

Evaluate Your Sexual Harassment Policies and Procedures Now— Don't Wait for the Consequences

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Recent media coverage of sexual harassment in the workplace reminds us that employers need more than a policy that no one reads. Employers must actively engage their employees in preventing sexual harassment and other illegal targeting of members of protected minorities.

It is essential that employers immediately review their policies and their distribution. Employees must feel secure with management and comfortable in making a complaint that will be taken seriously.

Sexual harassment remains a critical problem for employers. According to recent press, restaurateur and chef John Besh's successful restaurant empire did not have an effective HR process, despite employing more than 1,200 people. The restaurant group lacked a dedicated HR professional and proper policies, as well as an effective procedure to handle employee complaints. Now his company faces allegations of sexual harassment from 25 women, and Besh has stepped down from his position as head of the company.

Similarly, there has been substantial media coverage in recent weeks regarding sexual harassment allegations against Hollywood legend Harvey Weinstein. His organization has allegedly made payouts to targeted actresses, and continues to suffer public scrutiny and face steep financial consequences thanks to Weinstein's behavior.

Both these situations are a wake-up call for action. Certainly, employees are more aware of their remedies because of this press coverage. Employers must also ensure they have taken effective action to ensure these behaviors do not occur in their work environments. Even if companies have an effective policy, now is the time to self-audit to make sure it is meaningful for employees.

What steps should you take next? McGlinchey Stafford's Labor and Employment law team can help you ensure your policies and procedures are sound, even if you're not sure where to start.

For assistance with your HR audit or other advice and counsel, please contact a member of the firm's Labor and Employment team.

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