

Informal Resolution

Addressing sexual harassment in the workplace can feel intimidating, especially when you're trying to handle it informally.

An informal way to address sexual harassment in the workplace involves trying to resolve the issue without filing a formal complaint. This could include speaking directly to the person who has harmed you, discussing the problem with a supervisor, or involving HR in a less official way. Informal resolutions require active participation from everyone involved. This way, lessons are learned, and effective remedies are put into place.

The goal is to handle the situation through conversations rather than through formal channels like investigations or legal action.

Informal resolutions can be:

- **Conversation:** having a civil conversation, expressing how the actions have impacted you may be an option. This should only be done if you feel safe in doing so.
- **Facilitation:** facilitated discussion between the complainant and respondent by a qualified third party;
- **Notification:** a supervisor notifies the respondent that the behaviour must stop immediately;
- **Education:** a supervisor arranges coaching, support, and educational opportunities for the respondent and/or other members of the workplace.

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Many people choose this approach as a first step because it can feel less intimidating and may lead to quicker resolutions. However, it still requires careful communication and self-advocacy to ensure your concerns are heard and respected.

Informal processes also allow for more flexibility in how issues are handled, which can sometimes lead to more collaborative and constructive outcomes as long as both parties are willing to listen and make changes.

Cons to informal resolutions could include a greater risk of stalling or manipulating the process; parties may eventually disagree and not wish to participate; little to no check on power imbalances; the need to have full trust and confidence in all parties and the process; bias impacting the ultimate decision; risk of not protecting everyone's rights appropriately; and the risk that one party may ultimately control the conversation.

In the informal process of addressing workplace sexual harassment, self-advocacy plays a central role. Self-advocacy is confidently expressing how the behaviour has impacted you and clearly stating what changes you need to feel safe and supported. By advocating for yourself during informal discussions with the person involved, a supervisor, or HR, you can work toward a more flexible, personal resolution while still protecting your well-being.

These factors must be considered when determining if an informal resolution process will be the best action in your environment and for the specific complaint process.