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## **A Guide for Students on Sexual Harassment**

### **What is sexual harassment?**

Sexual harassment can take many different forms, but it typically occurs when a person in a position of authority subjects someone with less power to unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature. Unlike voluntary sexual relationships, sexual harassment involves coercive behavior and is not a matter of mutual choice. Sexual harassment is illegal. A general definition identifies sexual harassment as gender-related, verbal or physical conduct, which takes place under any of the following circumstances:

- There is a threat that submission to or rejection of the conduct will affect a person's grade or other type of evaluation or recommendation.
- The behavior interferes with the victim's academic or work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, offensive, or otherwise adverse learning or work environment.
- The behavior interferes with the victim's social relationships, or creates an intimidating, hostile, offensive or otherwise adverse social environment.

If it meets one of these three conditions, behavior such as the following is considered sexual harassment:

- subtle or blatant pressure for sexual activity
- persistent sexually explicit or sexist statements or stories
- frequent jokes of a sexual nature
- repeated leering or staring at a person's body
- unwanted hugging, patting, kissing, brushing up against someone's body, or other inappropriate sexual touching
- suggestive or obscene notes or phone calls
- the display of sexually explicit pictures or cartoons

There are other situations and actions that constitute sexual harassment. If you are not sure whether something that has happened to you is defined as sexual harassment, contact any of the following sources: Dean of Student Affairs, Associate Dean of Student Affairs, or staff member of the Division of Student Affairs.

### **Who can be sexually harassed?**

Although both men and women can be sexually harassed, studies indicate that more than 95 percent of the victims on college campuses are female. And according to national surveys, at least 20 percent of female college students have been subjected to some form of sexual harassment; this translates to about one and a quarter million victims among today's students. There is no one "type" of student who is most frequently the victim of sexual harassment. Older students are as

likely to be victims as younger ones; graduate students are as vulnerable as undergraduates are; international students and students from diverse backgrounds can be victimized as easily as any other students can. Nor is a student's degree of attractiveness or mode of dress an important factor in whether they will be sexually harassed. It can happen to anyone.

Virtually anyone on campus—students, faculty or staff—can be a victim of sexual harassment. Students are especially vulnerable because they hold less power than many of the individuals with whom they interact, and they are evaluated by large numbers of people throughout their years at the University. Students are susceptible to sexual harassment from people in many different positions—for example, professors, advisors, teaching assistants, staff, supervisors, student workers, and other students.

### **How does sexual harassment affect victims?**

Student victims often suffer severe psychological effects of sexual harassment. These effects can include debilitating feelings of helplessness, anger, depression, and humiliation, as well as loss of confidence and self-esteem. Victims may find themselves unable to sleep or concentrate, or may suffer from headaches, backaches and other symptoms of physical stress. Sometimes these reactions continue long after the sexual harassment incidents have taken place. Sexual harassment also can force victims to take actions that seriously disrupt their educations and careers. They may drop a course in which they were harassed, or simply stop going to class and fail. They may change their major, transfer to another university, or even drop out of school. Students who are sexually harassed as university employees may decide to transfer to another department, change their hours, or leave their jobs. Students in the residence halls may decide to change rooms, change halls, or move off campus. Students may also decide to withdraw from their friends and social groups.

Clearly, then, sexual harassment is neither harmless nor a simple inconvenience. Students' work and personal lives can be seriously and permanently damaged. And too often victims suffer in silence.

### **What can you do if you are sexually harassed?**

If you believe you are a victim of sexual harassment, it is important that you act. Ignoring this kind of behavior seldom makes it stop; in most cases, sexual harassment continues or becomes worse when it is tolerated. And while dropping a class or in some other way removing yourself from the uncomfortable situation may seem to be a solution, it is not. This will only add to the problem sexual harassment is causing you.

Yet, there are a range of actions you can take, depending on the circumstances surrounding the sexual harassment and your own situation. These things can be done individually or in combination, and in any order. Suggested actions include:

- Tell the harasser to stop as firmly and directly as you can. Do not feel that you must be polite or make excuses. If you would prefer not to talk to this individual, or if talking does not help, you can write a letter to the harasser describing the behavior and stating that you want it stopped. Such letters can be very effective.
- Keep a detailed record of the sexual harassment incident(s), recording dates, times, places, and witnesses, if any. Save this record and any evidence of the harassment so that you can use it if you decide to file charges at a later time.
- Talk to other students or co-workers. They may have learned things from their own experiences with sexual harassment that can help you, or they may be witnesses to the sexual harassment you have suffered and be willing to back you up. In addition, harassers often exhibit a pattern of such behavior, so you may

find others who have been sexually harassed by this same person. What you learn from other victims may help you decide what to do next.

- Talk to someone who has authority over the harasser: department chair, dean, supervisor, or area coordinator. This person may be able to stop the behavior without requiring further action from you.
- Get help at the Counseling Center. The emotional effects of sexual harassment can be severe, and no student should be expected to deal with them alone. Trying to handle these emotional effects on your own can further weaken you and add to the difficulty of finding ways to stop the sexual harassment. Because of this, victims are strongly encouraged to seek counseling at the University Counseling Center. The Counseling Center is in the Hanawalt House, located between the tennis courts and the baseball field. To contact the
- Center for further information, or to schedule an appointment, either stop by in person, or call on the telephone, (909) 593-3511 extension 4831. The receptionist will respond to your call and provide assistance. The Center is open during the school year (September through May) Monday through Thursday, from 8:30am to 4:30pm. Appointment times outside these normal hours are frequently provided and are scheduled by arrangement with the individual counselor.
- Involve your parents or other close relatives. They can help give you the support and confidence that sexual harassment victims need. They also can accompany you to meetings with University officials or others with whom you want to discuss your problem, thus adding impact to your concerns.
- Contact any of the following University personnel for assistance, support and information on University policy on Sexual Harassment: Dean of Student Affairs, Associate Dean of Student Affairs, or other Staff Members of the Division of Student Affairs.

Experience has shown that it is possible to stop many kinds of sexual harassment and solve most harassment complaints through mediation and confidential intervention. But such resolution can take place only if sexual harassment is confronted and condemned. You have a right to learn and work in an environment free of abuse and coercion. Do not tolerate sexual harassment.

### **Support and Resource Guide:**

Dean of Student Affairs, ext. 4050

Associate Dean of Student Affairs, ext. 4858

Director of Health Services, ext. 4254

Office of Campus Safety, ext. 4950

Director of Housing and Residential Life, ext. 4052

Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, ext. 4188

Dean, School of Business and Global Studies ext. 4201

Director of Human Resources ext . 4076



Last Modified: August 12, 2003. 17:23:27 pm  
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