

Taking action if you see or hear about sexual harassment

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Pay attention

If you see a behavior or hear a comment that doesn't seem right to you, trust your own reaction and notice the reactions of others. Does the behavior or comment seem welcome by the recipient? Is it in line with the values and expectations of your workplace? Does it promote safety, equality, and respect?

Choose to act

It is important to say or do something when you witness unwelcome or inappropriate behavior at work. When disrespectful comments, jokes, and actions go unchecked by the people who hear or see them, it sends the message that this behavior is acceptable and encourages harassers to continue or even escalate.

Whether you choose to intervene directly or indirectly, with the person harassing or being harassed, by yourself or with others, you have an important role to play in stopping harassing comments and behaviors before they get worse.

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Interrupt the situation

Drop a stack of papers, strike up an unrelated conversation, make up a reason that the person being harassed is needed elsewhere, or come up with your own creative way to cause a distraction. This can stop the harassment in its tracks and give the harassed person an opportunity to get out of the situation.

Talk with the harasser

If you feel safe doing so either in the moment or later on, letting the harasser know that their behavior was not okay with you sends the message that other people are paying attention and are willing to speak up about harassment in your workplace. This can range from a simple "That wasn't funny" to a more involved "Are you aware of how you came across in that situation?"

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Check in with the harassed person

After the harassed person has gotten safely out of the situation, follow up to see how they're feeling about what happened and offer your support. Share information about their rights and resources that are available, like the local rape crisis center hotline or your workplace's Employee Assistance Program. Respect their decisions about what steps - if any - they want to take next.

Consider reporting

Even if the harassing behavior was not directed at you, you have the option to report it to management. Check your employee handbook or personnel policies for details on filing a complaint. If you are a supervisor, once you become aware of possible harassment, you and your workplace are legally responsible for documenting, investigating, and addressing it.

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