

What is Workplace Sexual Violence?

Defining Sexual Violence

Sexual violence includes all types of sexual behavior, ranging from sexual harassment to rape and incest, that happens without the freely given consent of the victim. All forms of sexual violence can and do happen in the workplace. While working or on duty, U.S. employees experienced 36,500 rapes and sexual assaults from 1993 to 1999.ⁱ

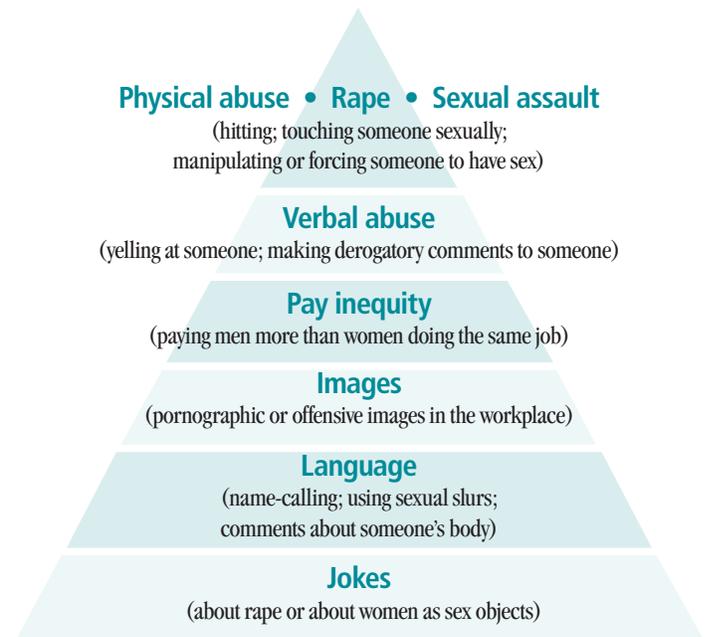
Sexual Violence at Work

Most often, we hear about sexual harassment in the workplace. In 2006, the Equal Employment Opportunity Council received 12,025 charges of sexual harassment (15.4% filed by males).ⁱⁱ In the pyramid at right, the range of sexually violent behaviors can be seen. Most of these are considered sexual harassment. Behaviors that involve physical contact are usually called abuse, rape, or sexual assault. All forms of sexual violence can and do happen in the workplace. The abuser or offender can be of the same or opposite sex, a supervisor, an agent of the employer, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or a non-employee.

Consequences for Victims

Due to the often devastating emotional and physical consequences of sexual violence, victims may have difficulty meeting ongoing work demands in the aftermath of an assault. Women who have been raped or sexually assaulted report decreased work functioning, sometimes for up to 8 months after the attack.ⁱⁱⁱ

Almost 50% of rape victims lose their jobs or are forced to quit in the aftermath of the crime.^{iv}



Cost of Workplace Sexual Violence

All forms of sexual violence result in high costs for businesses and the economy. Sexual violence on the job is related to lower productivity, higher rates of absenteeism, and lower employee morale. In 1994, sexual harassment cost the federal government an estimated \$327 million due to job turnover, sick leave, and individual and work group productivity losses among federal employees.^v

Interrupted work as a result of sexual violence can also jeopardize the economic stability of individuals, families, and communities. It also increases healthcare costs for both individuals and employers. If employees bring lawsuits

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against a company for sexual harassment or violence, businesses may incur large legal fees.

Preventing Workplace Sexual Violence

Prevention means stopping sexual violence before it happens. This requires us to change how we treat one another, and how we look at sexual violence in our society. Employees and employers have a role to play in prevention.

Here are some examples:

- Employees treat one another with respect and dignity, regardless of gender, race, or religion.
- Employers have well-publicized company policies for reporting and responding to acts of sexual harassment and violence.
- Businesses support their local rape crisis center through donation of time and/or money. By showing they care, others in the community are inspired to learn more about how to help.

Resources

National Sexual Violence Resource Center
www.nsvrc.org

National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women (VAWnet)
www.vawnet.org

U.S. Department of Labor
 Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA)
www.osha.gov

AFL-CIO Violence Against Women in the Workplace
<http://www.aflcio.org/issues/jobseconomy/women/violence.cfm>

References

- i Duhart, D.T. (2001). *National Crime Victimization Survey: Violence in the workplace, 1993-1999* (NCJ No. 190076.). U.S. Department of Justice.
- ii U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission. (2008). *Sexual Harassment*. Retrieved August 15, 2008 from www.eeoc.gov/types/sexual_harassment.html.
- iii Resick, P.A., Calhoun, K.S., Atkeson, B.M., & Ellis, E.M. (1981). Social adjustment in victims of sexual assault. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 49, 705-712.
- iv S. Rep No. 103-108, at 54, n.69 (1993) citing E. Ellis, B. Atkeson & K. Calhoun, An Assessment of the Long Term Reaction to Rape, *Journal of Psychology*, 90, 264.
- v U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board. (1995). *Sexual Harassment in the Federal Workforce: Trends, Progress, and Continuing Challenges*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.