

What Everyone Needs to Know about Handling Sexual Harassment Employee to Employee

- **Take the report seriously.** Assure the person that the complaint or problem is being taken seriously and that the organization will respond to the problem promptly.
- **Listen, sympathize, but don't judge.** Listen to what the person has to say, sympathize, but make no judgement or commitment regarding the allegations or how the investigation will be conducted. Do assure the person that the institution takes sexual harassment seriously and will not tolerate it.
- **Don't delay.** If you are not the individual designated to process sexual harassment complaints, tell the complainant who is responsible and offer to help contact that person. If that person is not immediately available, tell the complainant you will follow through immediately after the interview. Then do it as soon as possible. Delays of even a few days can make investigation difficult or send a signal to the complainant that the institution is not taking the complaint or problem seriously.
- **Respond to concerns.** If the complainant expresses or indicated fear, assure the person that the institution will do everything in its power to ensure confidentiality (but make no promises), prevent retaliation and stop further harassment. If you are the person designated to process complaints or investigate them, answer any questions about the complaint process that will not jeopardize the investigation. If you are not the appropriate person to process a complaint, assure the complainant that the appropriate person will answer their questions.
- **Document.** Write a detailed summary of what the complainant told you, including your observations of the person's demeanor. Submit it to the individual who will be process the complaint.
- **Follow up on the complaint.** Check with the complainant the next day to ensure that they are getting needed assistance.
- **Avoid using "Dangerous Words,"** such as "it's just teasing--no big deal."