

Steps Women Can Take If They Are a Victim of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

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Every worker is guaranteed the right to a workplace that is safe and discrimination free. The Federal Civil Rights Act gives that right to all workers. [Title VII in the Civil Rights Act](#) says that employers may not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, or sex.

But many women still experience sexual harassment in the workplace even though it's illegal. If you are being sexually harassed at your workplace you can file complaints both with your state labor authorities and with the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

What You Can Do if You're a Victim of Workplace Sexual Harassment:

First you need to know that harassment is never your fault. You are not to blame for sexual harassment that is occurring at your workplace. If you are experiencing sexual harassment, you should also know that you are not powerless. Sexual harassment is illegal, and you can take steps to make sure your employer is held accountable.

The first step you should take is to get a written copy of your company's [policy statement on sexual harassment](#). Every company should have one. You may have a copy in your employee handbook or in the paperwork that you signed when you first started working there. If you don't already have a copy, you can ask your HR department for a copy.

Go over the company's official sexual harassment policy very carefully so you know what's included in the policy. Then you should start writing down every occurrence of harassment that violates the company's policy. Write down the time and the date, the names of the people involved, the names of any witnesses to the harassment, and a brief summary of what happened. If the event was an email or document, print it and make copies or take screenshots that include the time and date of the email.

You will need to make several copies of your log, and you should keep an electronic copy as well. Use certified mail to send paper copies of the list to the HR department and to your supervisor or supervisors. If you send the list by email, make sure you have read receipts turned on so that you have a paper trail documenting that they did receive the document. **Only communicate in writing so that you have a paper trail of all communication.** That will help support your case.

You should also [gather as much evidence](#) as you can before you send the list because they may try to get rid of evidence after receiving the list of incidents. Get screenshots of emails, Slack messages, or other electronic postings. Get witness statements if you can. However, don't delay sending the list to HR and your boss or bosses. **Depending**

on the type of business you work for you may have only 180 days or 300 days to file your harassment claim.

Filing a Claim for Sexual Harassment

File complaints at both the state and Federal level with the state labor authorities and the [EEOC](#). You have 180 days from the sexual harassment occurrence to file a claim with the EEOC. You can also file a complaint with your state. In DC, you can file a complaint with the [Office of Human Rights](#) (OHR). Both the EEOC and the OHR will investigate your claim and determine the next course of action.

Your employer can face significant consequences from both the state and the Federal government. **It can be frightening to hold your employer accountable for sexual harassment, but you are helping other women who are experiencing it as well as yourself.**

Sources:

<https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/title-vii-civil-rights-act-1964>

<https://www.employmentlawhelp.org/sexual-harassment/sexual-harassment-policy>

<https://www.employmentlawhelp.org/sexual-harassment/evidence-harassment-claim>

<https://www.eeoc.gov/filing-charge-discrimination>

<https://ohr.dc.gov/page/EEOCounselors>