



How to Deal with Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

If you feel that you are a victim of sexual harassment, the following are steps that may be helpful.

- 1) **Know your employer's sexual harassment policy.** In some cases, you must utilize the employer's policy/procedure before you can file a charge with the Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (Commission).
- 2) **Ask the harasser to stop.** Warn them that if their behavior continues, they will be reported to the employer and to the Commission. With some people, this may be all that is needed to stop the harassment.
- 3) **Write a note to your harasser if they don't stop.** Clearly state that their behavior is not wanted and must stop immediately. This note should be dated and signed and should have the harasser's first and last name in the greeting. You may choose to send this letter by certified mail-return receipt requested. Keep an exact copy for your records.
- 4) **Keep records** of each harassment incident including the date, time, place, details and witnesses.
- 5) **Identify other victims and supporters/witnesses.** Ask them to write down what they have experienced or observed and ask them to sign and date their statement.
- 6) If the harassment continues, **write a letter to your supervisor** describing the incidents and saying that the law requires employers to maintain a working environment free of sexual harassment. **Set up a meeting** to explain the situation and **ask them to take steps to stop the harassment.**
- 7) If the supervisor does not show interest in correcting the situation, **inform the supervisor that it will be taken to other offices within the company, and to the Commission and the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).**
- 8) **Get copies of any written materials** available from your employer which show a good work record. This will be very helpful if there is an investigation or if you go to court.

FORMAL OPTIONS

- **Seek advice and conciliation through your employer's Equal Employment Opportunity or Affirmative Action Office.** (Taking this step does not mean that you have given up your right to make formal complaints to state or federal enforcement agencies.)
- **File an internal complaint** through the company's personnel office. After a reasonable amount of time, submit a request to the employer, in writing, asking how your complaint was handled. NOTE: In 2003, the Rhode Island Fair Employment Practices Act was amended to require that **employers who receive complaints of workplace harassment from employees must, upon request, provide the employees with a written statement on the disposition of the complaint.**
- **File a charge with the Commission.** If the charge comes within EEOC's jurisdiction, it will be co-filed with the EEOC. (Generally, a charge must be filed within one (1) year of the most recent act of harassment.)