What is Sexual Harassment?

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment can be: Direct sexual advances or propositions; Public humiliation; Insisting that workers wear revealing clothes; Sexually explicit gestures; Lewd & threatening letters, emails or phone calls; Sexist and insulting put-downs, jokes, cartoons and graffiti; Graphic descriptions or displaying of pornography; Inappropriate gifts; Pressure for dates; Leering, hooting, whistling, sucking, lip-smacking, & animal noises; Leaning over, invading a person's space; Unwelcome grabbing, touching, rubbing or hugging; Indecent exposure.

Facts about Sexual Harassment:

- Sexual harassment affects people of all races, all ages, all occupations, all classes and between people of the same or different gender.
- The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, an agent of the employer, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or a non-employee.
- The victim does not have to be the person harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.
- Offensive and demeaning behavior does not have to be tangibly detrimental (ex. wage loss, passed promotion) to the job to be considered sexual harassment.
- The harasser's conduct must be unwelcome.
- Women in traditionally male-dominated occupations such as construction, policing, and the military or in female-dominated workplaces where majority of women earn low wages and the management is predominantly male are more likely to be harassed. (Frank E. Saal, "Men's Perceptions of Women's Interpersonal Behaviors and Sexual Harassment" in Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: Perspectives, Frontiers and Response Strategies Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA, 1996)
- Serious harassment can lead to severe psychological, physical and emotional damage to the individuals affected, as well as to expensive administration and legal problems for the institution.
- Within an environment where one person has power over another (such as a supervisor, professor, coach, etc.) it is the responsibility of that person to maintain relationships that are free of harassment or intimidation.

Statistics:

- Between 40-70% of women and 10-20% of men have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. (Title VII Liability of Employers for Sexual Harassment Committed by their Supervisors, 1995)
- A survey conducted by the American Psychological Association on female graduate students revealed: 12.7% have been sexually harassed; 21% have avoided classes for fear of being sexually harassed; 11% have tried to report an incident of sexual harassment; 3% have dropped a course because of sexual harassment.
- 4 out of 5 students (81%) have experienced some form of sexual harassment during their school lives (Hostile Hallways, American Association of University Women 1993)
- Women are 9 times more likely than men to quit their jobs, 5 times more likely to transfer, and 3 times more likely to lose jobs because of harassment ("The Webb Report," National Council for Research on Women, June 1994)
- Only 6% of those experiencing sexual harassment took formal action. The most common reason given by those who did not take formal action was they did not think the situation was serious enough to warrant it. (Sexual Harassment in the Federal Workplace, 1995)