

## Stopping Harassment Before It Starts

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Being a business owner comes with many responsibilities, including being held accountable if harassment is occurring at your workplace. Therefore, it is important to understand what harassment is and how to prevent it. Unwelcome verbal or physical conduct based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or retaliation can be considered harassment when it results in a significant change in an employee's employment status or benefits. It may also be deemed harassment if the conduct is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create a hostile work environment which interferes with an employee's work performance.

Start by developing and implementing a good policy to prevent harassment. The policy needs to include a definition of harassment. The policy also needs to state that the company prohibits harassment and behavior that could be harassment. The other important component to preventing harassment is to effectively communicate the policy to the employees. In order to prevent liability and to be a responsible business owner, be sensitive of the issues surrounding harassment and implement a sound prevention plan with good policy. It's equally important to be as proactive as possible and to act in a timely and professional manner if ever faced with a harassment complaint.

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