

PLEASE BE ADVISED!

Every party to a public contract and every party bidding on public contracts are required to have a written sexual harassment policy that contains:

- (1) a definition of sexual harassment under state law;
- (2) a description of sexual harassment utilizing examples;
- (3) a formalized complaint procedure;
- (4) a statement of victims rights;
- (5) directions on how to contact the Illinois Department of Human Rights – **Illinois companies.** **Out-of-State companies must include directions on how to contact the enforcement agency within their state.** Companies that issue a standard policy for all business locations must prepare an addendum providing directions on how to contact the appropriate enforcement agency.
- (6) a recitation that there cannot be any retaliation against employees who elect to file charges.

Recommendation: Your sexual harassment policy should be drafted in language easy to understand and any revisions should be reviewed by legal counsel. A copy of your policy should be posted in a prominent and accessible location to assure all employees will be notified of the company's position.

In order to conduct business with the THE PEORIA PARK DISTRICT, you must have a written sexual harassment policy that conforms to the new ACT.

**FAILURE TO DO SO
WILL DISQUALIFY YOU AS AN ELIGIBLE VENDOR!!!**

Please be advised, effective July 1, 1993, Governor Jim Edgar established under Executive Order Number 7 (Public Act 87-1257) that every party to a public contract and every party bidding on a public contract within the State of Illinois must have a written policy statement prohibiting sexual harassment. The following model policy statement is a draft copy provided for use in formulating your company's policy statement

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY STATEMENT

It is the responsibility of each individual employee to refrain from sexual harassment and it is the right of each individual employee to work in an environment free from sexual harassment.

DEFINITION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

According to the Illinois Human Rights Act, sexual harassment is defined as:

Any unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors or any conduct of a sexual nature when

1. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment;
2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decision(s) affecting such individual; or
3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

The courts have determined that sexual harassment is a form of discrimination under Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights act of 1964, as amended in 1991. One such example is a case where a qualified individual is denied employment opportunities and benefits that are, instead, awarded to another individual who submits (voluntarily or under duress) to sexual advances or sexual favors. Another example is where an individual must submit to unwelcome sexual conduct in order to receive an employment opportunity.

Other conduct commonly considered to be sexual harassment includes:

D R A F T

- ⇒ Verbal: Sexual innuendoes, suggestive comments, insults, humor and jokes about sex, anatomy or gender-specific traits, sexual propositions, threats, repeated requests for dates, or statement about other employees, even outside of their presence, of a sexual nature.
- ⇒ Non-Verbal: Suggestive or insulting sounds (whistling), leering, obscene gestures, sexually suggestive bodily gestures, "catcalls", "smacking" or "kissing" noises.
- ⇒ Visual: Posters, signs, pin-ups, slogans of a sexual nature.
- ⇒ Physical: Touching, unwelcome hugging or kissing, pinching, brushing the body, coerced sexual intercourse or actual assault.

Sexual harassment most frequently involves a man harassing a woman. However, it can also involve a woman harassing a man or harassment between members of the same gender.

The most severe and overt forms of sexual harassment are easier to determine; however, some sexual harassment is more subtle and depends to some extent on individual perception and interpretation. The trend in the courts is to assess sexual harassment by a standard of what would offend a "reasonable woman" or a "reasonable man", depending upon the gender of the alleged victim.

An example of the most subtle form of sexual harassment is the use of endearments. The use of terms such as "honey", "darling", and "sweetheart" is objectionable to many women who believe that these terms undermine their authority and their ability to deal with men on an equal and professional level.

Another example is the use of a compliment that could potentially be interpreted as sexual in nature. Below are three statements that might be made about the appearance of a woman in the workplace:

- ⇒ “That’s an attractive dress you have on.”
- ⇒ “That’s an attractive dress. It really looks good on you.”
- ⇒ “That’s an attractive dress. You really fill it out well.”

The first statement appears to be simply a compliment. The last is most likely to be perceived as sexual harassment depending on individual perceptions and values. To avoid the possibility of offending an employee, it is best to follow a course of conduct above reproach, or to err on the side of caution.

RESPONSIBILITY OF INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEES

Each individual employee has the responsibility to refrain from sexual harassment in the workplace. An individual employee who harasses a fellow worker is, of course, liable for his or her individual conduct. The harassing employee will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge in accordance with company/organization policy or a collective bargaining agreement, as appropriate.

RESPONSIBILITY OF SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL

Each supervisor is responsible for maintaining a workplace free of sexual harassment. This is accomplished by promoting a professional environment and by dealing with sexual harassment as with all other forms of employee misconduct.

The courts have found companies/organizations as well as supervisors can be held liable for damages related to sexual harassment by a manager, supervisor, employee, or third party (an individual who is not an employee but does business with a company/organization, such as a contractor, customer, sales representative, or repair person).

Liability is based either on a company/organization's responsibility to maintain a safe and disciplined workplace, or on the supervisor acting as an agent of the company/organization. As such, supervisors must act quickly and responsibly, not only to minimize their own liability, but also that of the company/organization.

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RESOLUTION OUTSIDE THE COMPANY/ORGANIZATION

It is hoped that most sexual harassment complaints and incidents can be resolved within a company/organization. However, an employee has the right to contact the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) or the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) about filing a formal complaint. An IDHR complaint must be filed within 180 days of the alleged incident(s) unless it is a continuing offense. A complaint with EEOC must be filed within 300 days.

Illinois Department of Human Rights
(217) 785-5100 – Springfield
(217) 785-5125 – TDD Springfield
(312) 814-6200 – Chicago
(312) 263-1579 – TDD Chicago

Illinois Human Rights Commission
(217) 785-4350 – Springfield
(217) 785-5125 – TDD Springfield
(312) 814-6269 – Chicago
(312) 814-4760 – TDD Chicago

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
(312) 353-2613 – Chicago District Office
(800) 669-4000 – Toll Free Within State of Illinois
(800) 669-6820 – TDD Chicago

An employee who is suddenly transferred to a lower paying job or passed for promotion, after filing a complaint with IDHR or EEOC, may file a retaliation charge, also due 180 days (IDHR) or 300 days (EEOC) from the alleged retaliation.

An employee who has been physically harassed or threatened while on the job may also have grounds for criminal charges of assault and battery.

FALSE AND FRIVOLOUS COMPLAINTS

False and frivolous charges refer to cases where the accuser is using a sexual complaint to accomplish some end other than stopping sexual harassment. It does not refer to charges made in good faith which cannot be proven. Given the seriousness of the consequences for the accused, a false and frivolous charge is a severe offense that can itself result in disciplinary action.

