

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS WHO HIRE INTERNS

Newsrooms — including newspapers, broadcasters and news websites — often run student intern programs to provide future journalists with real-life experience. Experts at the Freedom Forum Institute’s “Power to the Interns” training session on March 2, 2018, offered these tips for employers to protect interns from sexual harassment:

> **PROVIDE ONGOING STAFF TRAINING ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT.**

Use experts to conduct face-to-face, interactive sexual harassment training for employees at every staff level, including those with “superstar” status. The trainer should provide examples of harassment tailored to newsrooms.

> **DEVELOP GUIDELINES ON INTERACTIONS WITH INTERNS.**

Focus part of harassment training on inappropriate behavior toward interns. Rules could prohibit sexual banter and one-on-one, after-hours meetings outside the office. Set rules for behavior at holiday parties and staff outings.

> **CONDUCT SEXUAL HARASSMENT TRAINING FOR INTERNS.**

Create separate training for paid and unpaid interns that includes a review of company policies on harassment, scenarios depicting inappropriate behavior, ways to avoid and handle uncomfortable incidents, and a method for reporting incidents.

> **INSTITUTE AN “ACTIVE BYSTANDER” RULE ON HARASSMENT.**

Require all employees to report any instance of inappropriate behavior toward any employee or intern, leaving it to higher-level managers to decide on a follow-up.

> **PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO INTERNS ON PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT.**

Offer advice to interns on expectations for their behavior in a professional setting. Guidance could include avoidance of office romances and sexually suggestive comments, as well as advice on appropriate office attire.

> **GIVE INTERNS OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET MANY EMPLOYEES.**

Do not isolate interns; offer them opportunities to interact professionally with a variety of newsroom employees. Seek their input, at story conferences, ethics discussions and creative brainstorming, to show they are valued.

> **SET UP A STRUCTURE TO OVERSEE INTERNS.**

Assign a high-level manager, or someone with direct access to one, to oversee the intern program. Coordinate with the human resources department.

> **ENCOURAGE INTERNS TO REPORT UNCOMFORTABLE BEHAVIOR.**

Make it clear that interns can report possible harassment without fear of retaliation or jeopardizing job prospects. Provide a “safe space” — perhaps an employee group — where interns can seek advice on how to handle uncomfortable situations.

> **SET AN EXAMPLE FOR INTERNS AND EMPLOYEES.**

Ensure managers conduct themselves in an exemplary manner. That could include calling out inappropriate conduct, avoiding demeaning language in describing others, and choosing content and photos that are not sexist or racist.

> **DISCUSS HARASSMENT POLICIES WITH FACULTY ADVISERS**

Coordinate policies with university faculty who run the internship programs.