

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL TRANSGENDER (LGBT) RESOURCE CENTER**

How to Deal with Same Sex Harassment

What is Same Sex Harassment?

The Supreme Court has ruled that same-sex harassment is a form of discrimination that an employer should not engage in or allow to occur within the workplace. The sexual orientation and gender of the parties is not relevant to whether or not the event is or is not a form of sexual harassment. An employer cannot claim that a male employee or supervisor could not have engaged in sexually harassing another male coworker because all the parties involved are heterosexual. A heterosexual female supervisor can create a sexual harassing situation with either another heterosexual or homosexual female employee. Sexual desire between the people need not be present in order for sexual harassment (discrimination) to occur.

Taken from <http://www.employer-employee.com/sexhar4.html>

Some Do's and Don'ts When Dealing with Same Sex Harassment

- **DO** deal with the situation immediately.

- **DON'T** ignore the behavior or situation, let it pass unchallenged, or let intangible fears block your ability to act.

- **DO** confirm that the particular type of abuse is hurtful and harmful and will not be tolerated.

- **DO** value the feelings of others by active, sensitive listening.

- **DO** take steps to support the victim and enable her or him to develop a stronger sense of self.

- **DO** take those individuals involved aside to discuss the incident.

- **DO** apply consequences to the attacker in accordance with the institutional rules, code of behavior, and other related policies.

- **DON'T** overreact with another put-down of the offender.

- **DON'T** impose consequences before finding out exactly what happened from those involved.

- **DON'T** focus entirely on applying consequences to the offender while ignoring the feelings of the victim.
- **DON'T** humiliate the attacker when imposing consequences. Remember that the attacker may feel like a victim too.
- **DON'T** embarrass either party publicly.
- **DO** explain to students why such incidents occur and undertake ongoing long-term (pro-active) strategies with the class for combating stereotyping, prejudice, and negative attitudes to differences.
- **DON'T** assume that the incident is an isolated occurrence divorced from the overall context in which it occurred.