

Creating a Healthy Workplace

Preventing Sexual Violence... and Promoting Racial Equity in the

Workplace. Violence within our workplaces affects everyone, including employers, employees, staff, managers, and customers. Between 2018 and 2021, 1,945 sexual harassment charges with a charge of race discrimination were filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. With over 71% of Black/African Americans listed as the complainants (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2022). Although workplaces vary, the **Healthy Workplace Actions** described in this resource may be appropriate for a variety of work environments.



SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Sexual violence in the workplace includes any sexual activity or behavior performed against another person's will at work when they did not or were unable to give their consent.

- Within two years, 80% of harassed women quit their jobs.
- Sexual harassment has a negative impact on productivity and morale, increases employee turnover, and increases in absenteeism, all of which may cost an average organization up to \$6.7 million annually.
- After being sexually assaulted, 18% of survivors reported threats and exclusion from coworkers. The participants felt alone and afraid as a result both on and off the job, especially if the sexual assault took place at work. (Workplaces Respond to Domestic and Sexual Violence, n.d.)

RACIAL EQUITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Racial equity is a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) are four times as likely as white people to have been discriminated against at work related to their race/ethnicity. *How to Promote Racial Equity in the Workplace* (Livingston, 2020) provides a model called **PRESS** for workplaces to use in order to move from understanding the underlying condition to developing genuine concern, and then to focusing on correction.

- BIPOC employees reported instances of employment discrimination at a rate that was 30% greater than it was a year prior.
- In comparison to white employees, BIPOC employees with three or more years of experience report more frequently that they have not had the same opportunities and possibilities to thrive as any other individual inside their company.
- When compared to white men and women, BIPOC women are almost twice as likely to not feel physically safe at work (Hue, 2022).

HEALTHY WORKPLACE ACTIONS

Employers

1. Review current sexual harassment and related policies with your Human Resources department to determine if current policies exemplify a safe and healthy work environment and if they are consistently implemented and enforced.
2. Familiarize new employees with the workplace culture during onboarding that fosters connections with leadership and allows them to envision a future with the organization.



3. Ask employees for input on the development and implementation of workplace policies on preventing and responding to sexual harassment and for creating an inclusive workplace culture.
4. Create remote/virtual work environments and meetings with options for various comfort levels, such as not requiring employees to be on camera, and recording meetings in order to have records of communications.
5. Encourage building trust and relationships to help employees feel comfortable sharing their experiences. For example, create affinity groups to help foster mentoring opportunities and safe spaces.
6. Establish an emotionally safe environment by training staff on ways to prevent sexual harassment, including bystander intervention.
7. Ensure a physically safe work environment with safety enhancements such as well-lit parking areas, security cameras, and easily accessible emergency information. It is important to ensure the privacy of employees while also having visibility – no isolated or blind spot areas.
8. Extend your commitment to a healthy and respectful work environment to include all visitors. Your commitment to employee safety and morale is a worthwhile investment and makes a strong statement to the community.
9. Collaborate with your local, state, territory, or tribal sexual assault program during Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). Collaborations could include fundraising activities, information booths, and guest speakers.

Employees

1. Respect cultural and racial differences in the workplace.
2. Avoid race-based or culturally offensive humor or pranks.
3. If you witness inappropriate or demeaning behavior such as racist or sexist jokes, sexual harassment, or other insensitive behavior, speak up! Practice responsible bystander intervention using the tips on NSVRC's Taking Action to Intervene (NSVRC, 2022) and NSVRC's Bystander Intervention Resources online special collection (NSVRC, 2020).
4. Volunteer with your local, state, territory, or tribal sexual violence program and consider participating in SAAM activities.

5. Report incidents of inappropriate, discriminatory, harassing, or abusive behavior you experience to your supervisor, Human Resources department, union, or management. Don't assume others will. The more employees speak up about a specific incident, the more likely management will take action.
6. Support sexual assault survivors if they confide in you. Offer flexibility and encouragement. To learn more ways to support a co-worker or employee who has experienced sexual harassment or assault, see the tips in *Supporting a Co-Worker or Employee Who Has Experienced Sexual Harassment or Assault* (Check Your Workplace, n.d.).
7. Participate in an awareness event on the SAAM Day of Action, April 4th, 2023, and encourage others within your workplace to join you. For a list of events online and in your area, visit the SAAM website at www.nsvrc.org/saam.

Additional Resources

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2009). Preventing sexual violence: Employer perspectives.

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2009). Respect works: Prevent sexual violence in your workplace

References

Check Your Workplace. (n.d.). *Supporting a co-worker or employee who has experienced sexual harassment or assault* [Webpage]. Futures Without Violence. <https://checkyourworkplace.com/advocate/supporting-survivorsHue>. (2022). *Unsafe. Unheard. Unvalued. A state of inequity*. <https://www.stateofinequity.wearehue.org/>

Livingston, R. (2020, September-October). How to promote racial equity in the workplace: A five-step plan. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2020/09/how-to-promote-racial-equity-in-the-workplace>

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2020). *Bystander intervention resources* [Webpage]. <https://www.nsvrc.org/bystander-intervention-resources>

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2022). Taking action to intervene

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Workplaces Respond to Domestic and Sexual Violence. (n.d.). *Facts: Sexual harassment in the workplace* [Webpage]. <https://nsvrc.co/Sexualharassmentworkplace>

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (2022, April). Sexual harassment in our nation's workplaces. *EEOC Data Highlight, 2*. <https://nsvrc.co/nationsworkplaces>