

Section 1

For Students



Many kids and teenagers don't feel safe in school or elsewhere. These children fear sexual harassment, which should not be a part of anyone's life. Have you experienced sexual harassment or do you know someone who has? Sexual harassment is people saying or doing sexual things that you don't want or feel uncomfortable about. Are you curious to find out more about it?

Here's some info about things you can do to prevent sexual harassment in your school or other places. Take a look around and use this helpful information.

Remember, you're not alone.

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Did You Know ...

- ❖ Most students (81 percent) will experience some form of sexual harassment during their school lives, with 27 percent experiencing it often.
- ❖ Nearly nine in 10 students (85 percent) report that students harass other students at their schools.
- ❖ Almost 40 percent of students report that teachers and other school employees sexually harass students in their schools.

—*Hostile Hallways* (AAUW Educational Foundation, 2001)

Survey: Have You Been Harassed?

Complete the following survey to see if you have been sexually harassed. Give the survey to friends or students who may be suffering from harassment.

If you decide you have been harassed, talk to a parent, teacher, coach, pastor, or other trusted adult. Some adult in your school should be assigned to handle sexual harassment complaints. Find out who that person is and talk to her or him. These adults can help you decide what your next steps should be. Show them your completed survey to help them better understand the problems you are facing.

The strategies on page 4 and the resources in Section 4 have tips on how to prevent sexual harassment and what to do if it is a problem. The more you know, the better prepared you will be to defend yourself against unwanted behaviors.

This survey was adapted from one developed at Glenbard East High School in Illinois and given to all high school students in 1998 as part of a school-wide student institute on sexual harassment. Survey results helped confirm that harassment was, in fact, a problem on campus. Glenbard East followed up with another institute in winter 2002.

Have You Been Harassed?

Instructions: Fill out the survey as honestly as possible. The survey is anonymous.

1. Have any of the following things happened to you at school when you did not want them to?

(Write the appropriate letter in the space before each question.)

- A = Very often
- B = Often
- C = Occasionally
- D = Rarely
- E = Never

- I have been the target of sexual comments, jokes, teasing, gestures, or looks.
- I have had my clothing pulled in a sexual way.
- I have had sexual rumors spread about me.
- I have had my way blocked in a sexual way.
- I have been touched, grabbed, or pinched in a sexual way.
- I have been shown or given sexual pictures, photographs, illustrations, messages, or notes.
- I have been physically intimidated by another student.
- I have stayed home or cut a class because I felt intimidated.
- I have felt unsafe in school.
- I have been penalized, threatened, or further harassed as a result of complaining about or reporting sexual harassment.

2. Where did the incident(s) take place?

(Check all that apply.)

- In the hall
- In a classroom
- On school grounds outside the school (other than the parking lot)
- In or near the gym/playing field/pool
- In the cafeteria
- At a field trip location, including another school for away games
- In the parking lot
- In or near the locker room
- In the rest room
- In the driver education car
- On school transportation on the way to school/on the way home/on a school trip
- On public transportation on the way to school or on the way home

3. When did the incident(s) take place?

(Check all that apply.)

- Before school
- Between classes
- In class
- During lunch
- During recess
- After school

Strategies for Students to Prevent Sexual Harassment

These strategies may be duplicated and shared.

- If someone harasses you, tell him or her to stop. Say you do not like what he or she is doing to you. If you are uncomfortable confronting the person directly, do it in writing.
- If you are harassed, tell an adult—a parent, a teacher you trust, or someone in your school who has been designated to handle issues of sexual harassment. Be persistent. If the first school official doesn't respond, go to someone else until you are taken seriously. Whether a fellow student or an adult is harassing you, the school is required by law to listen to your claim and take action.
- Remind yourself that sexual harassment is wrong, is illegal, and should stop. Don't tell yourself (or believe it if anyone else tells you) it's your fault. Don't ignore what is happening to you and just hope it will stop.
- Remember that someone you date, someone you used to date, or someone who wants to get involved with you can harass you. If you feel scared, uncomfortable, or threatened by the way someone is "flirting" with or treating you, tell a trusted friend or adult and get help.
- Keep a journal of your experiences with sexual harassment. This will help you if you ever need to remember particular details. Getting your feelings on paper also might make you feel better. If the person harassing you or that person's friends send you any notes or e-mails, keep them. Your records might later help substantiate the harassment.
- Interrupt any harassment you observe and tell an adult you trust. Don't be a bystander.

There were two or three boys touching me ... I'd tell them to stop but they wouldn't. This went on for about six months. Finally I was in one of my classes when all of them came back and backed me into a corner and started touching me all over. ... After the class I told the principal, and he and the boys had a little talk. And after the talk was up, the boys came out laughing because they got no punishment.

— Mexican American girl, age 12, in *Secrets in Public: Sexual Harassment in Our Schools* (Wellesley Center for Research on Women, 1993)

- Ask to see your school's sexual harassment policy. Read it and see what it tells you to do if you experience or witness sexual harassment. The policy might also help you understand what behaviors are considered harassment.
- Identify the sexual harassment or Title IX officer for your school or district and ask that person questions you may have about your legal rights. (Title IX is the federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in education.) If you have tried talking to the appropriate people and nothing has been done, consider seeking help from someone outside the school, such as the U.S. Department

of Education Office for Civil Rights. As a last resort, pursue other avenues, such as filing a lawsuit against the school in either state or federal court.

- Meet or get involved with a leadership or other student group that works on sexual harassment issues. If no such student group exists, organize your peers to address this and other related issues, such as body image and dating violence.
- Get involved in preventing sexual harassment in your school. Students at Avondale Middle School in Rochester Hills, Michigan, rewrote their school's sexual harassment policy, and complaints have declined significantly since the policy was adopted. For more information on this project and others, see page 34.
- Use the resources beginning on page 37 to learn about sexual harassment and how to prevent it. Share these resources with your friends.

I don't feel safe from abuse at my high school. I am relentlessly persecuted for being gay. By the time I was in ninth grade, listening without responding to others bashing homosexuals was more painful than the harassment I deal with now. Up to now, a person has masturbated in front of me while I was in the school lavatory, I have had cigarettes thrown at me, students have driven their car within a foot of me to drive me off the road while I was walking, and people call me vulgar names almost daily. What I am describing now is not simple child's play and name calling. It is very specific harassment that threatens my safety at school.

—Student, *Creating Safe Schools for Lesbian and Gay Students: A Resource Guide for School Staff* (Youth Pride Inc., 1997)