

# Facts About Harassment In The Workplace:

Dental Hygiene Program

## What You Need To Know

### What is harassment in the workplace?

The definition of harassment according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is: “behavior which has the effect of humiliating, intimidating, or coercing someone through personal attack.” It is behavior that will make someone uncomfortable or embarrassed and cause emotional distress.

### Do laws prohibit harassment?

Harassment is illegal according to Title VII of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination in the workplace because of race, color, sex, religion, and national origin. Harassment is a form of discrimination covered under these laws. Also, in 1980, the EEOC issued regulations defining sexual harassment and stating it was a form of sex discrimination. It is also prohibited by the Iowa Civil Rights Act of 1965, **AND** harassment at MHP is prohibited as stated by policy.

**Harassment may be intentional or unintentional. Men or women may be the cause or target of harassment. It is the behavior that is important, not the gender of the participants, and it is always disrespectful and inappropriate workplace behavior.**

### What is sexual harassment in the workplace?

Sexual harassment in the workplace is any **unwelcome** sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct that enters into workplace decisions and/or conduct that unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. It is a form of sex discrimination according to the EEOC, which is in direct violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The EEOC guidelines define two types of harassment: “quid pro quo” and “hostile work environment”.

**Quid Pro Quo Harassment:** This type of harassment occurs when an employee is required to choose between submitting to sexual advances or losing a tangible job benefit; the harasser has power to control aspects of the victim’s employment. Again the advances are sexual in nature (whether implied or explicit), unwelcome by the victim and a tangible economic benefit of the job is at stake.

**Hostile Work Environment:** Hostile work environment harassment is unwelcome conduct that is so severe or pervasive as to change the conditions of the victim’s employment and create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Briefly: it does not require an impact on an economic benefit; it can involve coworkers or third parties, not just supervisors ; it is not limited to sexual advances; it can occur even when the conduct is not directed at a specific person but still impacts his or her ability to perform the job; it usually involves a series of incidents that than one incident; **AND** the conduct is such that a reasonable person would find it hostile or offensive.

**Can you give me an example of harassing conduct?**

Inappropriate actions break down into four types of behavior according to the EEOC:

1. **Physical:** touching in a sexual manner, pinching, patting, rubbing up against, gestures, and assault.
2. **Verbal:** jokes of racial, ethnic, or sexual nature; comments or questions about a person's body, dress or personal life, using demeaning or inappropriate terms; using crude and offensive language of a sexual nature; name-calling or racial or ethnic slurs; demeaning comments about age, disability or sexual orientation.
3. **Visual:** cartoons, drawings, or caricatures of a racial, ethnic, or sexual nature; pin-up pictures or calendars; displaying sexual objects in the workplace; e-mail used for inappropriate personal messages or to distribute jokes and cartoons that are offensive.
4. **Hazing:** teasing, practical jokes of a sexual, racial, or ethnic nature, ostracizing, starting or spreading rumors about a person's personal life or sexual activities.

**How do you know if your own conduct might be unwelcome to others?**

Ask yourself these questions- "Would my behavior change if someone from my family was present?"  
"Would I want my spouse or child to be treated this way or subjected to this behavior?"

**What do I do if I feel I am a victim of workplace harassment?**

Every worker has the right to work in a harassment-free environment and sexual harassment should never be taken lightly. If you feel you are the victim of sexual harassment:

1. Be proactive. Inform the harasser in a clear and direct manner that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop.
2. If the behavior continues, notify your instructor and director of the area in which the student is in.
3. Keep a written record of all incidents of harassment.

I have received and read the Harassment handout for students while present at Indian Hills Community College and the affiliated dental clinic sites. I understand that I have a harassment complaint or issue; I will notify my instructor and director of the Dental Hygiene Program.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_