

Targeting In On Teens & Sexual Harassment



What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual Harassment is a kind of discrimination. It means that someone is treated differently because of his or her sex or sexual orientation. It is behavior or words that:

- are directed at a person because of his or her sex or sexual orientation, or perceived sexual orientation;
- are uninvited, unwanted, and unwelcome;
- cause a person to feel uncomfortable or offended;
- create an environment that makes learning difficult; and
- may be repeated or may be offensive on a one-time basis.

Sexual Harassment is a Serious Problem!

In fact, sexual harassment is illegal in schools and in workplaces because it violates state and federal laws.

But it's also hurtful and harmful to its targets, sometimes in long-lasting ways. They often suffer in silence—but they do suffer and may:

- dread—or even avoid—going to school or to a class;
- find it hard to pay attention in school or to study; and
- experience loss of self-confidence or self-esteem.

Give Everyone Respect.

You want your school to be a fair place where people treat each other with respect. But you can't have fairness and respect when there's sexual harassment — when people are treated in ways that offend them.

Anyone of any age, male or female, can sexually harass others or be a target of harassment. Sexual harassment means unwanted sexually oriented words or actions that hurt or humiliate people. It doesn't matter how these words or actions are intended. They have no place in school — or anywhere people believe in fairness and respect for one another.

Your school will not permit sexual harassment from anyone under any circumstances.

Your school will not tolerate sexual harassment.

Right or Wrong?

"It's just flirting."

WRONG. When you make a person feel uncomfortable or angry, that is sexual harassment.

"It's just a joke."

WRONG. Your body parts are not a joke—and other teenagers feel the same way, too.

"Everybody does it."

WRONG. Most people don't — or they do it in a group so they won't stand out and risk having jokes made on them.

"Boys will be boys."

WRONG. Boys who treat girls as sexual objects are not ready for a mature relationship.

"She didn't mean no."

WRONG. If she said "No," she meant it! If she was silent, she was probably afraid to speak.

There are Many Kinds of *Sexual Harassment*.

Physical Sexual Harassment is any unwanted sexually oriented physical act. For example:

- Grabbing or touching someone, especially his/her sexual parts
- Tearing or pulling at a person's clothing
- Purposely bumping or rubbing against a person
- Kissing or holding a person against his or her will

Verbal Sexual Harassment means offensive words and comments, spoken privately to a person or in front of others. For example:

- Comments about body parts or rating people's body
- Sexual suggestions or threats
- Spreading sexual rumors or stories
- Sexual jokes

Nonverbal Sexual Harassment includes:

- Staring or pointing at a person's body or body parts
- Making obscene gestures
- Displaying obscene sexual material
- Writing people's name along with sexual remarks or gestures.
- Using electronic devices to hurt someone because of their sex or perceived sexual orientation

If you are sexually harassed . . .

Take Action!!!

Even though it's difficult or embarrassing, you should do something about it. Tell the harasser you don't like it and you want him or her to stop. When behavior or comments offend you, say so. Explain to the harasser how it makes you feel and demand that the harassment stop.

If the harassment continues:

- Write down times, places, witnesses, and what happened
- Report it
- School officials are required by law to check out all complaints

Seek advice and help

Your district has a sexual harassment policy. No employee or student of this district is allowed to create a sexually hostile or offensive school environment for any student.

Help your friends.

It takes courage to talk about sexual harassment. So, if a friend confides in you, listen and show understanding and support.

Encourage your friend to tell the harasser to stop. Offer to go along for moral support. And if you learn that a friend is being sexually harassed, encourage your friend to report it. Remember that it is illegal for a harasser to try to stop someone from reporting harassment.

Help your friend to talk to someone. Everyone needs to talk to someone who cares. Don't let them carry the burden alone!

What to do

- Any student who feels that he or she has been the object of sexual harassment should notify his or her principal. If the principal is the harasser, then the student's parent or guardian should contact the District Office.
- All administrators, within three (3) working days, will initiate an investigation of any claims of harassment. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigation. Only those who have immediate need to know will know the identity of the complainant.
- Administrators will immediately report in writing the findings of the investigation, including any corrective or disciplinary action taken. If an employee or student is determined to have sexually harassed a student, disciplinary action will be taken up to and including termination of the employee or expulsion of the student.

Dos and Don'ts

Do be sensitive to how others take your words and actions. Treat others as you would like to be treated. Treat everyone fairly and with respect. Think before you speak or act.

Do be prepared for your school to punish sexual harassment whenever it's revealed. Sumter School District will not tolerate this behavior from its employees or its students.

Do put a stop to sexual harassment. Help make your school a place where everyone feels comfortable, shows mutual respect, and is treated fairly. Remember, no one asks to be sexually harassed.

Don't harass — or encourage others who do. If you laugh at the jokes or stand by when friends behave badly toward others, you may be guilty of sexual harassment, too.

Don't assume that a person's appearance gives you the right to make unwelcome remarks or advances. You should not make anyone feel uncomfortable or threatened.

Don't bully. The difference between good-natured harmless fun and sexual harassment is how it makes the other person feel. Sexual Harassment hurts and demeans its victims.