

Are You Taking An Ostrich's Approach To Workplace Harassment?

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In today's environment where sexual and other harassment cases have exploded in number in all workplace settings, you unintentionally may be placing your organization at risk if you are approaching this subject by burying your head in the sand in any of the following ostrich-like ways, "I'll take my chances," "It won't happen here," "Training is unnecessary," or "We are too busy to train." If you receive a harassment charge and are asked what good faith efforts your organization has taken to prevent unlawful workplace harassment and comply with discrimination laws, the reasons listed above will not produce desired results. At that point, it will be too late to implement preventative strategies that should have been in place.

The following is a checklist of ways to prevent and respond to allegations of harassment:

1. Develop a Harassment-Free Workplace Policy that covers sexual and other protected forms of harassment.
2. Provide training for all supervision and employees on a harassment-free workplace, recognizing that training is an essential part of an employer's good faith efforts.
3. Communicate the policy and any revisions to all employees; review the policy in your harassment-free workplace training.
4. Post copies of the policy in places readily available to employees, applicants and visitors.
5. Obtain employees' signatures confirming receipt of the policy and training.
6. Remind employees of the policy through supervisory discussions and by inserting information periodically in written communications.
7. Have refresher training to ensure that supervisors and employees are aware of the organization's expectations and their responsibilities.

8. Dedicate time for training during orientation meetings with new employees.
9. Investigate allegations of harassment and take action, as appropriate.
10. Develop a complaint procedure and ensure that no retaliation results from its use.
11. Create a respectful and inclusive work environment that does not tolerate or condone discrimination or harassment.

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