

THE TIPPING POINT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Lessons learned from actual experiences in the medical setting

With the #MeToo movement and media coverage surrounding Bill O'Reilly, Harvey Weinstein, and others, the issue of sexual harassment is at the forefront of professional and personal discussions. During the last year, COPIC's HR Hotline, a resource that insureds can call for advice on HR-related issues, has seen an uptick in questions about sexual harassment allegations in medical practices. Here are some common themes and lessons from those calls:



Much of the inappropriate workplace conduct triggers when one (or both) of the two parties involved is vulnerable.

Due to the demands of medical positions, providers may find themselves spending more time at work than at home. Feelings can ignite for one or both parties in the workplace when one is going through a difficult time in his/her personal life. The situation can turn sour when intentions are misinterpreted or when others in the office perceive the relationship to be inappropriate.



Never text your staff on matters that are personal, especially to someone of the opposite gender.

Text messages can be manipulated (parts of the conversation deleted) and taken out of context. The person receiving the text is in control of what happens to that message and who gets to see it.



Conversations can easily be recorded on a smartphone device without your knowledge.

Colorado is a one-person consent state, meaning that only one person involved in the conversation needs to give consent to record a conversation. Recorded conversations may be taken out of context, shared without the provider's knowledge, and can appear as evidence in sexual harassment claims.



If you hear rumors of sexual indiscretion by one of your colleagues, don't ignore it with the hopes that it will go away.

Bring the rumors to the attention of your colleague. Support your practice administrator or manager when a conversation needs to be had with a provider or other staff. When appropriate, clearly discuss the expectations of behaviors that are and are not acceptable in the workplace if a relationship does form between a provider and staff member.



The damage to reputation is not limited to the two parties involved.

Sexual harassment or sexual indiscretions in the workplace can have a significant and lasting impact on other staff members, providers, family members, and the reputation of the practice.

COPIC's HR staff conducts sexual harassment presentations for our insured medical practices and facilities (at the manager and provider level). If you are interested in arranging a presentation, please contact LaNee Reynolds at (720) 858-6057 or lreynolds@copic.com.

COPIC's



HR HOTLINE

COPIC's HR Hotline connects you with our HR experts who can help resolve employment-related issues.

The hotline is available during regular business hours, 8:30am-5pm (Mountain time), Monday through Friday.

(844) 208-4680