



Civil Rights  
Department  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

# CALIFORNIA LAW PROHIBITS WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION & HARASSMENT

The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) enforces laws that protect you from illegal discrimination and harassment in employment based on your actual or perceived:

- ANCESTRY
- AGE (40 and above)
- COLOR
- DISABILITY (physical, developmental, mental health/psychiatric, HIV and AIDS)
- GENETIC INFORMATION
- GENDER EXPRESSION
- GENDER IDENTITY
- MARITAL STATUS
- MEDICAL CONDITION (genetic characteristics, cancer, or a record or history of cancer)
- MILITARY OR VETERAN STATUS
- NATIONAL ORIGIN (includes language restrictions and possession of a driver's license issued to undocumented immigrants)
- RACE (includes hair texture and hairstyles)
- RELIGION (includes religious dress and grooming practices)
- REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH DECISIONMAKING
- SEX/GENDER (includes pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding and/or related medical conditions)
- SEXUAL ORIENTATION





# CALIFORNIA LAW PROHIBITS WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION & HARASSMENT

## THE CALIFORNIA FAIR EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING ACT AND ITS IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS PROTECT CIVIL RIGHTS AT WORK.

### HARASSMENT

1. The law prohibits harassment of employees, applicants, unpaid interns, volunteers, and independent contractors by any person. This includes a prohibition against harassment based on any characteristic listed above, such as sexual harassment, gender harassment, and harassment based on pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and/or related medical conditions.
2. All employers are required to take reasonable steps to prevent all forms of harassment, as well as provide information to each of their employees on the nature, illegality, and legal remedies that apply to sexual harassment.
3. Employers with 5 or more employees and public employers must train their employees regarding the prevention of sexual harassment, including harassment based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.

### DISCRIMINATION/REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

1. California law prohibits employers with 5 or more employees and public employers from discriminating based on any protected characteristic listed above when making decisions about hiring, promotion, pay, benefits, terms of employment, layoffs, and other aspects of employment.
2. Employers cannot limit or prohibit the use of any language in any workplace unless justified by business necessity. The employer must notify employees of the language restriction and consequences for violation.
3. Employers cannot discriminate against an applicant or employee because they possess a California driver's license or ID issued to an undocumented person.
4. Employers must reasonably accommodate the religious beliefs and practices of an employee, unpaid intern, or job applicant, including the wearing or carrying of religious clothing, jewelry or artifacts, and hair styles, facial hair, or body hair, which are part of an individual's observance of their religious beliefs.
5. Employers must reasonably accommodate an employee or job applicant with a disability to enable them to perform the essential functions of a job.

### ADDITIONAL PROTECTIONS

1. The law provides specific protections and hiring procedures for people with criminal histories who are looking for employment.
2. Employers with 5 or more employees and public employers must provide up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave to eligible employees: to care for themselves, a family member (child of any age, spouse, domestic partner, parent, parent-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, sibling) or a designated person (with a blood or family-like relationship to employee); to bond with a new child; or for certain military exigencies.

3. Employers must provide job-protected leave of up to 4 months to employees disabled because of pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition, as well as require employers to reasonably accommodate an employee, on the advice of their health care provider, related to their pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition.
4. Employers, employment agencies, and unions must preserve applications, personnel records, and employment referral records for a minimum of four years.
5. Employment agencies must serve all applicants equally, refuse discriminatory job orders, and prohibit employers and employment agencies from making discriminatory pre-hiring inquiries or publishing help-wanted advertisements that express a discriminatory hiring preference.
6. Unions cannot discriminate in member admissions or dispatching members to jobs.
7. The law prohibits retaliation against a person who opposes, reports, or assists another person to oppose unlawful discrimination, including filing an internal complaint or a complaint with CRD.

### REMEDIES/FILING A COMPLAINT

1. The law provides remedies for individuals who experience prohibited discrimination, harassment, or retaliation in the workplace. These remedies can include hiring, front pay, back pay, promotion, reinstatement, cease-and-desist orders, expert witness fees, reasonable attorney's fees and costs, punitive damages, and emotional distress damages.
2. If you believe you have experienced discrimination, harassment, or retaliation, you may file a complaint with CRD. Independent contractors and volunteers: If you believe you have been harassed, you may file a complaint with CRD.
3. Complaints must be filed within three years of the last act of discrimination/harassment/retaliation. For those who are under the age of eighteen, complaints must be filed within three years after the last act of discrimination/harassment/retaliation or one year after their eighteenth birthday, whichever is later.

**If you have been subjected to discrimination, harassment, or retaliation at work, file a complaint with the Civil Rights Department (CRD).**

### TO FILE A COMPLAINT

Civil Rights Department  
[calcivilrights.ca.gov/complaintprocess](http://calcivilrights.ca.gov/complaintprocess)  
Toll Free: 800.884.1684 / TTY: 800.700.2320  
California Relay Service (711)

Have a disability that requires a reasonable accommodation?  
CRD can assist you with your complaint.

The Fair Employment and Housing Act is codified at Government Code sections 12900 - 12999. The regulations implementing the Act are at Code of Regulations, title 2, division 4.1

Government Code section 12950 and California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 11023, require all employers to post this document. It must be conspicuously posted in hiring offices, on employee bulletin boards, in employment agency waiting rooms, union halls, and other places employees gather. Any employer whose workforce at any facility or establishment consists of more than 10% of non-English speaking persons must also post this notice in the appropriate language or languages.



# THE RIGHTS OF EMPLOYEES WHO ARE TRANSGENDER OR GENDER NONCONFORMING



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**CALIFORNIA LAW PROTECTS TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING PEOPLE FROM DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION AT WORK. THESE PROTECTIONS ARE ENFORCED BY THE CIVIL RIGHTS DEPARTMENT (CRD).**

## THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

### 1. Does California law protect transgender and gender nonconforming employees from employment discrimination?

Yes. All employees, job applicants, unpaid interns, volunteers, and contractors are protected from discrimination at work when based on a protected characteristic, such as their gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, race, or national origin. This means that private employers with five or more employees may not, for example, refuse to hire or promote someone because they identify as – or are perceived to identify as – transgender or non-binary, or because they express their gender in non-stereotypical ways.

Employment discrimination can occur at any time during the hiring or employment process. In addition to refusing to hire or promote someone, unlawful discrimination includes discharging an employee, subjecting them to worse working conditions, or unfairly modifying the terms of their employment because of their gender identity or gender expression.

### 2. Does California law protect transgender and gender nonconforming employees from harassment at work?

Yes. All employers are prohibited from harassing any employee, intern, volunteer, or contractor because of their gender identity or gender expression. For example, an employer can be liable if co-workers create a hostile work environment – whether in person or virtual – for an employee who is undergoing a gender transition. Similarly, an employer can be liable when customers or other third parties harass an employee because of their gender identity or expression, such as intentionally referring to a gender-nonconforming employee by the wrong pronouns or name.

### 3. Does California law protect employees who complain about discrimination or harassment in the workplace?

Yes. Employers are prohibited from retaliating against any employee who asserts their right under the law to be free from discrimination or harassment. For example, an employer commits unlawful retaliation when it responds to an employee making a discrimination complaint – to their supervisor, human resources staff, or CRD – by cutting their shifts.

### 4. If bathrooms, showers, and locker rooms are sex-segregated, can employees choose the one that is most appropriate for them?

Yes. All employees have a right to safe and appropriate restroom and locker room facilities. This includes the right to use a restroom or locker room that corresponds to the employee's gender identity, regardless of the employee's sex assigned at birth. In addition, where possible, an employer should provide an easily accessible, gender-neutral (or "all-gender"), single user facility for use by any employee. The use of single stall restrooms

and other facilities should always be a matter of choice. Employees should never be forced to use one, as a matter of policy or due to harassment.

### 5. Does an employee have the right to be addressed by the name and pronouns that correspond to their gender identity or gender expression, even if different from their legal name and gender?

Yes. Employees have the right to use and be addressed by the name and pronouns that correspond with their gender identity or gender expression. These are sometimes known as "chosen" or "preferred" names and pronouns. For example, an employee does not need to have legally changed their name or birth certificate, nor have undergone any type of gender transition (such as surgery), to use a name and/or pronouns that correspond with their gender identity or gender expression. An employer may be legally obligated to use an employee's legal name in specific employment records, but when no legal obligation compels the use of a legal name, employers and co-workers must respect an employee's chosen name and pronouns. For example, some businesses utilize software for payroll and other administrative purposes, such as creating work schedules or generating virtual profiles. While it may be appropriate for the business to use a transgender employee's legal name for payroll purposes when legally required, refusing or failing to use that person's chosen name and pronouns, if different from their legal name, on a shift schedule, nametag, instant messaging account, or work ID card could be harassing or discriminatory. CRD recommends that employers take care to ensure that each employee's chosen name and pronouns are respected to the greatest extent allowed by law.

### 6. Does an employee have the right to dress in a way that corresponds with their gender identity and gender expression?

Yes. An employer who imposes a dress code must enforce it in a non-discriminatory manner. This means that each employee must be allowed to dress in accordance with their gender identity and expression. While an employer may establish a dress code or grooming policy in accord with business necessity, all employees must be held to the same standard, regardless of their gender identity or expression.

### 7. Can an employer ask an applicant about their sex assigned at birth or gender identity in an interview?

No. Employers may ask non-discriminatory questions, such as inquiring about an applicant's employment history or asking for professional references. But an interviewer should not ask questions designed to detect a person's gender identity or gender transition history such as asking about why the person changed their name. Employers should also not ask questions about a person's body or whether they plan to have surgery.

Want to learn more?

Visit: <https://bit.ly/3hTG1EO>

## TO FILE A COMPLAINT

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[calcivilrights.ca.gov/complaintprocess](http://calcivilrights.ca.gov/complaintprocess)

Toll Free: 800.884.1684 / TTY: 800.700.2320

California Relay Service (711)

Have a disability that requires a reasonable accommodation? CRD can assist you with your complaint.





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# SEXUAL HARASSMENT

## THE FACTS

Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination based on sex/gender (including pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions), gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. Individuals of any gender can be the target of sexual harassment. Unlawful sexual harassment does not have to be motivated by sexual desire. Sexual harassment may involve harassment by a person of the same gender, regardless of either person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

## THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

1. *"Quid pro quo"* (Latin for "this for that") sexual harassment is when someone conditions a job, promotion, or other work benefit on your submission to sexual advances or other conduct based on sex.
2. *"Hostile work environment"* sexual harassment occurs when unwelcome comments or conduct based on sex unreasonably interferes with your work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. You may experience sexual harassment even if the offensive conduct was not aimed directly at you.

The harassment must be severe or pervasive to be unlawful. A single act of harassment may be sufficiently severe to be unlawful.

## BEHAVIORS THAT MAY BE SEXUAL HARASSMENT

1. Unwanted sexual advances
2. Offering employment benefits in exchange for sexual favors
3. Leering; gestures; or displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons, or posters
4. Derogatory comments, epithets, slurs, or jokes
5. Graphic comments, sexually degrading words, or suggestive or obscene messages or invitations
6. Physical touching or assault, as well as impeding or blocking movements



# SEXUAL HARASSMENT



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Actual or threatened retaliation for rejecting advances or complaining about harassment is also unlawful.

Employees or job applicants who believe that they have been sexually harassed or retaliated against may file a complaint of discrimination with CRD within three years of the last act of harassment or retaliation. CRD serves as a neutral fact-finder and attempts to help the parties voluntarily resolve disputes.

If CRD finds sufficient evidence to establish that discrimination occurred and settlement efforts fail, the Department may file a civil complaint in state or federal court to address the causes of the discrimination and on behalf of the complaining party. CRD may seek court orders changing the employer's policies and practices, punitive damages, and attorney's fees and costs if it prevails in litigation. Employees can also pursue the matter through a private lawsuit in civil court after a complaint has been filed with CRD and a Right-to-Sue Notice has been issued.

## EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITY & LIABILITY

All employers, regardless of the number of employees, are covered by the harassment provisions of California law. Employers are liable for harassment by their supervisor or agents. Employees accused of harassment, including both supervisory and non-supervisory personnel, may be held personally liable for harassment or for aiding and abetting harassment. The law requires employers to take reasonable steps to prevent harassment. If an employer fails to take such steps, that employer can be held liable for the harassment. In addition, an employer may be liable for the harassment by a non-employee (for example, a client or customer) of an employee, applicant, or person providing services for the employer. An employer will only be liable for this form of harassment if it knew or should have known of the harassment, and failed to take immediate and appropriate corrective action.

Employers have an affirmative duty to take reasonable steps to prevent and promptly correct discriminatory and harassing conduct, and to create a workplace free of harassment.

A program to eliminate sexual harassment from the workplace is not only required by law, but it is the most practical way for an employer to avoid or limit liability if harassment occurs.

## ALL EMPLOYERS MUST TAKE THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS TO PREVENT HARASSMENT AND CORRECT IT WHEN IT OCCURS:

1. Distribute copies of this document or an alternative writing that complies with Government Code 12950. This document may be duplicated in any quantity.
2. Post a copy of the CRD employment poster "California Law Prohibits Workplace Discrimination and Harassment."
3. Develop a harassment, discrimination, and retaliation prevention policy in accordance with 2 CCR 11023.

*The policy must:*

- Be in writing.
- List all protected groups under the FEHA.
- Indicate that the law prohibits coworkers and third parties, as well as supervisors and managers with whom the employee comes into contact, from engaging in prohibited harassment.
- Create a complaint process that ensures confidentiality to the extent possible; a timely response; an impartial and timely investigation by qualified personnel; documentation and tracking for reasonable progress; appropriate options for remedial actions and resolutions; and timely closures.
- Provide a complaint mechanism that does not require an employee to complain directly to their immediate supervisor.
- That complaint mechanism must include, but is not limited to including: provisions for direct communication, either orally or in writing, with a designated company representative; and / or a complaint hotline; and/ or access to an ombudsperson; and/

or identification of CRD and the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as additional avenues for employees to lodge complaints.

- Instruct supervisors to report any complaints of misconduct to a designated company representative, such as a human resources manager, so that the company can try to resolve the claim internally. Employers with 50 or more employees are required to include this as a topic in mandated sexual harassment prevention training (see 2 CCR 11024).
  - Indicate that when the employer receives allegations of misconduct, it will conduct a fair, timely, and thorough investigation that provides all parties appropriate due process and reaches reasonable conclusions based on the evidence collected.
  - Make clear that employees shall not be retaliated against as a result of making a complaint or participating in an investigation.
4. Distribute its harassment, discrimination, and retaliation prevention policy by doing one or more of the following:
    - Printing the policy and providing a copy to employees with an acknowledgment form for employees to sign and return.
    - Sending the policy via email with an acknowledgment return form.
    - Posting the current version of the policy on a company intranet with a tracking system to ensure all employees have read and acknowledged receipt of the policy.
    - Discussing policies upon hire and/or during a new hire orientation.
    - Using any other method that ensures employees received and understand the policy.
  5. If the employer's workforce at any facility or establishment contains ten percent or more of persons who speak a language other than English as their spoken language, that employer shall translate the harassment, discrimination, and retaliation policy into every language spoken by at least ten percent of the workforce.
  6. In addition, employers who do business in California and employ 5 or more part-time or full-time employees must provide at least one hour of training regarding the prevention of sexual harassment, including harassment based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, to each non-supervisory employee; and two hours of such training to each supervisory employee. All employees must be trained by January 1, 2023. New supervisory employees must be trained within six months of assuming their supervisory position, and new non-supervisory employees must be trained within six months of hire. Employees must be retrained once every two years. Please see Gov. Code 12950.1 and 2 CCR 11024 for further information.

## CIVIL REMEDIES

1. Damages for emotional distress from each employer or person in violation of the law
2. Hiring or reinstatement
3. Back pay or promotion
4. Changes in the policies or practices of the employer

To schedule an appointment, contact the Communication Center below.

If you have a disability that requires a reasonable accommodation, the CRD can assist you by scribing your intake by phone or, for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing or have speech disabilities, through the California Relay Service (711), or you can contact us below.

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