

RONALD V. MCGUCKIN AND ASSOCIATES

Post Office Box 2126

Bristol, Pennsylvania 19007

215-785-3400 215-785-3401 (FAX)

Childproviderlaw.com (website)

WHAT DOES SEXUAL HARASSMENT INVOLVE?

Employees are learning to identify and recognize sexually harassing behaviors in the workplace. Look at the list below. Place a check mark next to the acts that you know to be, or you think could be, unwelcome or offensive behavior of a sexual nature in the work environment.

- Repeated questions regarding your personal life
- Sly innuendoes of a sexual nature
- Persistent unnecessary questions about your "interests"
- Consistent compliments on your figure
- Unnecessary personal contact
- Frequent use of endearments - "honey", "sweetie"
- Sexual propositions
- Showing dirty cartoons and Telling dirty "jokes"
- Excessive swearing
- A pass from someone you do not want to date
- Sex-oriented verbal "kidding" or abuse
- Suggestive body movements
- Flirtatious winking
- Wolf whistles
- Lingering glances
- Patting, Neck rubs and Back rubs
- Blatant sexual discussions that refer to co-workers or other individuals
- Notes from co-workers with a personal or sexual message
- Unwanted requests for dates
- Unwanted telephone calls of a personal nature
- Unwanted flirtatious behavior
- Blocking or cornering movements
- Any kind of unwanted touch or physical contact
- Any kind of behavior of a sexual nature that is unwelcome

If you checked every act, you are not being hypersensitive. Most people would find nearly all these behaviors unwelcome in the workplace, and many of them are illegal sexual harassment under today's laws. Each one of these behaviors would be considered sexual harassment in certain instances - even the subtle behaviors, if they are unwelcome and pervasive or repeated.

What makes some of the subtle forms of sexual harassment difficult to deal with is that they are perceived differently by different people. Subtle behavior that is offensive to one person may not be to another. For example, some people enjoy flirting and calling each other "dearie" and "honey," while others are offended and insulted.

The relationship between the individual's, influences how a compliment is received. Also, cultural attitudes and background experiences contribute to the perception of another's behavior. There is a diversity of cultural and religious beliefs, stereotypes, background and childhood experiences in any workplace setting. The prevalence of physical and sexual abuse in our society has also impacted the perception of sexual harassment in the workplace.

It is important for the individual receiving the sexual attention to identify if the behavior is welcome or unwelcome. How the behavior is perceived by the person receiving it is an important factor in determining sexual harassment. If the attention is unwelcome and of a sexual nature, the offender needs to be told.

The intention of the offender can make a key difference in how compliments of a subtle sexual nature are received. Tonality, facial expression, body language, gestures, and the timing of the behavior all play into perception. Everyone can look to his or her own behavior first. Ask yourself, are my intentions clear? Is my behavior offensive in any way? Am I communicating with respect? If the intentions are clear, and the communication is perceived as sexually offensive, apologize promptly, find out how the person offended wants to be treated, and move on.

or possible termination against the offending party.