

Witnessing sexual harassment in the workplace



“I Observed Sexual Harassment in the Workplace”

You have just observed one co-worker sexually harass another co-worker. If you do not feel comfortable speaking directly to the harasser, consider reporting the behaviour to a supervisor. At the very least, you should inform the person who was targeted that you overheard the remark and ask if you can help in any way. On the other hand, if you feel comfortable approaching the harasser, you should let them know you saw what they did or said, and it was not appropriate; the conduct violates the workplace sexual harassment policy, and you may have to report the behaviour to a supervisor.

Document Your Observations

Time can affect memory and specifically the ability to recall details. In the event the incident you observed proceeds to a formal report and investigation a month or a year later, it will be helpful to the investigator if you have notes available which were jotted down shortly after making your observations as to what exactly you saw or heard.

Refer to Your Workplace Sexual Harassment Policy

You may need to refer to your workplace sexual harassment policy to determine whether you have a duty to report any incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace. The procedures contained in the policy will inform.

Request or Obtain Bystander Training

Increasingly, employers are offering bystander training for their employees, particularly in labour forces and industries which are typically comprised of men. Bystander training equips you as an employee with the confidence and skills to appropriately respond to sexual harassment in the workplace.

“I Don’t Want to Get Involved Because I Am Concerned About Retaliation”

If you are concerned about retaliation as a result of reporting your observations, refer to your employer’s retaliation or whistleblower policy for reporting options available to third parties or bystanders which may offer protections.