

RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEALING WITH SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The answer to the question “Who is responsible for addressing and preventing sexual harassment at **Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA)**” is very simple. We are all, as members of the community, responsible for making sure that sexual harassment does not exist on our campus. However, we all have different types of responsibilities when it comes to addressing the issue of sexual harassment.

Anyone who has been a victim of sexual harassment should:

- Understand what your rights are under the law and under the institution’s policy;
- If possible, confront the harasser immediately and tell him/her that you find that type of attention offensive.
- If you feel uncomfortable confronting the harasser face to face, consider writing a letter to the harasser, making sure that you keep a copy for your records.
- If possible, tell the harasser that the behavior affects you negatively and has the potential of negatively affecting your work or classroom performance.
- Understand that it is not your fault that this happened (no one asks to be harassed or encourages this type of behavior).
- Document all incidents of sexual harassment, being as detailed as possible. Record the date and time of the incident or incidents, the location, the individuals involved and any eyewitnesses to the act. Save any written correspondence from the harasser, such as notes, letters, e-mail messages, etc., or other documents that can verify that sexual harassment took place.

If you are unable to resolve the situation on your own, contact your supervisor, the Provost, Human Resources Director or Employee Relations Unit, a Vice President, or Legal Affairs for assistance.

Supervisors, managers and department heads are responsible for assuming an active role in the prevention of sexual harassment on campus. According to guidelines issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), employers are held liable for sexual harassment when their supervisors or agents create a hostile environment, or when the employer (or supervisor or agent) knew or should have known of the sexual harassment and failed to take immediate and appropriate action. According to the EEOC, employers are usually deemed to know of sexual harassment if it is openly practiced in the workplace, well known among the employees, or brought to the employer’s notice by a victim’s filing a charge. It is Northern Virginia Community College’s obligation to have an explicit policy prohibiting sexual harassment which is distributed to all employees and students and to have a reasonable, available avenue by which victims of sexual harassment can complain to someone with the authority to investigate and remedy the problem.

Specific responsibilities of supervisors, managers and department heads are to:

- Know **NOVA's** policy on sexual harassment and make employees aware that you will take immediate and appropriate action if an incident of sexual harassment is brought to your attention;
- Emphasize to your employees or students that you have an open-door policy and that anyone who has been harassed or who has witnessed harassment can seek your advice and assistance;
- Conduct regular sexual harassment awareness and prevention training with your employees;
- Immediately consult with the appropriate office when allegations of sexual harassment are brought to your attention, or when you observe behavior which might be considered to be harassment;
- Personally exhibit the type of behavior that you expect of your employees and students.

Employees and students must also assume an active role in preventing sexual harassment on campus by:

- Being familiar with the law and **NOVA's** policy on sexual harassment;
- Making sure that their behavior is in keeping with the law and the institution's policy;
- Being aware and conscious of engaging in behaviors which might potentially be considered sexual harassment at work, in the classroom, in institution-sponsored residences or at institution-sponsored events or activities;
- Being sensitive to individuals who may be offended by the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of others;
- Not assuming that employees, co-workers, or students enjoy or want to hear "risqué" jokes or sexually oriented comments about their appearance, or be touched, stared at, flirted with or propositioned for dates or sexual favors.

If you know someone who is harassing others, tell him/her about the negative effects of harassment on the recipient and to others who witness and are subjected to the behavior; that this behavior is unprofessional and unethical; and that the behavior could be a violation of **NOVA's** sexual harassment policy and the law.

In addition, it is NOVA's policy to proceed with a Title IX investigation in any reports of sexual harassment. The Title IX Coordinator will manage this process.