Sexual Harassment – Landscaping Meeting Kit

WHAT’S AT STAKE

Sexual harassment is a serious issue that can occur in any workplace, including the landscaping industry. It affects the safety, well-being, and dignity of workers, creating a hostile work environment.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

Sexual harassment in the workplace can take many forms, all of which are damaging.

1. **Types of Sexual Harassment:**
   - **Quid Pro Quo Harassment:** This occurs when a person in a position of authority demands sexual favors in exchange for job benefits, such as promotions, raises, or continued employment.
   - **Hostile Work Environment:** This form of harassment involves unwelcome sexual behavior or comments that create an intimidating, offensive, or hostile work environment.

1. **Behavior That Constitutes Harassment:**
   - **Unwanted Advances:** Unwelcome sexual advances, such as asking for dates repeatedly after being refused, suggestive comments, or inappropriate touching, are forms of harassment.
   - **Verbal Harassment:** This includes making sexual comments, jokes, or remarks about someone’s appearance, body, or sexual orientation.
   - **Non-Verbal Harassment:** Non-verbal actions, such as leering, making obscene gestures, or displaying sexually suggestive materials, also constitute harassment.

1. **Impact on Victims and the Workplace:**

- **Emotional and Psychological Impact:** Victims of sexual harassment often experience stress, anxiety, depression, and a loss of self-esteem.
- **Workplace Culture:** A workplace that tolerates sexual harassment can become toxic, leading to low morale, decreased productivity, and high employee turnover.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

How to protect yourself and others in the landscaping workplace.

Establish Clear Policies:

1. **Zero Tolerance Policy:**

- **Develop a Policy:** Employers should establish a clear, written zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment. This policy should define what constitutes harassment and provide examples.
- **Communicate the Policy:** Ensure that all employees are aware of the policy and understand their rights.

1. **Reporting Procedures:**

- **Create a Safe Reporting System:** Establish a confidential process for reporting incidents of harassment.
- **Protection from Retaliation:** Ensure that the policy includes protections against retaliation for those who report harassment or participate in an investigation. Retaliation is illegal.

Training and Education:

1. **Regular Training:**

- **Comprehensive Training:** Provide regular training sessions for all employees on sexual harassment, including what it is, how to recognize it, and how to report it.
- **Tailored to the Workplace:** Ensure that training is relevant to the landscaping industry.

1. **Promote a Culture of Respect:**
    - **Lead by Example:** Supervisors and managers should model respectful behavior and hold themselves and others accountable.
    - **Encourage Open Communication:** Foster an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing issues related to harassment.

Responding to Harassment:

1. **Take Immediate Action:**
    - **Address Complaints Promptly:** When a complaint is made, take immediate action to investigate.
    - **Ensure Fair Investigations:** Conduct thorough and impartial investigations into all reports of harassment.

1. **Support for Victims:**
    - **Provide Resources:** Offer victims of harassment, counseling, legal assistance, and other support.
    - **Respect Privacy:** Maintain confidentiality throughout the investigation process.

Creating a Positive Work Environment:

1. **Encourage Respectful Behavior:**
    - **Promote Inclusivity:** Encourage a workplace culture that values diversity and inclusivity.
    - **Address Issues Early:** Address any behavior that could lead to harassment before it escalates.

1. **Continuous Improvement:**
    - **Regular Review of Policies:** Regularly update harassment policies and training programs.
    - **Gather Feedback:** Solicit feedback from employees on the effectiveness of harassment prevention measures and make adjustments as needed.

FINAL WORD

By understanding what constitutes harassment, establishing clear policies, providing regular training, and fostering a culture of respect, we can create a safe and inclusive environment for everyone.