

Sexual harassment at work

Wednesday, February 25, 2026 from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. EST

Speakers:

Jordan Tilley, Precarious Employment Outreach Worker
Northumberland Legal Centre

Peter Vance, Community Legal Worker, Northumberland Legal Centre



Land Acknowledgement

CLEO acknowledges that our office is located on the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat. This land is now also home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. This area of Tkaronto, also known as Toronto, is covered by Treaty 13 signed by the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaties signed by multiple Mississauga and Chippewa First Nations.

We acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonization, anti-Indigenous racism, and white supremacy on which this city and our legal system are built. We are all Treaty people and we commit to working in solidarity towards truth and reconciliation.



CLEO Resources

Steps to Justice – free legal information

- stepstojustice.ca

Guided Pathways – help completing legal forms

- stepstojustice.ca/guided-pathways-home/

CLEO publications – free print resources

- cleo.on.ca

CLEO Connect – training for community workers

- cleoconnect.ca



What can you expect today?

- 90 minutes (2 presenters and 2 Q and A).
- The webinar may contain legal information. As a reminder, this is not legal advice. The information is current as of today's date, February 25, 2026.
- Links to the recording, slides, and handout will be sent by email to all registrants within a few days.
- ASL interpretation is available today. Subtitles (closed captioning) have also been enabled.



Department of Justice
Canada

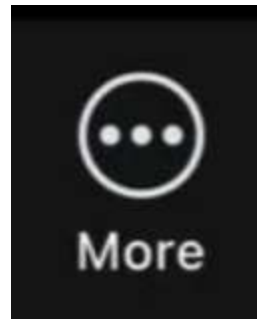
Enabling Closed Captioning



To use the Closed Captioning feature, click on the icon with two C's in your Zoom controls:



If you don't see this icon, try clicking on the More icon with three dots:





**Jordan Tilley, Precarious Employment Outreach
Worker**

Northumberland Legal Centre

Peter Vance, Community Legal Worker

Northumberland Legal Centre

UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

SHAPE

Sexual Harassment | Advice | Prevention | Education

For free legal advice, call 1-833-677-5146
Mon.-Fri. 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.



Department of Justice
Canada

Ministère de la Justice
Canada

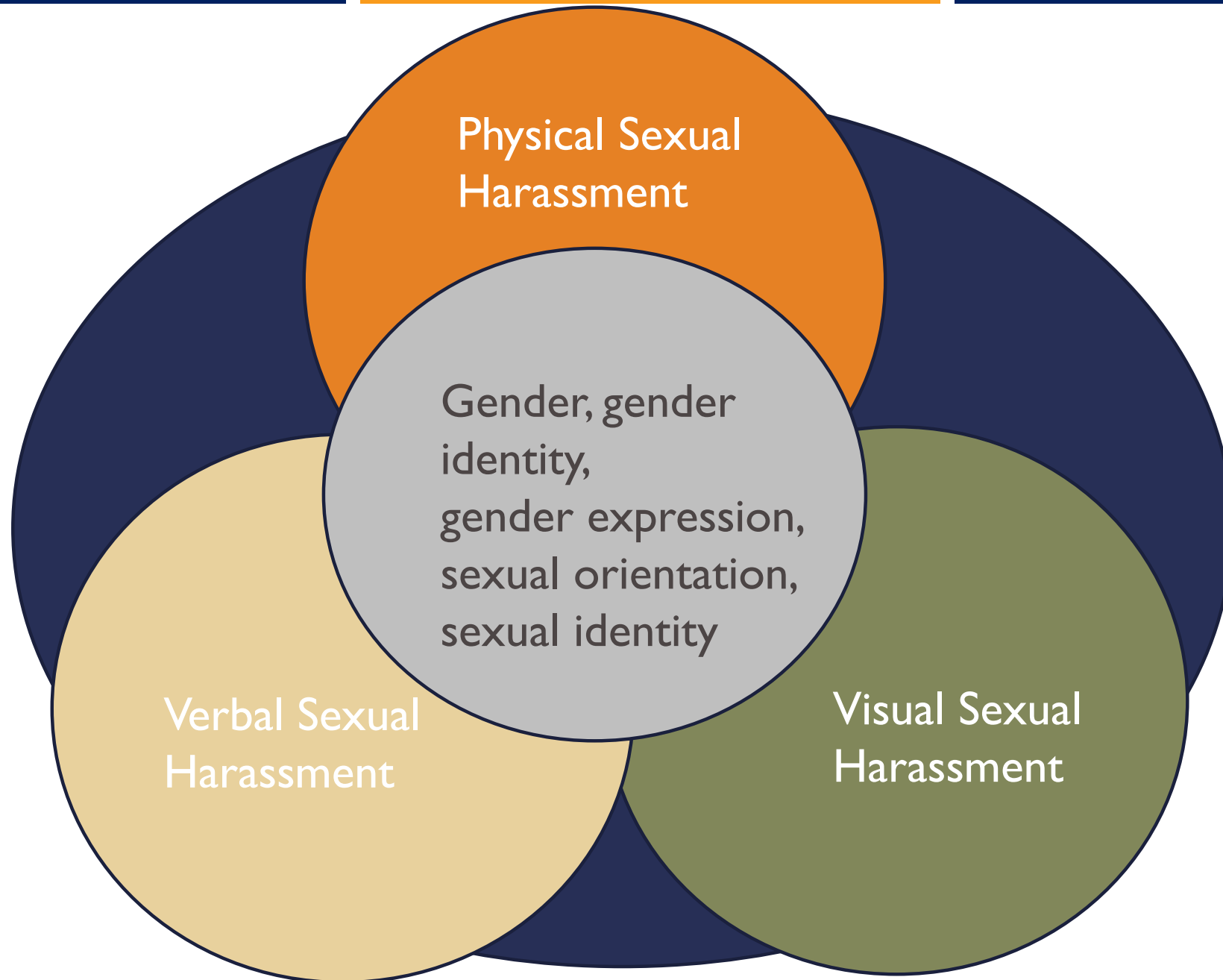
ABOUT THE SHAPE PROJECT

The SHAPE: Sexual Harassment, Advice, Prevention, Education project is generously funded by the Department of Justice Canada to:

- Deliver public legal education about workplace sexual harassment; and,
- Deliver free and confidential summary legal advice and assistance to people in Ontario who have experienced workplace sexual harassment.

LEARNING GOALS

- Identifying different forms of workplace sexual harassment
- Who is most at risk
- Worker Rights and Employer Responsibilities
- How to report workplace sexual harassment
- How you can support clients
- Resources you can share with clients



VERBAL SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- Jokes, remarks, teasing
- Not taking **NO** for an answer
- Comments about clothing, body or behavior
- Sexual emails, notes or letters
- Asking about sexual or gender identity preference
- Unwelcome sexual advances

VISUAL SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- Staring or leering
- Displaying sexualized images/content
- Sending sexual images or videos
- Sharing someone's sexual pictures or images without consent
- Exposing private parts
- Using intimidating gestures

Who is most at risk?

- Women
- LGBTQ2IA+ individuals
- Employees between the ages of 15-24
- Indigenous Women and Women of Colour
- Single Women
- Employees with low seniority
- Employees working directly with the public
- Employees in male dominated industries
- Employees working in isolation



WHO ARE THE PERPETRATORS?

- Two-thirds (65.6%) of workers who experienced sexual harassment and violence indicated that their harasser was a man;
- Compared to 13% who reported their harasser was a woman;
- The next highest categories were a mix of genders (9%) or two or more men (8%).
- The majority of perpetrators were either third-parties such as clients and customers (28%) or co-workers (25%).

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Dignity and respect

Good order and discipline

Highest ethical standards

Accountability

Safe and supportive environment

Unacceptable Conduct

Sexualized language/jokes

Visually displaying sexually explicit materials

Unwanted sexual attention

Pressuring for sexual activity

Sexist or sexual demeaning comments

Sexually discriminatory conduct

Online sexual misconduct

Inappropriate use of social media

Unsolicited sexually explicit text/emails/images

Criminal Conduct

Sexual Assault

Indecent exposure

Pornography

Criminal Harassment, stalking, threats

Sexual exploitation

Sexual interference

Sharing private images without consent

QUESTION & ANSWER

LEGAL DEFINITIONS

- Engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker, in a workplace where the comment or conduct is known or *ought reasonably to be known* to be **unwelcome**
- Making a sexual advance or solicitation where the person making the advance is in **a position to grant or deny a benefit** to the worker



HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

Ontario Human Rights Code

- Code prohibits all forms of discrimination based on sex
- applies to provincially regulated employees (most people)

Canadian Human Rights Act

- sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression is a prohibited ground
- applies to federally regulated employees (bank tellers, airline, military)

EMPLOYERS MUST:

- Have a workplace sexual harassment policy
- Provide training to staff
- Conduct an investigation of complaint
- Share outcome of investigation
- Ensure the privacy of participants

WHO IS PROTECTED?

"Every person who is an employee has a right to be free from harassment in the workplace because of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression by his or her employer or agent of the employer or by another employee."

- Human Rights Code

This includes:

- full-time staff
- part-time staff
- contract and temporary employees
- interns
- co-op students
- volunteers

WHEN ARE YOU PROTECTED?

You are protected from workplace sexual harassment during all aspects of the employment process including:

- Job application & recruitment
- Interviews
- Training
- Promotions & transfers
- Discipline & dismissal



WHEN ARE YOU PROTECTED CONTINUED

You are also protected outside of the physical walls of the workplace. Workplace sexual harassment can occur outside of normal business hours but must be linked to the workplace and employment including:

- travelling for work
- conferences/training
- company related functions and events
- virtually through social media and email

You are protected from workplace sexual harassment during all aspects of the employment process.

REPORTING HARASSMENT

- Reluctance
- Information as power
- No obligation, but employer needs to know to help
- Protections when making a complaint
- Legal help to discuss options

INTERNAL REPORTING OPTIONS

- If comfortable, talk to the perpetrator
- Talk to a co-worker or support person
- Review internal policy and follow steps for reporting
- File written complaint with employer
- Keep a record of any formal reporting steps you take
- Insist on investigation/written report/consequence

REPORTING INTERNALLY

Pros

- Protection: illegal to retaliate
- Confidentiality
- Employer *must* investigate
- Feel good
- Encourages others
- The situation might change

Cons

- Employers or co-workers may retaliate anyway
- Work environment could get worse
- Employer/manager may not take complaint seriously
- Less privacy in small workplaces or communities

EXTERNAL REPORTING OPTIONS

- Speak to community legal centres
- Contact police - criminal harassment and/or sexual assault
- Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB)
- Ministry of Labour
- Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO)
- Consult Union, if available
- Small Claims or Superior Court

REPORTING EXTERNALLY

Pros

- More authority to address issues
- Employers may take more seriously
- Order for compensation or to stop the behaviour
- Raise awareness about sexual harassment at work

Cons

- Have to tell story to more people
- Some processes take a long time
- Fears about being believed
- Social and cultural stigma

WHAT CAN COMMUNITY WORKERS DO?

- Refer client to nearest Community Legal Centre
- Tell the clients to keep a record **outside** of work of incidents (diary/record of incidents/who/what/where/when/witnesses)
- Active listening with a trauma-informed approach
- Offer referral for emotional and psychological support, safety planning
- Encourage client to gather relevant evidence (any evidence such as texts, videos, pictures, emails, letters from witnesses)
- Keep notes of your discussions with the client

REFERRALS

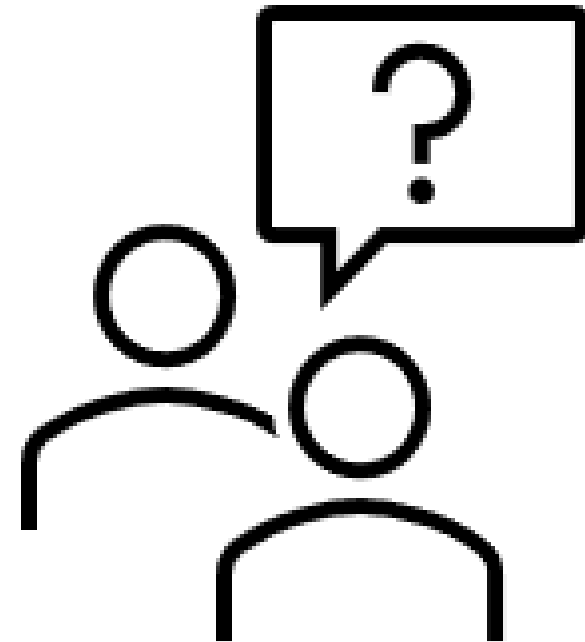
SHAPE can provide free public legal information and summary legal advice to workers experiencing workplace sexual harassment.

Call 1-833-677-5146

MON-FRI 8AM – 8PM EST

Website: shapeyourworkplace.ca

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Quick Survey

QR code:



You can enter a prize draw at the end of this short survey to win a \$50 gift card of your choice



Community and legal resources

[Find your community legal clinic](#) or call 1-800-668-8258

Legal Aid Ontario: [How do I apply for Legal Aid?](#)

[Visit Pro Bono Ontario](#) or call 1-855-255-7256

[Ontario Legal Information Centre](#) offers appointments with a lawyer, in English or French.



Thank you for joining us!

Subscribe to [CLEO Connect](#) for updates on new legal information and upcoming webinars.

QUESTIONS or COMMENTS?

Contact info@cleoconnect.ca