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What Is Sexual Harassment? And What Can You Do About It?

Monticello, NY – As the Sullivan County Human Rights Commission pursues its mission of making the County “the best possible place to live,” they stand firm in the commitment to protect the rights of local citizens against all forms of discrimination.

Just like harassment against people because of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation/preference, marital status, or criminal conviction, sexual harassment is equally WRONG and should not be tolerated.

The U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission says it is unlawful to harass a person (an applicant or employee) because of that person’s sex. Harassment can include “sexual harassment” or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature.

Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person’s sex. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general.

Both victim and the harasser can be either a woman or a man, and the victim and harasser can be the same sex. The harasser can be the victim’s supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or someone who is not an employee of the employer, such as a client or customer.

Although the law doesn’t prohibit simple teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that are not very serious, harassment is illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision (such as the victim being fired or demoted). SOURCE: https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/sexual_harassment.cfm

The Sullivan County Human Rights Commission urges all citizens to be aware of the law and to report instances where your rights have been violated. Call the Commission at 845-807-0189 so they can advise you on how to report harassment and seek relief.

“Harassment is always demeaning and discouraging, so it does nothing to improve profitability or customer service – just the opposite, in fact,” notes Legislator Terri Ward, chair of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Committee of the Sullivan County Legislature. “A harassment-free workplace is a productive workplace, a friendly and professional area to get business done. We all have a right to that kind of atmosphere. I encourage everyone to become familiar with the law – and to follow it.”

The Commission meets on the second Thursday of each month at the Sullivan County Government Center, 100 North Street, Monticello. Meetings are open to the public. Visit the Commission website at www.co.sullivan.ny.us/Departments/HumanRightsCommission/tabid/3205/default.aspx