

**Policy Template - Sexual Harassment**

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**Principles for a church**

1. Provide a safe working environment which encourages professional and appropriate relationships
2. Develop and abide by a well-defined harassment policy
3. Provide ongoing training and updates as the situation necessitates
4. Practice transparency as appropriate
5. Comply with local, state and federal laws

**Harassment**

* (Church Name) is committed to providing a work environment free of discrimination, harassment, or hostile work situations. In keeping with this commitment, (Church Name) maintains a strict policy prohibiting unlawful harassment, including sexual harassment.
* (Church Name) will not tolerate any form of harassment by any Staff Member toward another staff member, volunteer, attendee, or guest. This includes but is not limited to:
  + Sexual harassment.
  + Harassing behavior based on national origin/ancestry, culture, race, gender, color, age, sexual orientation, pregnancy status, marital status, disability, or other differences.
  + Disparaging comments about another person’s appearance, manner of dress, or accent.
  + Behavior that is abusive or offensive to another person and creates a hostile work environment.
  + Comments made in a joking manner that may easily be viewed to have hostile intent or can be misinterpreted.
* Every Staff Member needs to understand that jokes, stories, cartoons, nicknames, and comments about appearance could be considered offensive to others. In no way will the above list be considered all-inclusive, but is intended to provide guidance for what constitutes a form of harassment.
* Staff Members should at all times refrain from even the hint of inappropriateness in these sensitive areas.
* Any Staff Member found to have engaged in inappropriate or harassing conduct will receive corrective action reasonably designed to remedy the harassing conduct and prevent its recurrence, including subjecting the offending party to disciplinary action up through and including termination of employment.
* It is important to recognize that if a minor is involved, there are other implications to harassment which apply, including but not limited to legal and criminal ramifications.

**Sexual Harassment**

* Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances (either verbal or physical), requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:
  + Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment;
  + Submission to or rejection of any such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions; or
  + Such conduct has the result of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating or offensive work environment.
* Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to: sexual flirtations, touching, advances or propositions, verbal or written abuse of a sexual nature, graphic or suggestive comments about an individual’s dress or body, sexually degrading words to describe an individual, and the display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures.
* Sexual harassment does not refer to the occasional compliments or other conduct that is socially acceptable and does not have a discriminatory effect on the employment relationship.
* Any Staff Member found to have engaged in sexual harassment conduct will be discharged.

**Harassment Reporting/Investigating**

If any employee believes he/she is being or has been harassed, or has observed harassment in any way, he/she must report the facts of the incident(s) to the \_(leadership personnel)\_ immediately, and without fear of reprisal. If the incident is not resolved satisfactorily to all participants, he/she may report the incident(s) to the \_(eldership)\_. The church will take reasonable steps to protect the reporting employee from retaliatory, harassing, or abusive behavior in relation to such reporting. If the employee believes he/she has experienced or witnessed retaliation should immediately notify \_(leadership)\_.

Every reported incident will be investigated and documented in writing to determine whether the alleged conduct or incident occurred. Each complaint will be taken seriously, investigated promptly, and held highly confidential. All employees are expected to cooperate with an investigation of any type of harassment. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent permitted under such circumstances. After the investigation, (Church Name/Leader) will take affirmative steps to ensure such behavior is not allowed or tolerated. Offenders may be disciplined up to and including termination.

**Professional Conduct in Relationships**

\_(Church Name)\_ believes serving the church in any role is an important position that requires a life of virtue reflective of the life and teaching of Jesus. Scripture reveals that church leaders are to be “above reproach,” and as a result wisdom should be used in relating to the men and women of \_(Church Name)\_ as well as the \_(Church Location)\_ community. All employees are expected to abide by the following guidelines with respect to their interactions with anyone who may come within their sphere of influence in connection with their job at \_(Church Name)\_.

* Never engage in inappropriate physical contact with others.
* Avoid using technological devices to engage in inappropriate contact with others.
* Use wisdom and good judgment to avoid awkward situations when meeting with men and women in their homes, at local restaurants, or in places of employment.
* Carefully respond to cards, letters, and digital correspondence from men and women.
* Interactions on social media are expected to demonstrate best practices and appropriate etiquette when utilizing both personal and work accounts.

**Key Questions to Answer**

* Under local jurisdiction, what mandated reporting policy does the church need to explicitly practice to comply?
* What practices need to be developed in order to comply with local, state, and federal laws?
* Who are the persons of leadership employees should contact to discuss harassment questions or concerns?
* Who directs the investigation of a reported incident?