



WHAT WORKS AT WORK:

Promising practices to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in low-paid jobs



MAJOR FINDINGS

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In June 2019, the National Women’s Law Center and the Urban Institute hosted a two-day convening of workers, organizers, litigators, advocates, and social scientists to identify and examine effective interventions to prevent and respond to workplace sexual harassment in low-paid work settings. The presenters and participants examined practices shown to be effective by research or through on-the-ground experience for preventing and addressing workplace sexual harassment. Here are NWLC’s major recommendations:

- 1. Worker involvement is essential to stop harassment.** For all steps in stopping harassment—diagnosing the problem, planning and executing the training, setting up the complaint procedures and disciplinary policies, determining what types of alternative policies to offer and how—workers must be involved in and leading the change. Worker involvement increases the buy-in among workers and creates policies that workers will use.
- 2. Employer accountability must include concrete steps.** Employers must show institutional courage, stop retaliation, and invest in stopping harassment. Statements and policies alone are not enough.
- 3. Training must be rethought.** Training should be frequent, in-person, and cover civility and workplace behavior, not just what is legal and illegal.
- 4. Complaint and investigation procedures must be improved.** Procedures should be accessible, transparent, and keep the survivor informed of progress.
- 5. Discipline must be clear, transparent, and consistent.** Workers should be involved in determining the levels of discipline and should know what types of infractions will lead to different levels of discipline.
- 6. Voluntary alternative dispute resolution should be used.** Ombuds and restorative justice are two possibilities attendees discussed.
- 7. Employers should monitor the supervisors’ responses to harassment because monitoring increases compliance.**
- 8. Employers should take steps to increase diversity and inclusion in the workplace to decrease workplace sexual harassment.**

Additionally, the attendees acknowledged that more research is necessary regarding effective harassment interventions in low-paid industries and identified various areas where additional research is needed including:

- The efficacy of interventions discussed in the report
- Industry-specific practices to stop sexual harassment
- The impact of sexual harassment on a worker’s career
- Metrics for measuring and benchmarking the reduction in harassment