

What is Workplace Sexual Harassment?

Workplace sexual harassment is:

Conduct of a sexual or gender-based nature, that is unwelcome, and detrimentally affects the work environment or leads to negative job-related consequences. It can occur in or away from the workplace, either during or outside of working hours. Improper behaviour such as objectionable acts, comments or displays that demean, belittle, or humiliate, as well as any act of intimidation or threat can be considered sexual harassment.

While harassment is normally defined as a series of incidents, one single incident can constitute harassment if it demonstrates that it is severe and has a significant and lasting impact. This can include a disruption of the employee's job performance and potential, relationship with colleagues, and the overall work environment. As a type of discrimination based on sex, when someone is sexually harassed in the workplace, it can undermine their sense of personal dignity.

Some forms of sexual harassment are criminal offences, including criminal harassment, uttering threats, voyeurism and sexual assault. Sexual assault as defined by the Criminal Code includes groping and rape but also can be an intentional, non-consensual physical touch, or threat of touch, that is sexual in nature. If you have been assaulted, you should seek support immediately, either by reaching out to a trusted confidant, calling or texting VictimLinkBC at 1-800-563-0808, or contacting local law enforcement.

