

# Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

## 10 Common Myths Debunked

Sexual harassment is a very serious and important issue, but unfortunately, there are many myths and misconceptions about what does and does not constitute harassment. We need to dispel these myths and misconceptions in order to create a safe and supportive environment for everyone.



### MYTH VS. FACT

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| <p><b>1 MYTH</b><br/>Sexual harassment only includes physical acts, not speech.</p>  | <p><b>FACT</b><br/>Sexual harassment can include discussing sex or <b>making sexual comments, jokes, or inappropriate remarks</b> about someone's appearance.</p>   |
| <p><b>2 MYTH</b><br/>Only women are sexually harassed.</p>   | <p><b>FACT</b><br/><b>Both men and women</b> may be targets or perpetrators of sexual harassment.</p>   |
| <p><b>3 MYTH</b><br/>Sexual harassment must be motivated by sexual desire in order to violate the Fair Housing Act.</p>  | <p><b>FACT</b><br/>Sexual harassment <b>does not have to be motivated by sexual desire in order to violate the Fair Housing Act.</b> For example, sexual harassment could be motivated by hostility toward a particular sex, even if the harasser is the same sex.</p>  |
| <p><b>4 MYTH</b><br/>Sexual harassment must include adverse action or the threat of adverse action, such as threatening to fire or evict someone who does not perform or submit to a sexual act.</p> | <p><b>FACT</b><br/>Sexual harassment involves <b>any unwanted sexual behavior, acts, or speech.</b> Examples include entering a unit without permission and making unwanted sexual advances, comments, or physical contact.</p>   |
| <p><b>5 MYTH</b><br/>There must be evidence of intent to harass for someone to be charged with sexual harassment.</p>  | <p><b>FACT</b><br/>Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination, and <b>discrimination is determined by the effect an action has, not by the intent of the action.</b></p>   |
| <p><b>6 MYTH</b><br/>Adverse action against someone who reported sexual harassment is not a problem if the adverse action was taken for another reason.</p>  | <p><b>FACT</b><br/><b>Adverse action</b>, such as eviction, rent increases, or firing, against someone who reported any kind of discrimination, including sexual harassment, <b>could be seen as retaliation, even if the adverse action was for another reason. Thus, careful consideration must be given prior to taking adverse action after a report of discrimination is made.</b></p> |
| <p><b>7 MYTH</b><br/>When it comes to sexual harassment, only the person committing the harassment can be found liable.</p>  | <p><b>FACT</b><br/><b>The company employing a person guilty of harassment could be found liable</b> for failure to adequately address the allegations of harassment, failing to supervise the alleged harasser, and insufficient background checks at the start of employment.</p>  |
| <p><b>8 MYTH</b><br/>Companies cannot be held responsible for sexual harassment they did not know was occurring.</p>   | <p><b>FACT</b><br/><b>A company could be liable if a court finds they should have known about the harassment.</b></p>   |
| <p><b>9 MYTH</b><br/>Property management companies cannot be held responsible for sexual harassment committed by a resident.</p>   | <p><b>FACT</b><br/>Property managers could be <b>liable if a resident complains of being harassed</b> by another resident <b>and the management company takes inadequate action to stop the harassment.</b></p>   |
| <p><b>10 MYTH</b><br/>Only supervisors and employees who have direct interaction with the public need sexual harassment training.</p>  | <p><b>FACT</b><br/><b>Sexual harassment is equally dangerous whether it happens with members of the public (residents) or internally among employees.</b> Sexual harassment training should be required for every member of your company.</p>   |

Want to mitigate risk in your organization?

Talk to us about our trusted sexual harassment policy and training programs.

