

**People who believe they have been harassed on the job have asked for suggestions on what actions they may take short of filing a complaint.** This publication compiles ideas from various sources, regarding actions you may wish to take. Individuals must, of course, assess their particular circumstance and decide which particular actions are comfortable and safe for them.

### 1. Say No!

Confront the harasser as soon as possible after an incident. Choose whatever tone seems appropriate to you (friendly and patient or more direct and blunt), but **speak firmly** without being apologetic, nasty or judgmental. The harasser may not realize his or her behavior is offensive. Although a smile is usually a friend-affirming message, this is not the time to smile because doing so will likely send a mixed message. The point you need to make and make **clearly** is that the behavior is **unwelcome** and unacceptable to you.

**Examples:** “It bothers me when you make jokes and comments about my sex life/my ancestry/my race. I want to have a good working relationship with you but I prefer that you not make those kinds of comments again.”

“Every time we pass in the hallway you attempt to brush up against my body. You are doing this on purpose and I want it to stop. The next time it happens I will report it to your boss”.

### 2. Keep Records

Take accurate notes, preferably in a bound notebook in which sheets cannot be added. While still fresh in your mind, make notes on what was said or done along with the date, time and place. Also make a note on how you felt about the behavior. Include direct quotes if remembered. Note any witnesses. Save any letters, cards or materials sent to you. Keep the records in a secure place, preferably away from the worksite.

### 3. Talk to Others

Talk to a friend about the incident and make a note that you did. Are there any men or women in the office who are likely to be supportive who you can talk to or seek advice from? Talk to co-workers to learn if there are any witnesses or if anyone else has been harassed. Perhaps someone left a job because of similar behavior. **Witnesses** and **documentation** help provide evidence or proof of harassment. Otherwise, the only evidence may be your word against the harasser’s word.

### 4. Send a Letter

If the behavior persists, you may want to send a letter. Three concise paragraphs, as noted below, may be adequate in most cases:

**Paragraph 1:** Report the **facts** of what happened without evaluating the behavior

**Example:** “During the staff meeting of June 14th, you said that the dress I was wearing made me look sexy. On June 24th you said the sweater I was wearing really turned you on, then later that same day you brushed against me with your hip when we passed in the hall.”

**Paragraph 2:** In the next paragraph, describe how you **feel** about the incidents

**Example:** “Before you started this behavior, I was eager to come to work every day. Now, I am feeling a lot of stress and my stomach get knotted when we are in a meeting or when I have to interact with you. I am also thinking about asking for a transfer or reassignment.”

**Paragraph 3:** In the final paragraph, explain what **you want to happen** next

**Example:** “I insist that our relationship be on a purely professional basis. I want you to stop making remarks about my appearance and I do not want to meet with you socially.”

While the harasser may not respond directly to your letter, it is likely his or her behavior will change. Often the harasser is surprised that the victim views the behavior as offensive. The harasser may also be fearful of a formal charge and worry if anyone else has seen the letter. If the behavior does not stop, you should consider giving a copy of the letter to the harasser's supervisor or to another appropriate supervisor.

## 5. Check Your Company or Union Policies

Use the formal complaint procedures where you work. Report the harassment to a designated human resource manager or your supervisor. If your supervisor is harassing you, determine whom he or she reports to. Find out the best way to contact this next level manager.

## 6. Retaliation

Both state and federal laws prohibit retaliation against a person who engages in certain activity under the law. Under Wisconsin's fair employment law, an employer may not take an adverse action or discriminate against an individual who opposed any discriminatory practice or who complained, testified or assisted in a proceeding under the law.

## 7. File a Formal Complaint

If necessary, file a formal complaint with the Equal Rights Division of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development or with the federal U.S. Equal Employment Opportunities Commission in Milwaukee. The two main offices and phone numbers of the Equal Rights Division are shown below.

### EEOC can be reached at

310 W WISCONSIN AVE  
SUITE 800  
MILWAUKEE WI 53203

Their Milwaukee phone numbers are (414) 297-1111 or (414) 297-1115 (TTY).

**This is one in a series of guides regarding the fair employment law. It is not legal advice. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, a competent professional should be sought.**

For more information:

**STATE OF WISCONSIN  
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
EQUAL RIGHTS DIVISION  
CIVIL RIGHTS BUREAU**

201 E WASHINGTON AVE ROOM A300  
PO BOX 8928  
MADISON WI 53708

Telephone: (608) 266-6860  
TTY: (608) 264-8752

819 N 6th ST  
ROOM 255  
MILWAUKEE WI 53203

Telephone: (414) 227-4384  
TTY: (414) 227-4081

Website: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/er/>

**The Department of Workforce Development is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access this information in an alternate format or need it translated to another language, please contact us.**