

Eliminating Workplace Sexual Harassment May Begin With Revamped Reporting Policies

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Sexual harassment in the workplace presents not only a moral problem for employers, but also a growing legal problem. Employers, therefore, should redouble their efforts to eliminate this misconduct.

One of the greatest challenges in this respect is the underreporting of inappropriate workplace behavior. According to the most recent report of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) Select Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace, "roughly three out of four individuals who experienced harassment never even talked to a supervisor, manager, or union representative about the harassing conduct." Thus, in order for employers to create a culture free of sexual harassment and prevent legal claims, they must not only provide effective internal training of all staff and publish and enforce effective harassment policies, but also take steps to encourage early detection.

This can be accomplished by providing non-mutually exclusive diagnostic and reporting options such as: conducting an independent review of the current workplace; engaging neutral outside parties to field and/or investigate employee complaints of harassment; or provide multiple points-of-contact, and geographic and organizational diversity where possible, for an employee to report harassment.

By taking such steps, employers will be part of the answer to this significant problem.

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