What Can I Do If I’m Being Harassed?

♦ Trust your own judgment.
♦ Do not blame yourself – it’s not your fault.
♦ Keep a journal of each time something happens, including dates, times, locations, witnesses and if you were able to stop it. Include how the situation made you feel.
♦ Confide in a friend, family member or teacher about it and how it makes you feel.
♦ Tell the harasser to stop, either in person or in writing. Inform him/her which specific behaviors are inappropriate and unwelcome. If you feel too uncomfortable to confront the harasser yourself, seek the assistance of a trusted individual (friend, parent, teacher, principal, etc.) Regardless of how you choose to do it, the harasser must be told to stop and why.
♦ Does your school have a sexual harassment policy? If your school has a sexual harassment policy, be sure to follow it. If not, talk to school officials or a trusted adult about the harassment. If your school takes the appropriate actions, the situation is in the hands of your administrators. Be sure to cooperate with them to get the problem solved. However, if your school doesn’t take the appropriate actions, then you or someone acting for you may file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights.

What Can I Do If I Witness Someone Else Being Harassed?

♦ Say that you don’t think it’s funny.
♦ Tell the harasser to stop.
♦ Encourage the person being harassed to seek the help of a teacher, counselor, school administrator or hotline.

Are You A Sexual Harasser?

Take this test:
Would you say or do the same thing in front of your parent, teacher or other respected adult?
If you answered "No," then don’t say it or do it at all! This behavior may very well be considered sexual harassment.

For Help
Call the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) Hotline
1 (800) 601-7200
24 hours a day/7 days a week

NJCASA is the collective voice for victims of sexual violence, their loved ones and Sexual Violence Programs across New Jersey. Its member agencies represent each of New Jersey’s 21 counties. NJCASA’s toll-free hotline will connect individuals affected by sexual violence with professionals that provide assistance and referrals.

Calls to NJCASA’s hotline will be routed to the individual’s closest Sexual Violence Program.
A Message from the Department of Children and Families' Division on Women

Sexual harassment can happen to anyone at any age. That is why it is important you know what sexual harassment is and what to do if it happens to you or someone you know.

This brochure provides you with important information about sexual harassment. It defines what sexual harassment is and gives clear examples of things that can be considered sexual harassment. Most importantly, it explains what to do if you or someone you know becomes a victim of sexual harassment.

If you are being sexually harassed, it is important for you to ask for help from a trusted adult like a parent, teacher, school nurse or counselor. Every county in our state has a Sexual Violence Program that can provide you with free and confidential help if you are being sexually harassed. If you think someone has crossed the line, don’t be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help.

Definitions

Sexual harassment is:

- Any unwelcome behavior, gesture, look, comment or touching of a sexual nature. It is usually done on purpose to make someone feel uncomfortable, intimidated or threatened. It may even result in physical injury. The harasser can be another student, a team member, a leader or a teacher.
- Determined by the perception of the victim on a case-by-case basis. If you think you were sexually harassed, trust your instincts, even if others don’t agree.
- A widespread problem facing people of all ages, regardless of their race or gender.
- Illegal.

Sexual harassment can take the form of:

- Sexual comments, jokes, gestures or looks
- Touching, grabbing and pinching
- Intentionally brushing up against you
- Flashing or mooning
- Spreading sexual rumors
- Showing, giving or intentionally leaving sexual pictures, photographs, illustrations, messages, and notes
- Blocking your path in a sexual way
- Writing sexual messages or graffiti
- Forcing you to kiss or do something sexual to someone
- Pulling off, down or at your clothing
- Spying on you while dressing or changing

Effects

If you are being sexually harassed, you may feel:
- Uncomfortable
- Sad/Depressed
- Self-conscious
- Confused
- Embarrassed
- Less confident
- Scared
- Guilty
- Alone

If you are being sexually harassed, you may experience:
- Difficulty paying attention in class
- Difficulty studying
- Lower grades
- Difficulty sleeping
- Self-doubt
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Eating disorders
- A weakened immune system

Did you know?

- If left ignored, there is a 75% chance the harassment will continue to worsen*.
- Sexual harassment occurs everywhere.
- People don’t harass others out of affection; they do it to gain power and control over their victims.
- In New Jersey, any person over the age of 8 is subject to arrest and prosecution for sexual harassment and may be subject to harsh civil and criminal penalties.
- Four out of five students have experienced sexual harassment in school**.

* Source: Farley, Lin Sexual Shakedown, 1980
** Source: AAUW report, Hostile Hallways, 2001

Steps

Sexual harassment differs from case to case. Many times it happens in different steps from sexist remarks to sexual assault. However, the steps may not always apply or happen in the same sequence.

Step 1: Sexist remarks – convey degrading sexist attitudes
Step 2: Seductive behavior – sexual advances
Step 3: Sexual bribery – promise of reward in return for a sexual favor
Step 4: Sexual coercion – use of threats to force a sexual favor
Step 5: Sexual violence – touching, physical assault, rape

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NJ Coalition Against Sexual Assault
800-601-7200
24-hour hotline

National Victim Center
800-FYI-CALL
800-394-2255
TTY: 800-211-7996
Mon - Fri 8:30am-8:30pm EST

NJ Division on Civil Rights
609-292-4605

NJ Division on Women
609-888-7164

Women’s Referral Central Hotline
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