

10 Tips When Dealing with Claims of Sexual Harassment

1. Do not take any retaliatory action against the person making the complaint. If it is an employee situation, you cannot dismiss the employee or suspend the employee while the matter is investigated. If the person making the complaint is a member, you cannot ban them from the social quarters while the matter is pending.
2. Do not ignore or make light of a person's complaint. Ignoring a complaint or making light of it may give the impression that the Lodge approves of or condones the behavior giving rise to the complaint.
3. Do all that is possible and necessary to keep the person making the complaint and the person about whom the complaint is made from having contact with each other. If both are employees, schedule them on different shifts and make it clear that they must leave immediately at the end of their shift. If the person making the complaint is an employee and the person about whom the complaint is made is a member, you may have to ban the member from the social quarters until the matter is resolved. If the person making the complaint is a member and the person about whom the complaint is made is an employee, you may have to suspend the employee until the matter is resolved or schedule the employee for shifts when the member is known not to come in and advise the member when the person will be working. If both parties are members, you may have to ban the person about whom the complaint is made from the social quarters until the matter is resolved.
4. Loose lips sink ships. A complaint of sexual harassment and the subsequent investigation should be held in the utmost confidence. The matter should not be a topic of conversation at the Lodge. Discussion of the matter could leave the Lodge open to claims of bias and other charges. This includes the discussion of the matter between spouses. It should not be discussed outside of the investigation and the House committee hearing.
5. Excusing participation of the party about whom a claim is made. If the person about whom the complaint is made is in a position that would normally conduct the investigation or sit on the House committee, that person must excuse himself or herself from both the investigation and from participating in the House committee other than as the person about whom the complaint is made.
6. Excusing participation of other persons. If the person accused of sexual harassment is a close relative of the person who would normally conduct the investigation or sit on the House committee, the relative must excuse himself or herself from both the investigation and from participating in the House committee. This is necessary for the Lodge to avoid any appearance of impropriety or bias.
7. Cooperate fully with law enforcement. If the police become involved in the matter, give them your full cooperation while continuing your own investigation. Remember that a complaint of sexual harassment also may include a complaint of battery which could be grounds for a criminal investigation or charge. A battery is any unconsented to touching.
8. Disciplinary action against the accused. If disciplinary action against the accused party is warranted, keep written records of any such action. If the party is an employee, place the information regarding the investigation and disciplinary action in the employee's file. This may be important information in the future if there is a subsequent complaint and you find it necessary to terminate the employee.
9. Complaints to the EEOC. If you receive notice of an EEOC complaint regarding a claim of sexual harassment; immediately contact the Risk Management Department for assistance with the complaint. Do not attempt to handle an EEOC complaint on your own.
10. Never blame the person making the complaint of sexual harassment for the actions of the party against whom the complaint is made. What a person wears or the prior relationship of the parties is irrelevant to a complaint of sexual harassment.