

Question:

An employee has informed me that they were offended by a suggestive photo a coworker showed them. How should I handle this?

Answer from Rachel, SHRM-CP:



As an employer, you have an obligation to take steps to prevent harassment and deal with it thoroughly and promptly when it occurs. Since the alleged behavior may constitute sexual harassment, we recommend that you investigate the matter and put a stop to any such behavior as soon as possible.

Speak to the employee who complained, any witnesses, and the accused employee. Once the investigation interviews are complete, we recommend internally documenting your conclusions and actions taken.

If you determine that the accused employee violated the company's harassment or other workplace policy, you should take appropriate disciplinary measures. It is then important to inform both the accused employee and the accuser about the conclusions of the investigation. The employee who made the complaint doesn't need to know the specific disciplinary action you took, just that appropriate corrective action was taken.

Make sure that you document every step of your investigation and resulting actions taken so you can show that you fulfilled your obligations. Having a clear record will also help you ensure that similar situations are handled consistently in the future.

For dozens of additional resources, including a step-by-step Workplace Complaint Investigation Guide, search for *harassment investigation* in the search bar on the HR Support Center.

Rachel has a background as an HR Generalist in a variety of industries. After completing a B.A. in Psychology, she began her HR background in employee relations, staffing and payroll. During her free time, Rachel is an avid kayaker and plans to visit every National Park during her

lifetime.