

CHECKLIST FOR AN EFFECTIVE
POLICY STATEMENT

- | | <u>YES</u> | <u>NO</u> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Does the policy statement contain: | | |
| a) a clear definition of sexual harassment? | ___ | ___ |
| b) legal prohibitions on sexual harassment? | ___ | ___ |
| c) institutional prohibitions on sexual harassment? | ___ | ___ |
| d) the negative consequences of sexual harassment for all individuals? | ___ | ___ |
| 2. Does the policy statement refer to the existence of: | | |
| a) sanctions for sexual harassment? | ___ | ___ |
| b) student and faculty codes of conduct? | ___ | ___ |
| c) grievance procedures for processing sexual harassment complaints? | ___ | ___ |
| 3. Is the policy statement definition broad enough to encompass the wide range of types of sexual harassment? | ___ | ___ |
| 4. Does the policy statement include varying examples of sexually harassing behaviors to represent the wide range of incidences of sexual harassment? | ___ | ___ |
| 5. Does the policy statement include a variety of resolution alternatives? | ___ | ___ |
| 6. Does the policy statement provide information on resource persons and additional sources of information? | ___ | ___ |

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Gerald N. Tirozzi
Commissioner of Education

Division of Education Support Services

Robert I. Margolin
Division Director

Bureau of School and Program Development

William J. Gauthier
Chief

Eve Hendricks
Consultant for Sex Equity

Lyn Nevins
Product Developer

For further information or additional copies of this brochure, please contact:

Eve Hendricks
Consultant for Sex Equity
Connecticut State Department of Education
P.O. Box 2219
Hartford, CT 06145
(203) 566-5620

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN SCHOOL

WHAT IS IT?

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?



SEXUAL HARASSMENT - WHAT IS IT?

Sexual harassment in school is unwanted and unwelcome sexual attention from teachers, other adults, students, or anyone else the victim may deal with in school or at school-related activities.

The range of behaviors includes: leering, pinching, grabbing, suggestive verbal comments, and pressure for sexual activity. Attempted rape and rape are the most physically violent forms of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment also carries the message that if the victim does not comply with the harasser's demand, there may be retaliation.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND FLIRTING

High school students in Massachusetts designed the following chart to distinguish between flirting and sexual harassment.

Flirting

- When both like it and do it and it keeps on being mutual.
- A glance; you feel attractive and complimented.
- If you know the person (depends on how you know the person) and how they say it.

Sexual Harassment

- Male does it to female (usually) and she doesn't like it and can't stop it.
- A look or a stare; you feel invaded, ashamed, naked.
- Hints; obscene, suggestive, pinch, pat, grab.

EFFECTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Students report that they feel both direct and indirect effects of sexual harassment.

Direct effects include retaliation inflicted on them for not complying with sexual demands.

- A teacher may lower a student's grade.
- A teacher may give the student less help with her/his studies.
- A peer may sabotage a school project.
- A peer may spread rumors or ostracize a person from friendship networks.

These direct effects evoke feelings of embarrassment, fear, anger, powerlessness, loss of self-confidence and cynicism about education and nontraditional careers. In turn, these emotional responses often result in:

- reduced ability to perform school work
- excessive absenteeism
- transfer from courses

Indirect Effects. Students who feel betrayed, discredited, or compromised by peers or school staff are likely to become less trusting of people in general, and less enthusiastic about pursuing their education. They often become overly self-protective and thereby prevent themselves from meeting people who can assist them with their education or with their career choices.

WHAT CAN YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT DO ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

One of the most important steps a school district can take is to establish a policy statement on sexual harassment. This indicates how seriously the district views this problem.

The following are some tips on making your policy statement work effectively.

- Commitment of school administration must be strong in adopting and following through on the policy.
- Identify individuals who can serve as coordinators and support people for students dealing with a harassment situation. It is preferable to choose people with varying roles in the school - a teacher, a counselor and an administrator - so students can discuss their problems with the person with whom they are most comfortable.
- Wide dissemination of the policy should be accompanied by training and discussion for students, teachers, counselors and administrators.
- Informal resolutions in peer-to-peer cases should be encouraged. This process can be educational rather than punitive.

When your district writes its policy statement, the "checklist" on page 4 can help ensure its effectiveness.