciplinary steps that will be taken when harassment occurs. The discipline policy should clearly speak to the use of racial, ethnic, sexual/sexist slurs or slurs related to a disability?
- B. Periodic dissemination of the policy to all employees, students and parents (staff and student handbooks)
- C. Staff training on harassment and its negative impact on student achievement and self concept as well as its negative impact on the learning environment.
- D. Specific curriculum content and activities related to stereotyping, bias, prejudice, discrimination and positive intergroup relations skills at the elementary, middle school and the high school levels.

- E. Encouraging students to notify administrators, teachers or their parents when they are the victims of harassment or degrading slurs. Notifying students that it doesn't have to be tolerated and that it will be punished.
 - F. Role modeling of expectations by administrators, teachers and other employees. Positive reinforcement for students who display sensitivity.
 - E. Develop and enforce employee and student sanctions for acts of harassment.
4. What should employees who are directly responsible or supervising students do to prevent harassment?
- A. Be proactive in speaking with students about issues of harassment. Include in rules (Eg., Classroom, school bus, lunch room, etc.)
 - B. Speak to staff, students and parents about the board policy.
 - C. Include the policy in student, staff and parent handbooks.
 - D. Insure students that complaints will be fairly investigated and retaliation taken against them because of a harassment complaint will not be tolerated.
 - E. Enforce the policies and institutional sanctions where acts of harassment occurs.
 - F. Encourage student human relation clubs and peer support groups for students who may be common targets of harassment.

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