

Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

Information for
School Community Members

Discrimination and sexual harassment are not tolerated in this workplace according to the *Human Rights Act*.

- Your Rights
- How to Recognize Discrimination and Sexual Harassment
- What To Do About It

What can I do if I feel that I am being discriminated against or sexually harassed?

- Talk to someone you know and trust.
- When in doubt, tell someone rather than stay silent and continue to doubt.

It is your right to be in an environment that is free from discrimination and sexual harassment. If you feel that you are being discriminated against or sexually harassed, your school board has a policy that you can refer to.

For further information about this subject, and reporting policy, contact your principal or supervisor.

Some excerpts and examples reprinted from the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission with permission.



School Boards in Nova Scotia each have a policy that clearly sets out the rights and responsibilities of all school community members regarding child abuse, discrimination, and sexual harassment.

It is the responsibility of every school community member to be aware of the policy and their responsibilities.

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What is discrimination?

Discrimination is the unfavourable treatment of someone based on prejudice. We say discrimination occurs when

- burdens, obligations, or disadvantages are imposed on a person or class of persons and not imposed on others
- access to opportunities, benefits, and advantages is withheld or limited to some but not to others

The following characteristics, in general, are protected from discrimination:

Age

If your age is used against you it is discriminatory—such as when you are renting a home or looking for a promotion at work.

Race/Colour

Making a negative judgment about people because of the colour of their skin is racism; acting on it is discrimination.

Religion/Creed

Every Nova Scotian has the right to practise their religion or creed (religious belief).

Sex

Making a negative judgment about someone because of their gender is sexism.

Sexual Orientation

The Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act* protects people from discrimination on this basis—if they are heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Physical Disability/Mental Disability

Being refused service, fired, or treated negatively due to disability is discriminatory.

Irrational Fear of Contracting an Illness or Disease

Difficulties experienced at work or elsewhere because others have an irrational fear of contracting your disease is discriminatory.

Ethnic, National, or Aboriginal Origin

Being made to feel inferior or hearing jokes that stereotype you as a result of your origin is discriminatory.

Family Status/Marital Status

Whether you have children or not, or are married, divorced, single, or living common-law should not affect how you are treated.

Source of Income

Spousal agreements, court orders, pensions, or social assistance—your source of income can't be used to discriminate against you.

Political Belief, Affiliation, or Activity

Your own politics (or lack of them) should not affect your ability to look for a job, or keep one, if your politics differs from that of a government.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is any

- objectionable, coercive, or irritating comment, communication, action, or attention of a sexual nature that is directed to a person or persons by someone who knows, or ought reasonably to know, that such are unwelcome
- action or communication with a sexual connotation or component that creates an intimidating, demeaning, or offensive work or school environment, even if they are directed to no person in particular

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to

- staring or leering
- unwelcome invitations of a sexual nature
- inappropriate or unwelcome touching or physical contact
- sexual jokes

Sexual harassment may consist of a single incident or a series of incidents over a period of time.