

## What Can I Do If I'm Being Harassed?

- ◆ Trust your own judgment.
  - ◆ Do not blame yourself – it's not your fault.
  - ◆ Keep a journal of each time something happens, including dates, times, locations, witnesses and if you were able to stop it. Include how the situation made you feel.
  - ◆ Confide in a friend, family member or teacher about it and how it makes you feel.
  - ◆ Tell the harasser to stop, either in person or in writing. Inform him/her which specific behaviors are inappropriate and unwelcome. If you feel too uncomfortable to confront the harasser yourself, seek the assistance of a trusted individual (friend, parent, teacher, principal, etc.) Regardless of how you choose to do it, the harasser must be told to stop and why.
  - ◆ Does your school have a sexual harassment policy? If your school has a sexual harassment policy, be sure to follow it. If not, talk to school officials or a trusted adult about the harassment. If your school takes the appropriate actions, the situation is in the hands of your administrators. Be sure to cooperate with them to get the problem solved. However, if your school doesn't take the appropriate actions, then you or someone acting for you may file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights.
  - ◆ Report the offensive behavior to a teacher, counselor or school administrator.
- If your school does not correct the problem, ask a trusted adult to contact:
- U.S. Department of Education  
Office for Civil Rights  
Customer Service Team  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202-1100  
800-421-3481  
FAX: 202-245-6840, TDD: 877-521-2172  
OCR@ed.gov  
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>
- For additional information and a complaint form, ask a trusted adult to contact the New York Office Region II (New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands) for Civil Rights at:
- U.S. Department of Education  
32 Old Slip, 26th Floor  
New York, NY 10005-2500  
646-428-3900  
FAX: 646-428-3843, TDD: 877-521-2172  
OCR.NewYork@ed.gov  
weekdays from 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- You also can call the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault at 800-601-7200. You will be connected with the hotline in your area to speak to a counselor. You may need to leave a name and a phone number for a counselor to return your call.

### What Can I Do If I Witness Someone Else Being Harassed?

- ◆ Say that you don't think it's funny.
- ◆ Tell the harasser to stop.
- ◆ Encourage the person being harassed to seek the help of a teacher, counselor, school administrator or hotline.

### Are You A Sexual Harasser?

#### Take this test:

Would you say or do the same thing in front of your parent, teacher or other respected adult? If you answered "No," then don't say it or do it at all! This behavior may very well be considered sexual harassment.

**For Help  
Call the New Jersey Coalition  
Against Sexual Assault  
(NJCASA) Hotline  
1 (800) 601-7200  
24 hours a day/7 days a week**



NJCASA is the collective voice for victims of sexual violence, their loved ones and Sexual Violence Programs across New Jersey. Its member agencies represent each of New Jersey's 21 counties. NJCASA's toll-free hotline will connect individuals affected by sexual violence with professionals that provide assistance and referrals.

**Calls to NJCASA's hotline will be routed to the individual's closest Sexual Violence Program.**

Crossing  
the  
Line

Sexual Harassment  
in High Schools



Division on Women  
50 East State Street  
7th Floor, PO Box 717  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0717  
609-888-7164  
[www.nj.gov/dcf](http://www.nj.gov/dcf)

## A Message from the Department of Children and Families' Division on Women

Sexual harassment can happen to anyone at any age. That is why it is important you know what sexual harassment is and what to do if it happens to you or someone you know.

This brochure provides you with important information about sexual harassment. It defines what sexual harassment is and gives clear examples of things that can be considered sexual harassment. Most importantly, it explains what to do if you or someone you know becomes a victim of sexual harassment.

If you are being sexually harassed, it is important for you to ask for help from a trusted adult like a parent, teacher, school nurse or counselor. Every county in our state has a Sexual Violence Program that can provide you with free and confidential help if you are being sexually harassed. If you think someone has crossed the line, don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help.

## Definitions

### Sexual harassment is:

- ◆ Any unwelcome behavior, gesture, look, comment or touching of a sexual nature. It is usually done on purpose to make someone feel uncomfortable, intimidated or threatened. It may even result in physical injury. The harasser can be another student, a team member, a leader or a teacher.
- ◆ Determined by the perception of the victim on a case-by-case basis. If you think you were sexually harassed, trust your instincts, even if others don't agree.
- ◆ A widespread problem facing people of all ages, regardless of their race or gender.
- ◆ Illegal.

### Sexual harassment can take the form of:

- ◆ Sexual comments, jokes, gestures or looks
- ◆ Touching, grabbing and pinching
- ◆ Intentionally brushing up against you
- ◆ Flashing or mooning
- ◆ Spreading sexual rumors
- ◆ Showing, giving or intentionally leaving sexual pictures, photographs, illustrations, messages, and notes
- ◆ Blocking your path in a sexual way
- ◆ Writing sexual messages or graffiti
- ◆ Forcing you to kiss or do something sexual to someone
- ◆ Pulling off, down or at your clothing
- ◆ Spying on you while dressing or changing

## Effects

### If you are being sexually harassed, you may feel:

- ◆ Uncomfortable
- ◆ Sad/Depressed
- ◆ Self-conscious
- ◆ Confused
- ◆ Embarrassed
- ◆ Less confident
- ◆ Scared
- ◆ Guilty
- ◆ Alone

### If you are being sexually harassed, you may experience:

- ◆ Difficulty paying attention in class
- ◆ Difficulty studying
- ◆ Lower grades
- ◆ Difficulty sleeping
- ◆ Self-doubt
- ◆ Withdrawal from friends and activities
- ◆ Eating disorders
- ◆ A weakened immune system

## Did you know?

- ◆ If left ignored, there is a 75 % chance the harassment will continue to worsen\*.
- ◆ Sexual harassment occurs everywhere.
- ◆ People don't harass others out of affection; they do it to gain power and control over their victims.
- ◆ In New Jersey, any person over the age of 8 is subject to arrest and prosecution for sexual harassment and may be subject to harsh civil and criminal penalties.
- ◆ Four out of five students have experienced sexual harassment in school\*\*.

\* Source: Farley, Lin Sexual Shakedown, 1980  
\*\* Source: AAUW report, Hostile Hallways, 2001

## Steps

Sexual harassment differs from case to case. Many times it happens in different steps from sexist remarks to sexual assault. However, the steps may not always apply or happen in the same sequence.

- Step 1:** Sexist remarks – convey degrading sexist attitudes
- Step 2:** Seductive behavior – sexual advances
- Step 3:** Sexual bribery – promise of reward in return for a sexual favor
- Step 4:** Sexual coercion – use of threats to force a sexual favor
- Step 5:** Sexual violence – touching, physical assault, rape

**NJ Coalition Against Sexual Assault**  
800-601-7200  
24-hour hotline

**National Victim Center**  
800-FYI-CALL  
800-394-2255  
TTY: 800-211-7996  
Mon - Fri 8:30am-8:30pm EST

**NJ Division on Civil Rights**  
609-292-4605

**NJ Division on Women**  
609-888-7164

**Women's Referral Central Hotline**  
800-322-8092