

**THE RHODE ISLAND COMMISSION  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (RICHR) AND  
THE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPOR-  
TUNITY COMMISSION (EEOC)  
ENFORCE THE LAWS FORBIDDING  
SEXUAL HARASSMENT.**

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**What do I do if the harassment  
persists or I am otherwise unsat-  
isfied with how my employer  
handled my complaint?**

File a charge with the RICHR. If the charge falls within federal jurisdiction, it may be co-filed with the EEOC.

You may request an Intake Questionnaire (IQ) by calling the RICHR by phone, visiting in person, or visiting the RICHR website. Our contact information is listed on the back of this brochure.

*Generally, a charge must be filed within one year of the most recent act of harassment.*

**What if my employer takes ac-  
tion against me for complaining  
about sexual harassment?**

This is called retaliation and it is illegal. Both federal and state laws prohibit retaliating against anyone because they complained about sexual harassment or filed a charge alleging sexual harassment.

They also prohibit retaliating against anyone because they have testified or otherwise assisted in any investigation, hearing, or proceeding involving a complaint of sexual harassment.

**RHODE ISLAND  
COMMISSION  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

180 WESTMINSTER STREET  
3RD FLOOR  
PROVIDENCE, RI 02903

**PHONE:** (401) 222-2661

**FAX:** (401) 222-2616

**VOICE RELAY:** 7-1-1

**WEBSITE:** WWW.RICHR.RI.GOV

The RICHR processes charges of sexual harassment against any employer in the state that has four or more employees. Charges also may be filed against employment agencies and labor organizations.

The RICHR investigates charges, attempts resolution, and has the authority to conduct formal administrative hearings and issue decisions and orders. Where appropriate, the RICHR may award remedies to victims of sexual harassment.

The RICHR also accepts charges alleging violations of other anti-discrimination laws. Visit our website for more information.

**EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY  
COMMISSION (EEOC)**

**PHONE:** 1-800-669-EEOC

**WEBSITE:** WWW.EEOC.GOV

**SEXUAL  
HARASSMENT  
IN THE WORKPLACE  
IS ILLEGAL**

**HOW TO DEAL  
WITH SEXUAL  
HARASSMENT  
IN THE  
WORKPLACE**



### **What is sexual harassment?**

Sexual harassment in the workplace occurs when an employee is subjected to unwanted verbal or physical conduct that is sexual in nature.

Sexual harassment occurs when submission to or rejection of such conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, and/or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

### **Who can be a victim of sexual harassment under the law?**

Sexual harassment can happen to anyone. The victim as well as the harasser may be of any gender. They do not have to be of the opposite sex.

The harasser can be a supervisor, a co-worker, an agent of the employer, a supervisor in another area, or a non-employee (such as a customer or vendor).

Victims are not limited to the people being harassed, but can be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.

### **What laws prohibit sexual harassment?**

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that violates both federal law (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which applies to employers with 15 or more employees) and Rhode Island state law (the Fair Employment Practices Act, which applies to employers with four or more employees).

### **What should I do if I believe I have been the victim of sexual harassment?**

#### **Here are some suggested preliminary steps to follow:**

- 1) Keep records of each harassment incident, including the date, time, place, and details of the incident, as well as any witnesses. Describe what you did or said in response to the harassment.
- 2) Get copies of any written materials available from your employer which show a good work record. This will be very helpful if there is an investigation or if you go to court.
- 3) Ask the harasser to stop. Warn them that if their behavior continues, they will be reported to the employer. With some people, this may be enough to stop the harassment.
- 4) Inform the harasser in writing that their behavior is not wanted and must stop immediately. This should be dated and signed, and should have the harasser's first and last name in the greeting. Keep an exact copy for your records, and consider emailing it or sending it by certified mail (return receipt requested).
- 5) Identify supporters/witnesses and ask them to write down what they have experienced or observed. Have them sign and date their statements.

### **If the preliminary practices do not stop the harassment, you should take the following actions:**

- 1) Write a letter/email to the person in your company designed to handle sexual harassment complaints. If your employer does not have such a designated employee, write a letter to your supervisor, or your employer's equal opportunity office or personnel office. The letter should describe the incident(s) and say that the law requires employers to maintain a working environment free of sexual harassment.
- 2) Set up a meeting to explain the situation and ask your employer to take steps to stop the harassment.
- 3) The Fair Employment Practices Act requires that employers who receive complaints of harassment must not refuse to provide the employee with a written statement on the outcome of the complaint in a timely manner.
- 4) If no action has been taken by your employer to stop the harassment after a reasonable amount of time, or your employer refuses to address the situation, you may file a charge with the RI Commission for Human Rights or the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. See the other side of this brochure for more information on how to file a charge.