

Developing and implementing effective harassment and sexual harassment policies

INFORMATION SHEET

ADR2013

Developing and implementing an effective workplace policy is key in preventing harassment. Education is also important. People have to **know** there is a policy and what it says. The employer's position on harassment should be contained in a clear policy statement, distributed to all employees, posted on bulletin boards and provided to all managers, supervisors and new employees.

Leadership is critical to any effective harassment policy. With a well developed policy, senior management has a chance to demonstrate a proud corporate commitment to fair and equal treatment of all employees.

Managers must take a lead role in reminding staff (in newsletters, annual reports, at meetings, etc.) that harassment is against company policy and the law.

Policies that work do these things:

- **Encourage employees** to come forward with complaints. How a policy sounds and is structured is important. Management has to demonstrate its commitment to eliminating all forms of harassment.
- **Ensure acceptance** by all staff, unions and employee associations. This can only be developed through consultation, input and feedback. Time taken here will be more than repaid down the road.
- **Provide a clear definition of harassment**, as it relates to the protected areas and grounds in the *Alberta Human Rights Act*.

- **Include guidelines** for individuals seeking advice about making a sexual or other type of harassment complaint.
- **Maintain confidentiality** of complaints and protect employees from retaliation.
- **Designate a person or persons** to hear complaints. These individuals should be viewed by other employees as neutral but as having the authority to act. If possible, have more than one person assigned to this important, sometimes emotionally taxing, job.
- **Lay out the steps:** Effective harassment policies provide a step-by-step description of what happens in the company when a complaint of harassment is made. To encourage prevention, also spell out the disciplinary consequences for harassing any employee.
- **Guarantee a fair and prompt reaction** to anyone with a complaint of harassment.


Education and prevention

Education is important in preventing sexual and other types of harassment. Everyone must know about the policy, and management must ensure staff at all levels are aware of the ongoing commitment to that policy.

A sensitive policy also can serve to foster an understanding of the true nature of harassment and its destructive consequences. **Remember: prevention is better than cure**, and a policy prohibiting harassment can provide the basis for prevention.

For more information

For more information about preventing and dealing with harassment in the workplace, see these Commission information sheets:

- *Sample harassment policy*
- *Harassment as a form of discrimination*
- *Sexual harassment* 

Contact us

The Alberta Human Rights Commission is an independent commission of the Government of Alberta. Our mandate is to foster equality and reduce discrimination. We provide public information and education programs, and help Albertans resolve human rights complaints.

For our **business office and mailing addresses**, please see the **Contact Us** page of our website (www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca), or phone or email us.

Hours of operation are 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Northern Regional Office (Edmonton)
780-427-7661 Confidential Inquiry Line
780-427-6013 Fax

Southern Regional Office (Calgary)
403-297-6571 Confidential Inquiry Line
403-297-6567 Fax

To call toll-free within Alberta, dial 310-0000 and then enter the area code and phone number.

For province-wide free access from a cellular phone, enter *310 (for Rogers Wireless) or #310 (for Telus and Bell), followed by the area code and phone number. Public and government callers can phone without paying long distance or airtime charges.

TTY service for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing

780-427-1597 Edmonton
403-297-5639 Calgary
1-800-232-7215 Toll-free within Alberta

Email humanrights@gov.ab.ca

Website www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca

Please note: A complaint must be made to the Alberta Human Rights Commission within one year after the alleged incident of discrimination. The one-year period starts the day after the date on which the incident occurred. For help calculating the one-year period, contact the Commission.

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