

What To Do If You Are Sexually Harassed



Don't blame yourself. Don't assume that you are doing something to provoke the harassment. Remember that sexual harassment has more to do with power than with sex.

- **Object!** Make it clear to the harasser that his or her behavior is unwelcome. While you may prefer to object verbally in the beginning, if the harassment continues, object in writing and keep a copy of the letter. Be specific about what behavior you find objectionable.
- **Keep a log or diary of incidents**—date, time, place, behavior, what was said, witnesses. Keep the log in a safe place at home, not at work.
- **Don't suffer in silence!** The harasser is counting on your keeping it a secret.
 - *Talk to friends and family.* Let people who care about you give you their support.
 - *Talk to co-workers.* Since harassers tend to be repeaters, you may learn of other victims of the same harasser. Also, your co-workers may provide support and some protection, and if alerted may be able to corroborate incidents of harassment.
 - *Talk to your union steward.* If for some reason you feel uncomfortable approaching your steward or if you believe your steward is not responding appropriately, contact one of the local union officers or your staff representative.
- **Take formal action through the union grievance procedure.** Your union representative should be able to assist you. It is important to help establish employer liability to make sure the employer knows about the harassment and is given an opportunity to stop it.
- **Insist that the proposed “solution” does not adversely affect you.** For example, the employer may propose transferring you away from the harasser. If the new job is in an inconvenient location or would adversely affect your seniority rights or promotional opportunities, you are within your rights to insist that the harasser—not you—should be inconvenienced.

Since litigation can be expensive, time consuming and traumatic for the sexual harassment victim, every effort should be made to deal with the problem at the workplace. If the problem cannot be so resolved:

- **File a complain** with the state Fair Employment Practices agency or the federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission.
- **Consult an attorney experienced** in sexual harassment cases. The union can help you locate an attorney.
- **If the harasser's behavior included assault and battery or rape, file criminal charges** with the police.