

# Sexual Harassment Law

## A Guide for Employees in Washington State

**EVERYONE SHOULD BE TREATED WITH RESPECT AT WORK**

### What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is a form of illegal sex discrimination involving unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct that is based on sex. Sexual harassment is a violation of federal and state law.

There are two types of sexual harassment:

1

### Hostile Work Environment

Harassment that is frequent or severe enough to interfere with your ability to perform your job. The behavior must be directed at you because of your gender, and can include unwelcome, sexually suggestive or gender based comments or jokes; unwelcome and repeated requests for dates; offensive gestures; inappropriate touching; or display of pornographic materials.

2

### Quid Pro Quo

Harassment that occurs when a supervisor or manager asks for sexual favors from you in return for employment benefits such as a promotion, salary increase, career development opportunities, special projects, or other benefits related to your job.

### Requirements for Employers

Employers may be liable for sexual harassment if they do not adopt and enforce policies to:

- Provide procedures for employees who have experienced sexual harassment to report complaints;
- Thoroughly and promptly investigate complaints of sexual harassment; and
- Take prompt and effective action to eliminate further sexual harassment in the workplace.

### What Should I Do if I Experience or Observe Sexual Harassment?

If you observe another employee being harassed, or experience harassment yourself, you should do one or more of the following:

- (A) Communicate to the harasser or their supervisor that the offensive behavior is unwelcome.
- (B) Immediately report the incident(s) to management or the human resources department.
- (C) Report the harassment to these government agencies:

- Washington State Attorney General's Office, [www.atg.wa.gov/have-civil-rights-complaint](http://www.atg.wa.gov/have-civil-rights-complaint) or call 1-800-551-4636
- Washington State Human Rights Commission, [www.hum.wa.gov/discrimination-complaint](http://www.hum.wa.gov/discrimination-complaint)
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, [www.eeoc.gov/employees/charge.cfm](http://www.eeoc.gov/employees/charge.cfm)

Washington State Office of the Attorney General

(360) 753-6200

[www.atg.wa.gov](http://www.atg.wa.gov)

