

AUGUST ISSUE

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What to Do When an Employee Reports Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is the most reported issue with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

Employers should endeavor to educate and train their staff on sexual harassment regardless of whether they have received reports or not. And they should do everything they can to make sure employees feel safe and comfortable reporting it.

Formulating a Plan

An employer can become aware of potential sexual harassment from a variety of sources: e.g., the alleged victim, another employee who witnessed or was told of the



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harassment, an anonymous complaint. But whatever the mechanism, once an employer has this knowledge, the employer must take action.

Once on notice, the employer must follow its policies for investigating sexual harassment. Every company, no matter the size, should have a formal written sexual harassment policy. The policy should include descriptions of prohibited behaviors, how sexual harassment can be reported and to whom, and how it will be investigated and resolved. It is important to follow this policy to be fair and consistent, regardless of which employees are involved. Should the employer be sued by the alleged victim or harasser, the employer will have an affirmative defense if the employer can show it followed the protocol and documented the process.

It is important to have a solid plan in place before beginning any investigation.

Conducting the Investigation

Once the plan is in place, the



investigation can begin. It is important to move quickly but not foolishly. Some things to keep in mind as you move through the process:

Your initial objective is to get the reporter's story and understand the facts from the reporter's perspective. Keep in mind that it might be someone other than the victim who reports the harassment. The reporter's story will provide the facts to which the accused and other witnesses' stories can be compared.

You should also let the reporter know that he or she should tell you immediately of any retaliatory behavior from supervisors, peers, and other staff. This kind of "payback" behavior is completely unacceptable and should not be tolerated under any circumstances.

It's highly recommended that another staff member sit in on all interviews. This will allow the lead investigator to actively listen without the distraction of having to take notes. Make sure you get names, dates, places, behaviors, and any other relevant

Study Tips for Success

As we approach that time of year where school is back in session, you may need some helpful study tips for you or your child. These helpful tips should make it easier to reach your academic goals.

Even if you don't have a test to study for, these study tips can help you focus when gaining knowledge on any topic.

A Distraction-Free Setting

A distraction-free setting is the first step to a successful study session.

Some benefit from playing white noise or having a fan going, as sometimes the absence of any sound can be distracting for some.

Being able to say things out loud can help you remember them. You can also do this with someone else, provided that person does not distract you.

If you get hungry, you

may want to take a break and go grab food, which wastes time that could be spent more productively. Try instead to come

prepared so you can get sustenance while studying.



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information. Ask open-ended questions when possible and try to help the person relax and feel safe.

(also with a second person to take notes). It will be important to follow the same standards when interviewing the accused. Again, you want to hear the accused's side of the story, as well as the names of any witnesses that could corroborate the accused's version of events. The accused must feel like he or she is being treated fairly and given every opportunity to get facts on the record.

to the events in question. They must also feel safe from retaliatory behaviors and that their jobs will not be negatively affected for coming forward.

phone records, texts, emails, photos, audio recordings, videos, documents. All of this must be weighed and examined against the

facts as presented by the reporter, the accused, and the witnesses.

a decision should be made. If possible, you should review your decision with an attorney to make sure all laws have been followed and due process was afforded the accused.

Making a Decision

Your decision may be easy - there may be corroborating witnesses and evidence that point squarely to finding the accused responsible or not responsible. More often than not, the results of the investigation will be much more ambiguous. Many reports of sexual harassment are of the "he said, she said" type. There are no witnesses, there is no evidence, often alcohol or drugs are involved, and you must rely solely on the word of the victim and the accused. In such cases, it will be important to assess the credibility of each party and determine whom you believe. Credibility can be assessed

by observing body language, internal inconsistencies in each person's testimony, and whose story makes more sense on its face.

If the accused is found responsible, it's time to implement interim or permanent measures to protect the victim. These could include reassignment, suspension, or termination of the accused.

The corrective measures will depend on the specific facts but where possible, the goal should be to rehabilitate the responsible party and help him or her become a better employee. While many companies employ a "zero tolerance" policy regarding sexual harassment, such a policy could result in overly punitive outcomes.

File all documentation and final decisions separate from the employees' personnel files. They should be kept confidential and accessible only to your HR staff.



What's Next After You Move?

After your move, you may think your work is over. And for the most part, that's true. But there are still a couple of things that you should do.

Remember, as long as you kept your previous home in good condition (walls, floors, appliances, etc.) and took lots of pictures before moving out, you are entitled to your deposit. Check your state

laws for how many days from your move-out date that a landlord has to return your deposit. Make sure you fully understand what your state laws allow in terms of deductions from the deposit (can they deduct for cleaning costs? How

many years have you lived in the residence and what is the cut-off for general "wear and tear"?), whether or not receipts for deductions need to be included, whether or not an itemized list with

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Taking Productive Breaks

Just because it's important to stay focused, that doesn't mean you should study for hours without any breaks. Breaks can also help you study.

or every hour and a half. This can help your brain refocus on a task and help you to avoid burnout. If you just take a break every hour to scroll through social media, it won't help you study. So when you do take a break, make it something that will help you. Try taking a walk, doing a workout, as aerobic exercise can help boost your brain power.

Take some time

on your breaks to practice some meditation and focus on your breathing. Meditation can also help to boost your attention span.

Test Yourself

One of the most effective ways to ace a test or grasp a topic is to test yourself prior to any type of official test.

If you can use mnemonic devices to test yourself, they may help you remember specific facts for later.

Flashcards are a great way to quiz yourself on various information. You can make the main subject on one side and bullet points of key points to remember on the other.

If you're able to work with another person who is willing to help or is studying the same subject, they can also test you by asking you questions. It may be helpful for the other person to ask questions beyond the key points you need to remember.

Remember that what works for someone else may not be exactly what works for you. It's okay to find what works for you. Maybe you study best with a cup of coffee, while your classmate studies best with a cup of herbal tea. Find what works for you and stick to it. There's always something new to learn about, so hopefully these tips get you started. 📌

Illustrations by Freepik



costs of repairs needs to be included, etc.

Send a letter to your previous landlord (and keep a copy!) to show that you tried to resolve the matter amicably, and then, if there is still no response, check your state laws to determine the steps you need to take to file a small claims lawsuit against your previous landlord. Remember, all parties want to avoid going to court, so it's best to make sure you send a letter to your landlord before taking legal action.



(especially if you are moving to a rental).

Try Craigslist, Offer Up, and other similar websites for affordable and sometimes free furniture. Better yet, maybe you have family nearby, and they've been looking to get rid of that extra set of drawers that's collecting dust in their garage. There are always creative ways to avoid splurging on brand new furniture

Consider introducing yourself to your next-door neighbors and letting them know you've just moved in. If you want to go the extra mile, drop by with a baked good, a bottle of wine, or some other thoughtful neighborly gift. Being on good terms with your neighbors can be extremely helpful down the line when you need a helping hand, and it also helps for

your neighbors to see you as a human being (which means they might think twice before blasting music after 10PM).

The hardest part is over, and you can kick back and bask in your new space. Remember to take as long as you need to recuperate before diving into decorating, color schemes, new furniture, yard work, and everything else that comes with a new home.



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Super Easy Fish and Veggie Gratin

An easy weeknight fish that is good enough for entertaining and requires only 30 minutes of prep time.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 T unsalted butter
- 1 1/2 pounds mushrooms, sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 pounds fish fillets, such as sole, mahimahi, tilapia or cod
- 3/4 cup panko or other bread crumbs
- 1 1/2 pounds tomatoes, sliced
- 6 ounces gruyere or swiss cheese, grated
- 2 T parmesan cheese, finely grated (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

Heat the butter over medium heat until melted and it begins to bubble. Add mushrooms and garlic and saute for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Put the panko on a plate and dip the fillets in the panko, coating each side of the fillets.

Layer the fish fillets over the mushrooms. If you are using thicker fillets such as mahi mahi, the fish will not overlap. If you are using thinner fillets such as sole, the fillets may overlap a bit. Some overlap is OK.

Add the optional parmesan cheese last. Bake for 30 minutes. Cut into squares and serve while hot.

NOTES

Consider using sauteed onions, zucchini or brussels sprouts. Or a combination of vegetables.

