



COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TUCSON

Sonoran Center for
Excellence in Disabilities

Sexual Harassment & Disability in the Workplace

Sexual harassment is any sexual behavior that a person does not want. This may include:

- Starting unwanted sexual contact
- Asking for sexual favors
- Touching in a sexual way
- Making sexual comments or jokes
- Sending sexual pictures, messages, or gestures.

In 2024, only 22.7% of people with disabilities had a job versus 65.5% of those without disabilities,¹ and were four times more likely to experience unfair workplace treatment or harassment, including sexual harassment.²

Why does this matter?

[1] (United States Department of Labor 2025)

[2] (Jones, Finkelstein and Koehoorn 2018)

People with disabilities, especially women, are more likely to experience sexual harassment at work. This is often due to power differences, unfair beliefs, and dependence on others for support.

Sexual harassment can cause emotional harm and make workers lose trust in their employer, leading to people with disabilities leaving their jobs or having trouble keeping a job.

People with disabilities may not know that certain behaviors count as sexual harassment. In Arizona, services that help people with disabilities find and keep jobs do not have to teach workers about sexual harassment at work.

In some situations, a person with disabilities may cause harm without realizing their behavior is unwanted because they have not learned workplace boundaries and how their actions impact others.



Barriers to Reporting

- Fear of being treated unfairly for speaking up
- Fear of losing a job
- Fear that no one will believe them
- The reporting process may be difficult or not accessible

What are some solutions?

- More research is needed to understand how common workplace sexual harassment is and what solutions can help stop it.
- Employees with disabilities need accessible and inclusive educational training on sexual harassment, including how to speak up for themselves and report it.
- Employers need resources and tools to make reporting safe, simple, and fair.
- Organizations that support disability employment should offer training and clear policies.

WHAT PROTECTIONS DO EMPLOYEES HAVE?

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act bans sexual harassment in the workplace. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) makes sure employees with disabilities cannot be discriminated against or denied equal protection when reporting harassment.

What to Do and Resources that Can Help

- Document everything and report to your employer's Human Resources division.
- File a complaint with the Arizona Civil Rights Division if you feel like you were treated unfairly:
[Bit.ly/AZCivilRights](https://bit.ly/AZCivilRights)
- US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Public Portal to file a charge of employment discrimination: **[Bit.ly/EEOCPublicPortal](https://bit.ly/EEOCPublicPortal)**



For more information:
[Bit.ly/FromSilenceToSafety](https://bit.ly/FromSilenceToSafety)

Questions about this project?

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