

I'M BEING HARASSED
AND NEED YOUR HELP

DATE

WHY I AM GIVING YOU THIS

I am disclosing to you, my employer, that I believe I am being sexually harassed. The person harassing me, like me, is queer.

I am giving you this document because I want your help. I need you to understand that this environment makes it harder for me to do my job, and I want you to take steps to make our workplace better.

A WHAT I NEED FROM YOU - MY PRIVACY PREFERENCES

- ☐ Keep this anonymous — please don't try to find out who I am.
- ☐ Keep this private — please don't tell anyone I've complained.
- ☐ At this time I don't want my complaint investigated, so I am not naming the person who is harassing me.

B WHAT I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND

- ☐ Know that this is workplace harassment.
- ☐ This environment makes it harder for me to do my job.
- ☐ I'd like to talk with you about what's happening and what would make me feel okay at work.

C WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO

- ☐ Take my complaint seriously — don't minimize it because we are both queer.
- ☐ Make clear that nobody is allowed to harass others, regardless of anybody's identity.
- ☐ Ensure that people who complain are not excluded from opportunities or mocked for speaking up.
- ☐ Take steps to restore opportunities I may have lost.
- ☐ I'm not sure yet — I would like to talk about options.

Thank you for reading this request and taking it seriously.

This handout was created by Aftermetoo, a Canadian charity that helps people who are experiencing workplace sexual harassment. Its goal is to make it easier for workers and employers to talk about these situations — to help workers explain what's wrong, and to help employers understand and respond in ways that make things better.

THE CONTEXT OF QUEER-ON-QUEER HARASSMENT

In workplaces that aren't queer-centered, employers sometimes react to queer-on-queer harassment by ignoring it or treating it as an interpersonal matter. They may fear liability, or worry about appearing discriminatory.

But harassment is harassment, regardless of the genders or sexual orientations involved. The fact that both people are queer does not make it “private” or “off limits” for the employer. If there's unwanted sexual behaviour at work, the employer is obligated to act.

THE IMPACT ON WORKERS

- ◆ Queer workers may already feel isolated in non-queer workplaces; harassment can make this worse.
- ◆ If employers treat queer-on-queer harassment as “not their business,” it signals that queer staff can't rely on the same protections as others.
- ◆ The result is stress, anxiety, and diminished commitment to the work, along with the same risks of lost productivity and opportunities that harassment creates in any context.

THE IMPACT ON EMPLOYERS

A workplace that fails to address queer-on-queer harassment is not inclusive — and not compliant with the law.

- ◆ It undermines trust and safety for queer workers.
- ◆ It can damage recruitment and retention.
- ◆ It can increase stress, absenteeism, and turnover.
- ◆ It creates legal and reputational risk.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO

- 1. Treat it the same way:** Respond to queer-on-queer harassment exactly as you would if the genders or orientations were different.
- 2. Focus on conduct:** The question is not who the people are, but whether unwanted sexual conduct has occurred.
- 3. Address stereotypes:** Make clear that nobody is allowed to harass others, regardless of anybody's identity.
- 4. Respond quickly:** Take reports seriously and act without delay.
- 5. Protect opportunities:** Ensure the worker is not excluded, ridiculed, or punished for asserting boundaries.
- 6. Repair where possible:** If harassment has already cost the worker opportunities, ask what they feel they've missed (a project, training, a conference) and make efforts to provide them.
- 7. Protect confidentiality:** Handle the situation with the same discretion and dignity you would in any other harassment case.