

Ombuds Office



SEXUAL HARASSMENT

A guide prepared by the HMS/HSDM/HSPH Ombuds Office

What is sexual harassment?

SEXUAL HARASSMENT is a form of sex discrimination illegal under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The American Medical Association has adapted guidelines, originally set by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, that define and describe sexual harassment. The AMA definition states that “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made, explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of employment or academic success
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or academic decisions affecting such individual
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.”*



OMBUDS OFFICE

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 Harvard School of Dental Medicine
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The Ombudsperson, who is available to all HMS/HSDM/HSPH staff, students, trainees and affiliated faculty, provides a confidential, independent and informal forum in which the Ombudsperson can help people clarify their concerns, identify their goals and consider all their options in managing or resolving any concern affecting work or studies. The Ombudsperson can also provide information about formal complaint processes.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY POLICY

It is the goal of Harvard University to promote a workplace that is free of sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment in the workplace is discriminatory, unlawful, denies respect for the rights and dignity of others and is clearly inconsistent with the nature of an academic community. The University regards such behavior as a violation of the standards of conduct required of all persons associated with the Harvard community, and such behavior is strictly prohibited.

It is the intention of the University to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior that violates this policy.

What does it look like?

EXAMPLES of such harassment include unwelcome sexual advances that are physical, such as unnecessary touching of someone’s body, or verbal, such as repeated sexist jokes or slurs, as well as suggestions or requests for sexual favors in exchange for rewards related to school or work.

RETALIATION against someone who, in good faith, reports alleged harassment or participates in an investigation is also a violation of Harvard’s policy and is subject to appropriate discipline.

Men and women can be sexual harassers.

*The full text of “Harvard Medical School and Harvard School of Dental Medicine Procedures for Resolving Complaints of Discrimination, Harassment, or Unprofessional Relationships and Abuse of Authority” is at <http://www.hms.harvard.edu/ombuds/>. Harvard School of Public Health policies can be found at <http://www.harvard.edu/search:“HSPH non-discrimination.”>

SEXUAL HARASSMENT: What should you do?

If you believe YOU ARE BEING sexually harassed

- **Say no.** Tell the person his or her behavior toward you is making you uncomfortable.
- **Tell someone:** a friend, a colleague, or a supervisor.
- **Request an intervention** from a third party, perhaps a friend or colleague.
- **Speak to the Ombudsperson** to explore your options or find help from another resource listed below.
- **Consult the Human Resources Office** at your school, hospital or affiliate.
- **Write a letter to the person you believe is harassing you.** Forms are available in the Ombuds Office or Human Resources at your location.
- **Keep a record** of events, including details such as dates and witnesses.
- **Document your work** and evaluations, in case your abilities are questioned sometime in the future.
- **File a grievance.** People in the offices below, including the Ombuds, can help.

If you HAVE AUTHORITY over others

- **You can be held legally responsible** for sexual harassment involving those who report to you if you knew or should have known about the conduct.
- **The law requires you to take immediate and appropriate corrective action**, so if someone comes to you with a complaint about another person, seek help by promptly calling your Office of Human Resources for advice and instructions.
- **Behave responsibly:** Employers are legally held responsible for incidents involving supervisors regardless of whether the employer knew or should have known of their occurrence.
- **“No” means no.** Do not repeat behavior you have been told is not welcome. Do not interpret silence as consent.
- **Retaliating** when someone complains of harassment is unlawful.
- **If you treat every person with respect and dignity**, your words and actions will be much less likely to be misunderstood.

If you are a PEER or a COLLEAGUE

- **People with authority are not the only harassers.** When some verbal or physical actions between peers are not welcome or are not returned, those actions may be seen as sexual harassment.
- **If you think something you do or say is being perceived as unwelcome, ask.** If the answer is yes, stop the behavior. If you are in doubt about what to do, stop.
- **Sexual remarks can make some people uncomfortable.** Recognize and respect such differences.
- **If you observe what you believe is unwanted and inappropriate behavior** such as propositioning or questioning about someone's private life, you can:
- **Ask the person you think is being harassed** how you might be helpful.
- **Consult one of the resources listed below** for help and advice.
- **Tell the person you believe is being offensive** about your own uneasiness.



OMBUDS OFFICE
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Harvard School of Dental Medicine
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ombuds (617) 432-4040
office (617) 432-4041
Offices of Human Resources
HMS (617) 432-2035
HSDM (617) 432-5913
HSPH (617) 432-0979
Human Resources Offices at the affiliates

Where to get help

HMS Office for Diversity, Inclusion
and Community Partnership (617) 432-2413
Harvard University Police Department
Medical campus (617) 432-1212
Main campus (617) 495-1212
University Health Service (617) 432-1370
Chaplain (617) 495-5529

The Officers of
Harvard Medical School
Harvard School of Dental Medicine
Harvard School of Public Health
Harvard Union of Clerical
and Technical Workers (617) 661-8289
Massachusetts Commission
Against Discrimination (617) 727-3990
Equal Employment
Opportunity Commission (617) 565-3200