

# Network to Work – Participant Guide

## July 2024

### Harassment Training

Welcome! Don't Forget to Sign-In and turn in your JSAL & Cover Letter

Network to Work Lessons & Materials  
are on the Participant Portal at:  
**A4td.org / a4tdtraining**

#### Meeting Ground Rules:

- Silence your phones
- Maintain Confidentiality
- Listen to others
- Participate
- Use the Parking Lot

### Today's Agenda:

#### 1. Introductions:

- Tell us your **name** and **job goal** or **current training**.
- **Icebreaker Question:** Do you have any routines you use to improve your energy and focus?

#### 2. Review Last Month:

- **Resumes**
- Remember, your resume drafts are due to us at the August NTW meeting!  
Go online to:  
<https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Resumes/ResumeGuide/introduction.aspx> and build your updated resume!

#### 3. This Month:

- **Harassment Training** – This is a training you will be required to take annually at any future job.

#### 4. Celebrations!

- Please share your achievements: Classes taken, Training received, and Jobs!

## 5. Programmatic Assurances:

- Network to Work Meetings are a required part of your program. Notify your RC or CMPA before the meeting if you are unable to attend.
- There is a grievance policy beginning on page 23 of your participant handbook. These are the steps you follow should you have a complaint. Please see your CMPA or RC if you need a new handbook.
- No political activity, drugs, discrimination or harassment are allowed at your Training Site

## 6. Workplace Safety Video:

- Link: [https://youtu.be/q0Rk-elzsuk?si=DO70Xva0gl5\\_pbyS](https://youtu.be/q0Rk-elzsuk?si=DO70Xva0gl5_pbyS)
- **Quick Inspections:**  
Everyone should get into the habit of doing quick visual surveys of any area they walk or drive into. No matter where you work – an office, machine shop, factory, hospital, home, garage, basement – every place can have safety obstacles.

## 7. A4TD News:

- **SCSEP Orientations** – Please see flyer on **page 11** of this packet to **share** with friends and family that may also benefit from this program.
- **Upcoming A4TD Closures:** July 4, 2024: Independence Day and September 2, 2024: Labor Day

## 8. Timesheet Reminders:

- Names, Places, Dates, Signatures: All must be filled out!
- Do not forget to total in both the right hand column and at the bottom
- NEW Offsite training must be explained with just the hours breakdown and name of the provider (organization, school, or online platform)
- It is your responsibility to save your paystubs. A4TD finance cannot re-mail batches of paystubs.

## 9. Next Meeting:

- \_\_\_\_\_ day, August \_\_\_\_\_, 2024 at \_\_\_\_\_

A4TD's  
Sexual Harassment and  
Discrimination  
Prevention Training

July 2024



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Introduction



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The term "sexual harassment means different things to different people

It depends on your life experience



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Times change.      What is acceptable changes.



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**Our goal:**  
To provide a common understanding of what is - and isn't - okay in the workplace or at your training site.

- Sexual harassment should not be tolerated.



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- What is considered sexual harassment and discrimination
- What you should do if you witness or are the target of sexual harassment or discrimination
- Any harassing or discriminatory behavior will be investigated
- Retaliation against anyone making a report of harassment or discrimination is not allowed and will be met with disciplinary action.

**By the end of this training, you will understand...**



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What is Sexual Harassment?

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It is a type of sex discrimination and is unlawful.

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It is harassment based on:

- Sex
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Self-identified or perceived sex identity
- Gender expression
- Gender Identity
- Transgender status

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9

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**It's unlawful when it forces someone:**

- to work in inferior conditions

or

- to receive inferior employment privileges

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**It is unwelcome behavior or conduct that is:**

- Sexual in nature

or

- Targeted at one because of their sex or gender.

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**The unwelcome behavior must also...**

- Interfere unreasonably with the person's work
- Create an offensive, intimidating or hostile-feeling work environment
- Make someone believe it is a condition of employment
- Relate to a decision to fire an individual if they object

or

- Relate to a decision to hire an individual if they submit

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Furthermore, if you aren't the target, but you experience this environment . . .

**you** can report that you have been sexually harassed.



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Gender Identity



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The three most common ways people identify are:

- A **cisgender** person is someone whose gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- A **transgender** person is someone whose gender is different than the sex they were assigned at birth.
- A **non-binary** person is someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.



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## **VIDEO ACTIVITY – TEST YOUR WORKPLACE HARASSMENT IQ**

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Read each question and answer “true” or “false” in the blanks, unless otherwise noted.

- \_\_\_\_\_1. If no one complains, then it's not sexual harassment.
- \_\_\_\_\_2. If my intentions were good - for example, I meant to compliment someone on how great they looked - there is no way my conduct could violate the sexual harassment policy.
- \_\_\_\_\_3. If most people find a comment amusing and inoffensive, then the one person who is offended does not have a right to complain about harassment.
- \_\_\_\_\_4. Sexual harassment is not limited to physical contact. It can occur any time that an individual is uncomfortable with another person's approaches, comments or discussions.
- \_\_\_\_\_5. Sexual harassment needs to be based on sexual desire to be covered by the law.

Two Types of Sexual Harassment

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16

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Hostile Environment      Quid Pro Quo

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17

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What is Hostile Environment Sexual Harassment?

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18

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**A hostile work environment is when someone engages in...**

- Unwanted words, signs, jokes, pranks  
or
- Intimidation, physical actions, violence of a sexual nature, or directed towards another because of their sex.



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**A hostile work environment includes...**

- Sexual or discriminatory displays or publications *anywhere* in the workplace, that are sexually demeaning or pornographic.
  - photos, posters, art, calendars, graffiti, reading material, etc.
  - on a workplace computer or cell phone and being shared with others
  - sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks, jokes or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience.



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**A hostile work environment includes... (cont.)**

- Actions taken against another because of that person's gender, such as:
  - Rape, sexual battery, molestation, or attempts to commit these.
  - Physical acts that are sexual in nature.
  - Damaging or destroying someone's work equipment or otherwise interfering with their work.
  - Bullying, yelling and name calling, including intentional misuse of preferred pronouns.



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What is Quid Pro Quo Sexual Harassment?

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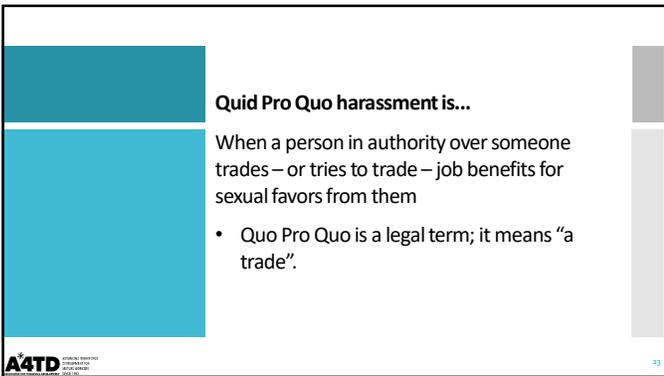
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**Quid Pro Quo harassment is...**

When a person in authority over someone trades – or tries to trade – job benefits for sexual favors from them

- Quid Pro Quo is a legal term; it means “a trade”.

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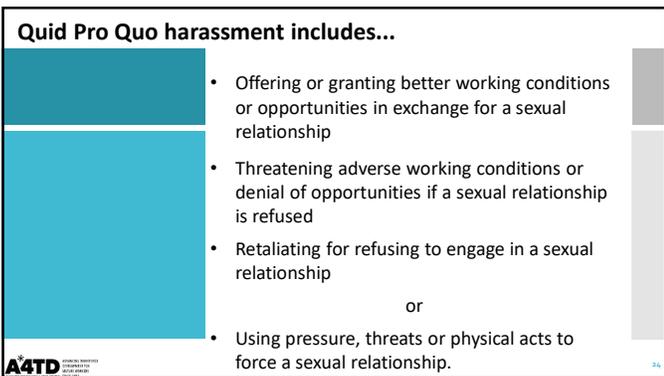
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**Quid Pro Quo harassment includes...**

- Offering or granting better working conditions or opportunities in exchange for a sexual relationship
- Threatening adverse working conditions or denial of opportunities if a sexual relationship is refused
- Retaliating for refusing to engage in a sexual relationship

or

- Using pressure, threats or physical acts to force a sexual relationship.

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**Sex Stereotyping, Gender Discrimination, and Sexual Harassment**



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**Sex stereotyping occurs when...**

- Someone’s conduct or personality traits are judged based on other people’s ideas or perceptions about how individuals of a particular sex should act or look.



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**Sexual Harassment includes...**  
aggressive or negative behavior towards a person because their gender expression does not conform to gender stereotypes

**Gender Discrimination includes...**

- aggressive or negative behavior towards a person who is performing a job that is often performed by individuals of a different sex
- assigning work tasks traditionally gendered roles



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## VIDEO ACTIVITY – *TEST YOUR WORKPLACE HARASSMENT IQ*

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Read each question and answer “true” or “false” in the blanks, unless otherwise noted.

- \_\_\_\_ 6. Harassment based on sex can include making stereotypical remarks about someone’s gender.
- \_\_\_\_ 7. Sexual harassment involves offering job benefits in exchange for sexual favors, or alternatively threatening a person’s job if they don’t agree to the offer.
- \_\_\_\_ 8. Abusive behavior aimed at one's sex that is not “sexual” in nature (e.g., a supervisor who is constantly rude to female employees and tells them that they are “dumb broads”) can be sexual harassment.
- \_\_\_\_ 9. Which of the following can be considered types of Hostile Work Environment sexual harassment?  
A. Repetitive lewd gestures      B. Teasing      C. Invitations for sex      D. A and C
- \_\_\_\_ 10. If comment is not explicit or is hidden in innuendo, it can’t be considered sexual harassment.

**Examples of Sex Stereotyping:**

- Amy is a steelworker with 25 years of experience. Her supervisor, Gus, always assigns a male coworker to partner with Amy on any project she is assigned. Similar projects he assigns to Amy's male coworkers to accomplish solo. When Amy confronts Gus, he explains that he just wants her to be safe as she is the only woman in a tough job.
- Frank is an administrative assistant at a popular production company. He applies for an internal promotion to serve as administrative assistant to the company's Executive Director, which will involve greeting several high-level guests when they come to meet the director. Frank is gender fluid, and he wears makeup and dresses on occasion. Though more qualified than other candidates, Frank does not receive the promotion. The Executive Director explains that while he supports Frank's "lifestyle," many of his guests are "more traditional" and would "not be comfortable" with Frank as their first point of contact.

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**Who can be the Target of Sexual Harassment or Discrimination?**

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**Anyone in the workplace can be the target:**

- Employees
- Paid / unpaid interns
- Non-employees like independent contractors and service providers who work in the workplace
- Sex and gender doesn't matter

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Who can Commit Sexual Harassment or Discrimination?



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Anyone in the workplace can be the perpetrator:

- A coworker
- A supervisor or manager
- Any third-party (non-employee, intern, vendor, visitor, customer, building security, etc.)



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Where can Workplace Sexual Harassment Occur?



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**Sexual Harassment can happen...**

- Wherever and whenever employees are carrying out a work responsibility:
  - In the field
  - Employer-sponsored events
  - Training or conferences open to the public
  - Office parties
- If at an off-site location or after work hours, the activity can be considered an extension of the work environment;
- Can even occur through calls, texts, email and social media.



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**Here are some examples of where sexual harassment can happen and with whom it can happen:**

- A patient harasses his at-home caregiver.
- A customer asks a waitress to remove her mask so he can decide how much to tip.
- An employee frequently comments with discriminatory language on a coworker's social media posts.
- A copy repair person tells jokes that are degrading toward women while fixing the copier.
- Cleaners employed by the building where an organization rents space in discuss their sexual activities loudly.
- A hotel guest gropes a housekeeper as she walks by.

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**How Does Retaliation Relate to Sexual Harassment?**



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## **VIDEO ACTIVITY – TEST YOUR WORKPLACE HARASSMENT IQ**

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Read each question and answer “true” or “false” in the blanks, unless otherwise noted.

- \_\_\_ 11. It cannot be sexual harassment if both parties are the same gender.
- \_\_\_ 12. Sexual harassment can only come from a boss or coworker.
- \_\_\_ 13. Sexual harassment can occur outside the workplace (like at a restaurant) and still be considered work related.
- \_\_\_ 14. I work remotely and I interact online with a coworker who harasses me. I am protected even though I don't go to the office.
- \_\_\_ 15. An employer is not responsible if a person who provides a service (e.g., filling the vending machine, repairing the copier or delivering supplies) harasses its employees because the provider of services is not the company's employee.

**Retaliation is also illegal.**

- It is illegal to **retaliate** against someone who has engaged in a **protected activity**.



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**Retaliation is...**  
Any actions that discourage one from making a complaint of harassment or discrimination:

- Negatively alters terms or conditions of employment;
- Can happen after the end of employment, such as giving a bad reference.
- Doesn't have to be job related or happen in the workplace.

**NOTE:**  
An action is NOT retaliation if the person has otherwise failed to meet the requirements of the job or to follow company policies and rules.



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**The law protects you from being retaliated against if you:**

- File a formal complaint of harassment per your company's policy;
- Report that you suspect another is being harassed;
- Oppose discrimination;
- Help another who is complaining they have been harassed;
- or
- Give information or testimony in an investigation of harassment.

**Protected Activities**



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What Should You Do If You Are Harassed?




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**NOTE:**  
Supervisors/Managers are **required** to report any harassment that is reported to them or that they have observed.  
If they do not file a report, they will be subject to disciplinary actions.

**NOTE:**  
Any report filed will be investigated and corrective action will be taken as appropriate.

- Report it to a supervisor, manager or the designee
  - If they don't act, you can go to the next level of management or somewhere like the EEOC.
- Report any behavior you either experience or know about that seems inappropriate. ***Don't worry or try to figure out if it is unlawful harassment.***
- Cooperate with management in its investigation.
- Write down what happened so you remember.




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What should you do if you see another person being sexually harassed?




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- Report it to a manager, supervisor or designee
- Support the person being harassed by
  - interrupting the harassment
  - asking someone to intervene
  - taking notes on the incident
  - checking in on the person to see how they are doing
- Tell the harasser that "it's not okay"

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Confronting the behavior directly  
 Hotel cleaner Frances is walking down an empty hallway between rooms. A guest pushes her up against the wall and attempts to assault her just as hotel bellhop Tony comes out of the elevator. Tony places himself between Frances and the guest and tells the guest he is behaving inappropriately

Engaging and distracting the person being harassed  
 Kyle is asking Sheila about her dating life. Sheila says she does not want to talk about it at work, but Kyle keeps asking about it. Taylor asks Sheila to review a slide deck she is working on.

Asking a third party for help intervening  
 Bartender Leslie notices a restaurant customer is brushing up against his waitress Danielle, touching her arm or leg every time she comes to the table. Leslie tells her supervisor who intervenes and allows Danielle to switch table assignments.

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Final Notes

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Other Types of Workplace Harassment

- Workplace harassment can be based on other protected characteristic and is not just about sex or gender.
- Any harassment or discrimination based on a protected characteristic is prohibited in the workplace and may lead to disciplinary action.
- Protected characteristics include age, race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, military status, sex, disability, marital status, domestic violence victim status, gender identity or expression, familial status, predisposing genetic characteristics, and criminal history.

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A4TD's policy

- Our Sexual Harassment Policy, including the procedure for making a complaint, can be found in your **Participant Orientation Handbook** starting on page 36.
- Other important policies can also be found in the **Participant Orientation Handbook**.

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## **VIDEO ACTIVITY – TEST YOUR WORKPLACE HARASSMENT IQ**

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Read each question and answer “true” or “false” in the blanks, unless otherwise noted.

- \_\_\_16. It is unlawful to retaliate against someone who resists unwelcome behavior, files a complaint about harassment or perceived harassment, or participates in an investigation.
- \_\_\_17. Employees are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination for engaging in unlawful harassment or discrimination.
- \_\_\_18. A person who works in an office where sexual harassment occurs, but to whom harassment activity is not directed, may still file a complaint/make a report of sexual harassment.
- \_\_\_19. If a victim of sexual harassment asks a manager or supervisor not to tell anyone about the sexual harassment incident, the supervisor should not take further action.
- \_\_\_20. If an employee complains about workplace harassment, and an investigation does not prove the allegations true, an accused supervisor or manager may discipline the employee for filing the complaint.

## Sexual Harassment & Discrimination Case Studies

These case studies demonstrate the kind of behaviors that are considered sexual harassment. Remember, all employees should *report* inappropriate behavior. They do not, however, have the responsibility to *decide* if something is sexual harassment.

### **Example 1: No Go Joe**

**Scenario:** Mallory works at a small family-owned gift shop. She is one of two employees in addition to the owner Joe. The storage room at the back of the shop is tight and can sometimes require Mallory and Joe to get very close while restocking inventory. On more than one occasion, Joe has brushed up against Mallory while moving past her. Though she initially thought it was unintentional, Joe is now pressing himself against her in a clearly intentional way. Mallory mentions this to her coworker Emily who confides that Joe has been doing the same to her. Joe is both the owner of the store and Mallory's supervisor. There is no separate individual at the store through which Mallory can make a harassment complaint.

**Question 1 - True or False:** Mallory's only option is to confront Joe directly about his behavior by writing a report and submitting it to Joe.

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### **Example 2: Accidentally on Purpose**

**Scenario:** June started a new job at a restaurant three months ago, and she is slowly getting to know her co-workers. While sharing a meal before the dinner rush, her manager John asks her if she has a boyfriend. June tells John that she would prefer not to talk about her personal life at work. He nods and changes the subject.

**Question 1 – Yes or No:** June's manager asked her a personal question that made her uncomfortable. Was this sexual harassment?

**Scenario continued:** In the weeks that follow, whenever John is near June, he complains about how hard it is for him to date, discusses his past romantic relationships in detail, and asks June's advice on how to flirt with other women, often pointing out specific candidates. June repeatedly reminds John she would prefer not to talk about personal lives at work, but he ignores her and continues to make unwelcome comments. June finds herself avoiding him whenever she can.

**Question 2 - True or False:** John's behavior has escalated above a trivial inconvenience to sexual harassment.

### **Example 3: Banking on You**

**Scenario:** Sawyer is a manager at a mid-size bank. Sawyer recently began dating Hayden, a teller at the bank. After three months of dating, Hayden breaks up with Sawyer. Though the two agree to act professionally at work, Sawyer takes the breakup hard. As manager, Sawyer is sure to assign Hayden shifts so they are always at the bank at the same time. Sawyer creates special projects to work on one-on-one with Hayden, ensuring the two are alone while at the bank. More than once, Sawyer uses these sessions to urge Hayden to give their relationship another chance. Hayden is firm that their romantic relationship is over.

**Question 1 - True or False:** This is not sexual harassment because Sawyer and Hayden were in a consensual relationship, and Sawyer's behavior is typical of anyone dealing with a breakup.

**Scenario, continued:** Frustrated that Hayden will not reconsider their relationship, Sawyer begins complaining to coworkers about Hayden's perceived cruelty. While complaining, Sawyer frequently divulges personal information about their romantic relationship and Hayden's private life.

**Question 2 - True or False:** This is a personal issue between Sawyer and Hayden and co-workers should not get involved.

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### **Example 4: One Moment in Time**

**Scenario:** Whitney is a paralegal at a large law firm that has adopted remote work as the primary way most employees work. As the firm transitioned to remote work, there were growing pains, and for a period of time, employees relied on their personal phones and email accounts to stay in touch while working from home. Though employees now have access to their work emails and phone numbers, on occasion a lawyer Whitney works with closely, Xander, will text her questions on her personal cell phone. One night, Xander texts Whitney a sexually explicit image.

**Question 1 - True or False:** Xander sent the image from his personal phone to Whitney's personal phone, so this is not a workplace issue.

**Scenario continued:** The next day, after she did not respond, Xander sends Whitney a text apologizing for the night before, and states that the image was meant for someone else.

A few weeks later, during a one-on-one meeting discussing a case over Zoom, Xander comments on the fact that Whitney's home workstation is set up in her bedroom, and jokes that he would love a virtual tour of "where the magic happens." Uncomfortable, Whitney finds an excuse to end the meeting quickly after that.

Later that same week, Xander sends Whitney a direct message during an all firm Zoom meeting telling her he "can't stop thinking about her in her bedroom" during the workday.

**Question 2 - True or False:** A hostile work environment cannot exist while working from home.

### **Example 5: Call Me By My Name**

**Scenario:** Erin is a transwoman who works at a marketing firm. She has been with the company for 20 years and has come out and transitioned while with the company over the past 7 years. At this point, all her coworkers know her as Erin and her preferred pronouns of she/her/hers. Though she has support from leadership and the majority of her coworkers, Erin’s colleague, Vanessa, continues to refer to Erin by the name she received at birth and no longer uses (otherwise known as deadnaming) while also continuing to use he/him pronouns. When Erin asked Vanessa to stop, Vanessa stated being transgender violated her religious beliefs. Erin reported the treatment to her supervisor, Jessica. Jessica sympathized with Erin but advised her to just let it go because Vanessa would be retiring soon.

**Question 1.** Erin can file a complaint against Vanessa *and* Jessica for gender discrimination **True or False?**

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### **Example 6: Shaken, Not Stirred**

**Scenario:** Jamila is a bartender at a popular Brooklyn restaurant. She has been with the restaurant for a month and is hoping to be scheduled during the popular Friday and Saturday evening shifts. Her manager Jason creates the shift schedule. She tells him she feels confident in her position and that she knows the restaurant patrons well enough to be scheduled for the high tipping weekend shifts. He tells her, “We’ll see. We have a lot of qualified bartenders.”

A week later, Jamila and Jason are closing after a Wednesday night shift. Jason pours them both a shot of tequila, asks Jamila to join him at the bar, and tells her that he hopes he will be able give her some weekend shifts. He tells her that some other bartenders have been with the restaurant longer but that she is the one he wants. Jason places his hand on Jamila’s knee and encourages her to drink the tequila. Jamila quickly takes the shot before jumping off the barstool and finishing her closing tasks.

**Question 1 - True or False:** Jason's behavior could be harassment of Jamila.

**Scenario continued:** After a week of continuing to receive less desirable shifts, Jamila asks Jason again if he would schedule her for a Friday or Saturday night. He says that he is not sure, but there is still time for her to “make it worth his while.” He then asks her to come home with him after work that night.

Jamila, who really needs the extra cash a Saturday night shift will bring in tips, decides to go home with Jason. Almost every week they go out at Jason's insistence and engage in sexual activity. Jason begins scheduling Jamila for Friday and Saturday evenings. Jamila does not want to be in a relationship with Jason and is only going out with him because she believes that he will change her schedule away from the busier shifts.

**Question 2 - True or False:** Jamila cannot complain of harassment because she voluntarily engaged in sexual activity with Jason.

**Scenario, continued:** After several months, during which she believes she has proven herself an asset during the weekend rush, Jamila breaks off the sexual activities with Jason. He immediately changes her schedule and places her in less desirable shifts with fewer customers and lower tips.

**Question 3 - True or False:** It is now “too late” for Jamila to complain. Her relationship with Jason was consensual so there is no proof she is receiving less favorable shifts due to the breakup.

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### **Example 7: Working Twice as Hard**

Sandra is a first-year resident intern at a teaching hospital in Buffalo. She is the only Black woman in her intern class. She and her intern peers attend rounds every day with Dr. Grey. When asking interns questions, Sandra feels as though Dr. Grey holds her to a higher standard than the other interns. He frequently makes comments about her ignorance and belittles her answers to his questions, though her responses are in line with her fellow residents.

As the months go by, Dr. Grey continues to bully Sandra during rounds, including rolling her eyes when she speaks and reacting dramatically when she gives wrong or incomplete answers, behavior that he doesn't exhibit toward any of her fellow residents, and that embarrasses her in front of colleagues and patients. Recently, his comments have started to venture away from her medical knowledge. Dr. Grey has begun commenting that Sandra needs to make more of an effort in her appearance if she wants to be respected as a professional including wearing makeup and straightening her natural hair. When Sandra complains to her fellow intern Monica, who is white, Monica shrugs off Sandra's concerns because Dr. Grey has never made her feel uncomfortable with personal remarks.

**Question 1 - True or False:** Dr. Grey's conduct is likely racial discrimination.

**Question 2 - True or False:** Dr. Grey's conduct is likely sexual harassment.

## Respectful Workplace Expression – Gender Identity

Workplace etiquette is about showing respect in the workplace. Nothing may be more personal than the way in which people refer to us through our name and pronouns. Using a person’s chosen name and desired pronouns is a form of mutual respect and basic courtesy.

In the workplace, employees usually have the option of articulating their **preferred name**, and the way they articulate this may vary -- formally vs. informally, in email vs. in-person meetings, on name badges and business cards, etc. For example, you may know someone with a birth name like Robert John Smith who prefers to be called RJ. Or someone who appears to be male but prefers to go by a female-sounding name such as Sarah.

But what about **pronouns**?

Gender pronouns (such as “he/him/his”, “she/her/hers” and “they/them/theirs”) are the way that we constantly refer to each other’s gender identity - except we often don’t think a whole lot about them. Usually we interpret or “read” a person’s gender based on their outward appearance and expression, and “assign” a pronoun based on our gender assumptions. But our reading may not be a correct interpretation of the gender with which this person identifies.

For most people their birth-assigned sex, their gender identity, their gender expression and how everyone else interprets their gender falls into alignment. However, this is not true for everyone. A culture that readily asks or provides pronouns is one committed to reducing the risk of disrespect or embarrassment for both parties.

**Gender assumptions** are made and fostered from birth – boy babies are dressed in blue, while girls are swaddled in pink; there are countless cultural and social norms like this that can be difficult to unlearn. We see someone who looks or dresses a particular way and assign a gender to them.

**Gender identity, however, is internal** – an internal *sense* of one’s gender. Many people identify as “**cisgender**” (i.e., male or female) because to them, their gender matches what was assigned at birth.

Others are “**non-binary**” and don’t identify along the binary of either male or female (e.g. “him” or “her”). Some people identify as both masculine and feminine, or neither. A genderfluid, genderqueer or non-binary identified person may prefer a gender-neutral pronoun such as the “they / them / theirs” (e.g. “I know Tom. They work in the Accounting Department”).

As gender identity is internal, we can’t necessarily know a person’s correct gender pronoun by looking at them and relying on traditional gender assumptions.

The concept of gender identity, gender fluidity and changing personal pronouns can be difficult for some to grasp and get used to, but this concept is rapidly shaping the workplace landscape. This means learning to move past our gender assumptions.

Everyone deserves to have their self-ascribed name and pronouns respected in the workplace; the experience of being misgendered can be hurtful, angering, and even distracting. Accidentally misgendering someone can be embarrassing for both parties, creating tension and leading to communication breakdowns across teams and with customers. Therefore, more and more people of all gender identities are choosing to clarify their pronouns in an email signature, on a name tag, etc. These cues are intended to help everyone in the workplace to be more conscious and intentional regarding our assumptions and about how we communicate with one another.

## Respectful Workplace Expression - Terms of Endearment

Imagine this scenario. You’re having a typical workday doing your routine job responsibilities. Then, one of your colleagues who you don’t know very well asks for help with the copy machine. As a gesture of gratitude, they respond by saying “thanks, honey.” How would that make you feel?

For most individuals in the workplace, terms of endearment like “honey”, “sweetie”, “hon”, “darling”, etc. make them feel uncomfortable or offended. Others may chalk it up to regional or generational differences. This dilemma begs the question: are terms of endearment a form of workplace harassment? Or are they just a harmless way to express affection? Here’s what experts on workplace etiquette, ethics and labor law have to say.

**Regardless of gender or the intent, many people find that terms of endearment are not appropriate for work. Most feel they should be reserved to express affection for a partner, friend or family member – and the experts agree.** Rachel Holland, an authority on work etiquette and ethics, advises against using any terms of endearment in a professional setting.

Labor law attorney, Karen Michael, is of the same mind. **Not only can terms of endearment in the office show a lack of respect and condescension, but they can also have potential legal implications if they are deemed workplace harassment.** Instead, your safest bet is to call your colleagues by their first name and if you don't know it, just ask.

The U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Civil Rights puts it best: **“Terms of endearment, such as calling a co-worker “honey”, “dear”, “sweetheart”, or some similar expression may constitute sexual harassment or discrimination. The effect [of the words] is the primary issue rather than the intent. Even if the person ‘means nothing to you’ or you have ‘used the term for years’, you should be aware that such expressions are inappropriate.”**

To help build positive and respectful workplace relationships with your colleagues and to avoid possible workplace harassment claims, avoid terms of endearment. Other off-limit topics include: a) your colleague's clothing, behavior, or body; and b) yours or your colleague's romantic relationships

If you're not sure if something you want to say would be offensive to others or considered workplace harassment, it's best to keep it to yourself. You could also use this similar rule of thumb: **if you wouldn't say something to a coworker in front of your spouse or significant other, it's probably better left unsaid.**

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Adapted from:

“Are Terms of Endearment at the Office Considered Workplace Harassment?” October 11, 2018

<https://ezop.com/blog/water-cooler-talk/are-terms-of-endearment-considered-workplace-harassment/>

“Gender Diversity Etiquette: Ensuring a Respectful Workplace”. Aires Blog. By Kamryn Bohn and Lauren McKenna.

<https://blog.aires.com/gender-diversity-etiquette-ensuring-a-respectful-workplace>

“Talking About Pronouns in the Workplace”. Human Rights Campaign Foundation.

[https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/files/assets/resources/TalkingAboutPronouns\\_onesheet\\_FINAL.pdf?mtime=20200713142932&focal=none](https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/files/assets/resources/TalkingAboutPronouns_onesheet_FINAL.pdf?mtime=20200713142932&focal=none)

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