

EEOC Training on Respectful Workplaces: Q&A for Employers

1. What do the training modules cover?

The training modules – *Leading for Respect* (for supervisors) and *Respect in the Workplace* (for all employees) – go beyond traditional harassment prevention training to focus on respect, acceptable workplace conduct, and the types of behaviors that contribute to a respectful and inclusive organizational culture. The modules contain sections on the concept of respect, the spectrum of workplace behaviors (including respectful, uncivil, abusive, and illegal behaviors), employer policies and procedures, fairness, bystander intervention, effective coaching, and how to provide and receive feedback.

2. How do the training modules differ from traditional trainings on harassment prevention?

Most trainings on harassment prevention focus on what employees should *not* do, whereas these focus on what employees *should* do. Moreover, while most harassment prevention trainings are lecture format, these trainings are on-site, interactive and skills-based. Lastly, most harassment prevention trainings focus on the legal concepts underlying harassment law. Instead, these trainings focus on the positive behaviors that may prevent conduct from rising to the level of illegal conduct.

3. The EEOC's Harassment Prevention Report

[https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task_force/harassment/report.cfm] discusses three kinds of training – compliance training, bystander intervention training, and workplace civility training. Which kind of training is this?

Leading for Respect and *Respect in the Workplace* incorporate key elements from all three types of training:

- *Leading for Respect* and *Respect in the Workplace* explain what behavior is and is not acceptable in the workplace, provide information regarding what employees should do if they believe they are being harassed, review supervisor responsibilities regarding abusive and harassing behavior, and review the prohibition against retaliation.
- The modules teach employees the concept of bystander intervention through case studies and interactive discussion. The program provides participants with specific strategies for intervening when they observe disrespectful, abusive, or harassing behavior.

- The supervisory program teaches evidence-based skills that supervisors can immediately put to use in responding to employee concerns and complaints and coaching employees about unacceptable behavior.
- The modules focus on the values of respect and fairness. Each program facilitates discussion amongst participants about the behaviors and words that generate respect and their responsibility for contributing to respect in the workplace. Participants learn how to provide and receive feedback about behavior that is uncivil and disrespectful, and supervisors learn specific skills for handling difficult issues.

4. Who will conduct the training?

The training will be led by EEOC's Outreach and Education Coordinators [eeoc.gov/eeoc/outreach/coordinators] and other EEOC trainers. All trainers have undergone intensive training on how to conduct *Leading for Respect* and *Respect in the Workplace*.

5. How long are the training modules?

Respect in the Workplace is designed to be a three hour course, and *Leading for Respect* is designed to be a four hour course.

6. How many people can be trained at one time?

The training is designed for 25-30 participants. We recommend that no more than 35 participants be trained in any single session.

7. Can supervisors and non-supervisory employees be trained together?

Supervisors and non-supervisory employees should be trained separately so that participants are comfortable speaking freely. Moreover, while there is some overlap, the content in each course differs, providing unique and specific skills for each employee group.

8. Are the training modules customizable to specific workplaces?

The modules are customizable for different types of workplaces and include a section for reviewing employers' own anti-harassment policies and procedures.

9. How do I know the training will have an impact?

No one training can change an organizational culture. That said, preliminary studies suggest that training on civil and respectful workplaces can help foster a climate in which uncivil behavior may be nipped in the bud – before it rises to the level of illegal harassment.

10. Do the training modules satisfy the requirements set forth in Supreme Court decisions on workplace harassment?

Supreme Court decisions on workplace harassment require employers to show they undertook “reasonable care” to prevent and promptly correct harassment. Such reasonable care generally requires an employer to establish, disseminate, and enforce an anti-harassment policy and complaint procedure, and to take other reasonable steps to prevent and correct harassment, such as training employees about employer policies and procedures.

Whether or not an employer can prove that it exercised reasonable care in any particular case depends on the particular factual circumstances. No one training is sufficient to establish reasonable care. *Leading for Respect* and *Respect in the Workplace* are components of a holistic harassment prevention program. Implementation of the training modules may help demonstrate the exercise of reasonable care.

11. Can the training modules satisfy the training requirements of the laws in California, Connecticut, and Maine that require training on sexual harassment?

The training modules can be modified to satisfy the training requirements set forth in these state laws.

12. Who designed the training modules?

The training modules were designed by Fran Sepler, of Sepler and Associates, under a contract with the EEOC.