

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING A HARASSMENT POLICY

Why is a harassment policy important in the workplace?

Developing and implementing an effective workplace policy is the key in preventing harassment. Education is the other essential ingredient to ensure people know there is a policy and what it says.

What is the employer's responsibility?

The employer has the responsibility to create and maintain a harassment free workplace, and to take appropriate steps to prevent harassment. As an employer it is your duty to:

- Make it clear that harassment will not be tolerated
- Establish a harassment policy
- Make sure every employee understands the policy and procedures for dealing with harassment
- Provide training to supervisors and managers of their responsibility to provide a harassment-free workplace
- Investigate and correct harassment problems as soon as they come to light, even if a formal complaint hasn't been received.

What are the elements of effective harassment policies:

- Encourage employees to come forward with complaints. Management (and unions where applicable), need to demonstrate commitment to support a harassment-free workplace
- Ensure acceptance by all staff, unions and employee associations by involving them in the development of the policy
- Provide a clear definition of harassment
- Provide guidelines for individuals about making a harassment complaint and outline the rights and responsibilities of employees, supervisors and managers, as well as contractors, customers and volunteers
- Maintain confidentiality of complaints and protect employees from retaliation
- To hear complaints, designate a person who is viewed by others as neutral but as having the authority to act. Ideally a choice of two or three individuals will allow people to select a person they perceive as being neutral
- Provide a step-by-step procedure for making a complaint. Spell out the disciplinary consequences of harassment. Outline additional options and resources for dealing with harassment
- Guarantee fair and prompt action to anyone with a complaint of harassment

Remember that prevention is better than cure and should provide the basis of a harassment policy.

This is a general guide only. For more detailed information contact the Yukon Human Rights Commission at 101-9010 Quartz Road in Whitehorse or email us at humanrights@yhrc.yk.ca or phone toll free at 1-800-661-0535 or 667-6226 or check our website at www.yhrc.yk.ca. Information is available at no charge.