



Safer Spaces

CREATING SEXUAL HARASSMENT FREE WORKPLACES
IN BC'S TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Sexual Harassment is "conduct of a sexual or gender-based nature, that is unwelcome and unacceptable, and detrimentally affects the work environment or leads to negative job-related consequences. It can occur in or away from the workplace (i.e. work events, staff housing), either during or outside of working hours. In either case, the repercussions can be severe. Improper behaviour such as objectionable acts, comments or displays that demean, belittle, or humiliate, as well as any act of intimidation or threat can be considered sexual harassment. This applies to face-to-face interactions as well as via electronic communication like email and social media."

While sexual harassment is most commonly perpetrated against women, it also happens to men and transgender individuals.

Overview on what is and what is not Sexual Harassment

What is Sexual Harassment	What is not Sexual Harassment
A person in authority asking an employee for sexual favours in return for being hired, promoted or other employment benefits	Not all invitations are sexual harassment. An invitation can be an innocent, one-time request that you can accept or reject without any trouble
Sexual advances with actual or implied work-related consequences	Behaviours that arise from a relationship of mutual consent
Microaggressions such as unwelcome remarks, questions, jokes or innuendo of a sexual nature including sexist comments or sexual invitations. Microaggressions can show as well as subtle and non-verbal behaviour.	A hug between friends, mutual flirtation, or a compliment on appearance between colleagues
Verbal abuse, intimidation or threats of a sexual nature	Reasonable management action such as decisions relating to the following <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Job duties, or work to be performed○ Workloads and deadlines○ Work evaluation or performance management○ Asserting dress code or uniform that is not sexualized or gender specific○ Disciplines, suspensions, or terminations



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Leering, staring or making sexual gestures	Consensual behaviour between two co-workers who are dating
Display of pornographic or other sexual materials, offensive pictures, graffiti, cartoons or sayings	An argument in the workplace between co-workers who are dating
Unwanted physical contact such as touching, patting, pinching or hugging; and	Being left out of team catch ups, lunches etc.
Humiliating initiation practices or hazing, spreading malicious rumors, calling someone derogatory names of a sexual nature	

Signs of Harassment

Many times, sexual harassment doesn't take place out in the open at work. There aren't always witnesses. A benefit of having a positive relationship with your employees is that you will have a better chance of recognizing changes in their behaviour that may be attributed to sexual harassment. A person experiencing sexual harassment may show the following signs:

Sudden and/or frequent absences and tardiness

A worker who is normally dependable might suddenly be late for work, call in sick, frequently leave early or miss important meetings. A worker might also put in for a sudden transfer or change their schedule.

Reduced productivity

A worker might begin to struggle to meet deadlines or there might be a decrease in the quality or quantity of their work produced.

Avoidance and anxiety

You might notice that a worker who was once extroverted now passes on opportunities to socialize or becomes visibly uncomfortable or silent when a certain person enters the room or a conversation. They may avoid specific situations or places that they didn't in the past.

Declines professional development opportunities

A worker may pass up a promotion or other professional development opportunities for no apparent reason.

Increased alcohol or drug use

This sign might not be noticeable if you don't socialize with your workers. However, you may notice that a worker has started to keep a bottle of alcohol in their locker at work or you notice the smell of alcohol on them often, or repeatedly has a few drinks at lunch.



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Signs of Mental Health Challenges

such as depression, persistent sadness

- lack of energy
- Low self-esteem
- Cognitive challenges
- Physical symptoms such as headaches and back pain
- Anxiety or worry about situations that did not seem to cause anxiety in the past

Where does Sexual Harassment Happen?

In our industry, we need to be mindful of the fact that our workplaces are unique and lines between work and our social life can be blurred. Sexual harassment can happen:

- At the workplace
- In staff accommodation
- Social work events, i.e. Holiday Party
- Social get together after work
- Car pooling
- Travelling for company events, conferences
- Online, social media