



International
Labour
Organization

An ILO free from sexual harassment

A right and our joint responsibility

The ILO is committed to ensuring a safe and harassment-free working environment and a culture of mutual respect across the Organization. All staff have the responsibility to uphold the highest standards of behaviour, and actively prevent sexual harassment and misconduct.

What you should know

Sexual harassment is defined as “any conduct of a sexual nature in the workplace or in connection with work, which, in the perception of the recipient, can reasonably be seen as creating an offensive, intimidating, hostile or humiliating working environment for that person or is used as the basis for a decision which affects that person’s employment or professional situation” (ILO Staff Regulations).

Anyone can be sexually harassed and sexual harassment can take many forms including:

- Sexual comments or jokes – in person, via e-mail or social media;
- Displaying images of a sexual nature that objectify women or men;
- Staring or leering in a sexually suggestive manner or wolf whistling;
- Inappropriate touching, such as pinching, patting or unwanted hugging;
- Unwelcome sexual advances or pressure to meet outside the work environment;
- Implicit or explicit reference to currying sexual favours in return for specific assignments, job security, or promotions;
- Any form of physical sexual assault;
- It may be a pattern of behaviour or a single incident;
- It may occur between people of the opposite or same sex;
- Whether the sexual harassment

was intentional or not – it is how the behaviour is perceived that counts.

The policy covers harassment at the workplace, but also at social events outside of the ILO, on duty travels, training or missions.

Do not fail to act

The ILO is responsible for ensuring that any workplace misconduct, including sexual harassment, is properly addressed. All staff members must be aware of the need to prevent sexual harassment and to ensure that it is properly addressed when it does occur.

All managers are required to take appropriate action to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual harassment using prompt and effective measures. If cases are brought to your attention you must act.

Any staff member who experiences sexual harassment, or who has knowledge of potential cases, should inform a higher-level chief or the Director of the Human Resources Department (HRD).

Those who report incidents will be supported in an environment that takes this issue seriously.

Speak up if you feel that you are being sexually harassed

Depending on the nature of the behaviour and the impact caused, you may be

able to address the matter directly with the person concerned. In many cases, particularly if the offending behaviour is not intended to cause harm or distress, it should be possible to correct the situation through dialogue.

If this is not possible, then it is important that you seek help from someone you trust. The sooner the situation is made known, the easier it is to make it stop.

How to take informal action

Even if you are not sure whether the situation falls within the boundaries of sexual harassment, you can use informal procedures to discuss and clarify the nature of the problem in the strictest confidence. It is important to identify someone you trust to help you make it known that you are finding the behaviour of someone else to be offensive.

You might first seek the help of your responsible chief or a higher-level manager. If you don't feel at ease with that option, you might seek assistance from the Mediator, the Staff Welfare Officer, HRD, the Staff Union, a colleague or former colleague, or a representative of the Medical Service.

How to take formal action

If you wish to pursue a formal process, you can submit a written complaint, including a detailed written statement of the facts, to the Director of HRD. You may want to seek guidance from a representative of the Staff Union or from HRD concerning formal procedures.

Your complaint will be reviewed to determine if there is a need for a fact-finding investigation. In that event, independent external investigators will be hired and their report will be submitted to the Director-General.

If allegations of sexual harassment are substantiated, the Director-General will ensure that appropriate disciplinary sanction and any other administrative measures are taken.

What to do if you are told that your behaviour is causing offence

If you are told by someone, or by a third party on behalf of someone else, that your behaviour is causing offence, then you must take this seriously. It doesn't matter whether you intended to cause harm or not – you must stop.

Take steps to correct your behaviour and apologize for any offence or distress that you have caused.

If you do not understand why you are causing offence, or consider that the offence caused is not reasonable then you must seek advice and guidance. You may consider consulting the Mediator, HRD, a higher-level chief, or a representative of the Staff Union.

It is incumbent on everyone to consider the impact of their behaviour on others and to react constructively when offence is caused.

Protection against retaliation

The ILO is here to support you, and will take steps to ensure that there is no victimization or retaliation against those who exercise their right to complain and report harassment. All reported cases will be reviewed and actions will be taken where sexual harassment is found. Where appropriate, sexual harassment will be referred to the national authorities for further review.

Who to contact

Mediator: Antonio Augusto Cuesta de Queiroga
mediator@ilo.org

Staff Welfare Officer: Daniela Menes
menes@ilo.org

Medical Service: medical@ilo.org

Human Resources Department: Faith O'Neill
oneill@ilo.org

Staff Union: syndicat@ilo.org

LEARN MORE: intranet.ilo.org