

# VinciWorks

## Frequently Asked Questions – Sexual Harassment

## Introduction

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VinciWorks continuously receives questions on the topic of sexual harassment. We have separated our answers to the questions into three categories: general questions about sexual harassment, questions about behavior at work and questions frequently asked by supervisors. This document covers general sexual harassment questions. You can access the other categories by visiting our [sexual harassment prevent resource page](#). The full list of questions and answers is included in VinciWorks' harassment training, [MyStory: Harassment and Bullying at Work](#).

## What behavior counts as prohibited retaliation?

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Reprisals or retaliation against someone who has filed a sexual harassment complaint are illegal. Examples of prohibited retaliation include:

- Ignoring the person who has filed the complaint
- Giving a negative review or evaluation
- Spreading gossip or rumors
- Sabotaging the person's work

Someone who has experienced retaliation can file a separate complaint, unrelated to the veracity of the original complaint.

## What about things that are just 'good fun'?

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Conduct that is sexual harassment is never 'good fun' for the person experiencing harassment. Sexual harassment is done to intimidate, hurt, and belittle others. It is conduct that is antithetical to a person's rights and their basic humanity. All people have a right to be treated professionally and with respect, decency and humanity.

## What should I do if I am being sexually harassed?

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Understand you are not alone. Sexual harassment can be a very isolating experience, that is what the attacker wants. Remember that you do not have to put up with behavior directed at you that is unwelcome. Federal and state law protects you.

If possible, tell the harasser that you find the conduct offensive and ask them to stop. Give examples of what behaviors you find unacceptable and ask them to stop. You can also ask someone you trust to witness the conversation, or do it in the open so other people can hear.

Do everything you can to document the behavior. Write down times, dates, witnesses and details. As difficult as it might be, retain copies of any harassing messages you have received. Do not wait to make a report. Use the reporting portal that your employer has provided. If you do not trust the normal chain of command, speak to an HR representative or other colleague you trust.

If you do not want to report the conduct to your employer, you can file a complaint directly with the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) within 180 days of the harassment taking place. Your state may have extended reporting times.

## **How many incidents make a hostile work environment?**

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A hostile work environment, as defined by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, can arise after just one incident. This is particularly the case when a severe incident, such as an assault, takes place. If the incident changes the terms or conditions of the work or the environment then one incident can be considered as the direct cause of a hostile work environment.

## **Can a supervisor choose not to investigate an incident?**

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No. A supervisor is required to fully investigate and address any complaints of harassment, or to refer it to the appropriate office or person for full investigation. A supervisor cannot, for example, decide by themselves that the incident does not merit investigation, or make any sort of judgement that would prejudice or corrupt the resulting investigation.



To learn more, email [training@vinciworks.com](mailto:training@vinciworks.com) or call:

UK: +44 208 815 9308

US: +1 (917) 3383958

[www.vinciworks.com](http://www.vinciworks.com)