



Do you have nude pictures in your workplace? Tell dirty jokes? Make suggestive remarks to other employees? If you answered yes to any of these questions you may be guilty of sexual harassment.

Since the development of guidelines by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 1980, sexual harassment is considered to be a form of sex discrimination - **a federal offense**. To discriminate against a person is to deny them rights, benefits, wages, or opportunities because that person belongs to a certain group.

**Sexual harassment is defined as:**

- Unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors, or any verbal or physical conduct of sexual nature when submission to such conduct is expressed or implied as a condition of employment.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct, used as a basis for employment decisions.
- When such conduct substantially interferes with a person's work performance
- The creation of an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

**Basically, sexual harassment is any inappropriate and unwelcome behavior** with a sexual overtone that causes a negative effect on a person's work environment. Examples of sexual harassment, if carried out in the workplace include:

- Displaying obscene or offensive pictures or reading materials
- Making suggestive gestures or sounds
- Whistling or leering
- Exerting unwanted pressure for dates
- Sending letters or making telephone calls unwanted by the receiver
- Inappropriate touching, patting, etc.
- Telling dirty jokes
- Extorting sexual favors from a subordinate

We usually think of an injury as a traumatic event resulting in broken bones, or blood gushing from open wounds. People also suffer injuries that have no outwardly observable signs. These are psychological injuries which can be just as devastating, disabling, and scarring as any visible injury. Victims of sexual harassment often suffer from embarrassment, loss of reputation, fear of retaliation, criticism, blame, loss of their jobs, stress, low productivity, absenteeism, and low morale.

Everyone - the harasser, the victim, and the employer suffer when sexual harassment exists in the workplace. Think about your behavior around other employees for a moment. Are you guilty of sexual harassment?

\*Some behaviors may not seem offensive in your view, but they may be offensive to others.