



Kingsborough Community College Internship Program About Sexual Harassment

It is a shame that a topic such as sexual harassment has to be addressed as you begin your internship. In fact, it is a shame the topic has to be addressed at all. Unfortunately, some people do abuse their power or their trust by physically or emotionally harassing other people. It happens at work and, although rarely, it has happened in internships.

Friendships at work are wonderful. Co-workers “hang out” together; some date each other; some marry each other. A workplace is a social organization. Moreover, informal relationships expressed by playful kidding and idle banter are part of the socialization process. It is entertaining, and it should be expected. However, as you begin your internship, you should keep the following points in mind.

- You have the right to expect professional conduct from everyone at work, including your supervisors, peers, and subordinates. You are not “just a student” or “just an intern,” and the internship is not an initiation. It is a job in a professional work environment.
- No co-worker, ever, has the right to touch you, fondle you, proposition you, make lewd or sexually intimidating remarks, or place you in personally uncomfortable situations.
- “Honey,” “babe,” and “stud” are inappropriate methods of address in a professional environment. Obviously, these are unacceptable substitutions for your name. Remind those using these terms that you expect to be addressed by your proper name. Also, do not use these terms, even in jest, with co-workers or other interns in the work environment.
- Sexual harassment constitutes behavior that is perceived as annoying, aggressive, and threatening. If you feel that someone is targeting you as the object of sexual innuendo or inappropriate advances, then you are being harassed. It is not just a matter of the actions of others; it is how these actions affect you.
- Sexual harassment rarely happens to only one person. People who harass do so routinely—they express a pattern of behavior. If you have been harassed, you are probably not the only one. Others have experienced similar harassment from the same people. The fault lies with the person doing the harassing. Sexual harassment is behavior that is inappropriate and unwarranted under any circumstances.

If you feel that you have been sexually harassed, here are some things you can do.

1. Find an ally at work (someone with whom you are comfortable), and confide in that person. This is a good idea for two reasons. First, someone else at work will know what has happened, which provides you with an advocate. Second, this person may be aware of previous patterns of harassment and may be able to counsel you about how to avoid future encounters with the individual doing the harassing and about reporting procedures and the appropriate course of action you should take within the organization.
2. Tell someone at Kingsborough Community College. We need to know about these incidents. We can intervene on your behalf to make certain that similar incidents do not occur to you or to future interns. You may contact Public Safety at 718-368-4800 in room L202, Title IX Coordinator, at 718-368-6896 in room V-231; and/or Office of Student Affairs at 718-368-5563 in room A216. We will help you to decide what you should do about the situation.
3. Document what happened. It may be painful to do. However, it often helps to approach the incident objectively by writing about it and by separating the emotion from the description of the incident. A written account is essential if you decide to pursue a complaint against your harasser. Be factual and specific in your description of the incident.