**Workplace Harassment Risk Factors**

Assessment Tool

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| **Present** | **Risk Factor & Indicators** | **Connection to Harassment** | **EEOC Mitigation Strategies** | **Selected Strategies** |
|  | **Homogeneous Workforce**   * Historic lack of diversity in the workplace * Currently only one minority in the work group (team, department or location) | * Employees in the minority can feel isolated and may actually be, or at least appear to be, vulnerable to pressure from others. * Employees in the majority might feel threatened by those they perceive as “different” or “other,” or might simply be uncomfortable around others who are not like them. | * Increase diversity at all levels of the workforce, with particular attention to work groups with low diversity. * Pay attention to relations among and within work groups. |  |
|  | **Workplaces Where Some Employees do not Conform to Workplace Norms**   * “Rough and tumble” or single-sex dominated workplace cultures * Remarks, jokes or banter that are crude, “raunchy,” or demeaning | * Employees may be viewed as weak or susceptible to abuse. * Abusive remarks or humor may promote workplace norms that devalue certain types of individuals. | * Proactively and intentionally create a culture of civility and respect with the involvement of the highest levels of leadership. * Pay attention to relations among and within work groups. |  |
|  | **Cultural and Language Differences in the Workplace**   * Arrival of new employees with different cultures or nationalities * Segregation of employees with different cultures or nationalities | * Different cultural backgrounds may make employees less aware of laws and workplace norms. * Employees who do not speak English may not know their rights and may be more subject to exploitation. * Language and linguistic characteristics can play a role in harassment. | * Ensure that culturally diverse employees understand laws, workplace norms, and policies. * Increase diversity in culturally segregated workforces. * Pay attention to relations among and within work groups. |  |
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|  | **Coarsened Social Discourse Outside the Workplace**   * Increasingly heated discussion of current events occurring outside the workplace | * Coarsened social discourse that is happening outside a workplace may make harassment inside the workplace more likely or perceived as more acceptable. | * Proactively identify current events – national and local – that are likely to be discussed in the workplace. * Remind the workforce of the types of conduct that are acceptable in the workplace. |  |
|  | **Young Workforces**   * Significant number of teenage and young adult employees | * Employees in their first or second jobs may be less aware of laws and workplace norms. * Young employees may lack the self-confidence to resist unwelcome overtures or challenge conduct that makes them uncomfortable. * Young employees may be more susceptible to being taken advantage of by coworkers or superiors, particularly those who may be older and more established in their positions. * Young employees may be more likely to engage in harassment because they lack the maturity to understand or care about consequences. | * Provide targeted outreach about harassment in high schools and colleges. * Provide orientation to all new employees with emphasis on the employer’s desire to hear about all complaints of unwelcome conduct. * Provide training on how to be a good supervisor when youth are promoted to supervisory positions. |  |
|  | **Workplaces Reliant Upon Customer Service or Client Satisfaction**   * Compensation directly tied to customer service or client satisfaction | * Fear of losing a sale or tip may compel employees to tolerate inappropriate or harassing behavior. | * Be wary of a “customer is always right” mentality in terms of application to unwelcome conduct. |  |
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|  | **Workplace with “High Value” Employees**   * Executives or senior managers * Employees with high value (actual or perceived) to the employer, e.g. the “rainmaking” partner or the prized, grant-winning researcher | * Management is often reluctant to jeopardize high value employee’s economic value to the employer. * High value employees may perceive themselves as exempt from the workplace rules or immune from consequences of their misconduct. | * Apply workplace rules uniformly, regardless of rank or value to the employer. * If a high-value employee is discharged for misconduct, consider publicizing that fact (unless there is a good reason not to).\*   \* *There could be several reasons not to so publicize.* |  |
|  | **Workplaces with Significant Power Disparities**   * Low-ranking employees in organizational hierarchy * Employees holding positions usually subject to the direction of others, *e.g*. administrative support staff, nurses, janitors, etc. * Gendered power disparities (e.g., most of the low-ranking employees are female). | * Supervisors feel emboldened to exploit low-ranking employees. * Low-ranking employees are less likely to understand complaint channels (language or education / training insufficiencies). * Undocumented workers may be especially vulnerable to exploitation of the fear of retaliation. | * Apply workplace rules uniformly, regardless of rank or value to the employer. * Pay attention to relations among and within work groups with significant power disparities. |  |
|  | **Workplaces Where Work is Monotonous or Tasks are Low-Intensity**   * Employees are not actively engaged or “have time on their hands” * Repetitive work | * Harassing behavior may become a way to vent frustration or avoid boredom. | * Consider varying or restructuring job duties or workload to reduce monotony or boredom. * Pay attention to relations among and within work groups with monotonous or low-intensity tasks. |  |
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|  | **Isolated Workplaces**   * Physically isolated workplaces. * Employees work alone or have few opportunities to interact with others. | * Harassers have easy access to their targets. * There are no witnesses. | * Consider restructuring work environments and schedules to eliminate isolated conditions. * Ensure that workers in isolated work environments understand complaint procedures. * Create opportunities for isolated workers to connect with each other (e.g., in person or on-line) to share concerns. |  |
|  | **Workplaces that Tolerate or Encourage Alcohol Consumption**   * Alcohol consumption during and around work hours. | * Alcohol reduces social inhibitions and impairs judgment. | * Train co-workers to intervene appropriately if they observe alcohol-induced misconduct. * Remind managers about their responsibility if they see harassment, including at events where alcohol is consumed. * Intervene promptly when customers or clients who have consumed too much alcohol act inappropriately. |  |
|  | **Decentralized Workplaces**   * Corporate offices far removed physically and / or organizationally from front-line employees or first-line supervisors. | * Managers may feel (or may actually be) unaccountable for their behavior and may act outside the bounds of workplace rules. * Managers may be unaware of how to address harassment issues and may be reluctant to call headquarters for direction. | * Ensure that compliance training reaches all levels of the organization, regardless of how geographically dispersed workplaces may be. * Ensure that compliance training for area managers includes their responsibility for sites under their jurisdiction. * Develop systems for employees in geographically diverse locations to connect and communicate. |  |