

## Techniques of Dealing with Sexual Harassment

All individuals have a responsibility to help resolve acts of sexual harassment.

The Informal Resolution System can be used by both civilian employees and military members of the work force. This system incorporates several options for resolving conflict in the work environment, and therefore, may be very appropriate for behavior in the yellow and red zones. Yellow and red zone behavior is defined as follows:

- **Yellow zone.** Many people would find these behaviors unacceptable, and they could be sexual harassment: violating personal “space”, whistling, questions about personal life, lewd or sexually suggestive comments, suggestive posters or calendars, off-color jokes, leering, staring, repeated requests for dates, foul language, unwanted letters or poems, sexually suggestive touching, or sitting or gesturing sexually.
- **Red zone.** These behaviors are always considered sexual harassment: sexual favors in return for employment rewards, threats if sexual favors are not provided, sexually explicit pictures (including calendars or posters) or remarks, using status to request dates, or obscene letters or comments. The most severe forms of sexual harassment constitute criminal conduct, e.g., sexual assault (ranging from forcefully grabbing to fondling, forced kissing, or rape).

The recipient of such behavior should have the following options:

### a. DIRECT APPROACH

(1) Employees may contact the alleged offender directly. When using this approach, the recipient of unwanted behavior must take care to focus on the behavior and not the person, be specific about the unwanted behavior and use common courtesy and respect when dealing with the alleged offender. It is often helpful to collect one’s thoughts about the unwanted behavior by writing down some points before making contact when using this approach. Having some notes can prove useful, if the unwanted behavior is not corrected and a more formal approach is needed.

(2) Employees may send a letter to the alleged offender. If this method is chosen, be sure the facts are stated in a clear and concise way, along with one’s feelings

about the behavior and the expected resolution. Maintain a copy of the letter sent so it can be used as documentation. If the unwanted behavior continues, a more formal approach is necessary.

(3) Employees may also report the offensive behavior to their supervisor. If, for any reason, they are uncomfortable discussing the issue with their immediate supervisor, they may contact anyone in their chain of command. Supervisors are responsible for taking prompt, appropriate action. This approach may be more attractive to employees who are not comfortable using one of the above approaches, but who genuinely want the offensive behavior to stop.

b. **INFORMAL THIRD PARTY.** This is an option that can be used to stop unacceptable/unwanted behavior. Employees may ask another person to talk with the individual on their behalf or accompany them when they talk with the individual who has targeted them with the unacceptable/unwanted behavior.

The bottom line, when this type of behavior happens, it's unacceptable and steps to stop it need to be taken.