

YSBIV Sexual Harassment Policy for Foster Parents

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII) prohibits sexual harassment by customers, clients, and any third parties, the same as it prohibits sexual harassment between employees, regardless of whether or not they are employees of an agency or company. Youth Service Bureau of Illinois Valley (YSB) recognizes that while foster parents are not employees of the agency, foster parents are viewed as part of the foster care team when providing services to foster children/youth. As a foster parent you hold a unique and vital role in caring for these youth and are expected to have a close working relationship with the agency and the workers assigned to your home. Given this relationship, it is the agency's expectation that all foster parents agree to abide by the agency's Sexual Harassment Policy.

YSB is committed to providing a safe environment, free from discrimination and harassment on any grounds, including sexual harassment for all, including its employees, foster parents and clients. YSB operates a zero-tolerance policy for any form of sexual harassment within the agency. Anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment, regardless of their sex and the sex of the harasser, and YSB recognizes that sexual harassment can also occur between people of the same sex. YSB also recognizes that sexual harassment is a manifestation of power relationships, and often occurs within unequal relationships, for example between a supervisor and an employee, a foster parent and employee or another client. Sexual Harassment often takes place within the confines of the work environment and/or relationships.

Definition of Sexual Harassment:

Sexual Harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated. It also includes situations where a person is asked to engage in sexual activity as a condition of employment, a gain, or access to services or needs.

Sexual Harassment can involve one or more incidents. Actions or incidents may be physical, verbal and/or non-verbal. Examples of conduct or behaviors which constitutes sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

Physical Conduct:

- Unwelcome physical contact including patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, fondling or inappropriate touching.
- Physical violence including sexual assault
- Physical contact, e.g. pushing, grabbing etc.
- The use of threats or rewards to solicit sexual favors

Verbal Conduct:

- Comments on a person's appearance, age or private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories or jokes
- Sexual advances
- Repeated and/or unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy
- Insults based on the sex or gender of the person
- Condescending remarks
- Use of terms of endearments generally used in more intimate or familiar relationships such as honey, darling, sweetheart, etc.

Non-Verbal Conduct:

- Sending sexually suggestive or explicit messages by text, voicemail or email
- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive materials
- Sexually suggestive gestures
- Whistling or leering

It is important to note that these examples are not exhaustive, and that sexual harassment can include **any conduct of a sexual nature** which is unwanted and unwelcome by the recipient.

The most severe and overt forms of sexual harassment are easier to determine. On the other end of the spectrum, some sexual harassment is more subtle and depends, to some extent, on an individual's perception and interpretation.

Complaint Procedures:

YSB employees are expected to abide by the agency's Harassment Policy as stated in the YSB Personnel Policies, including complaints against clients, Foster Parents or other third parties within YSB.

If a Foster Parent or client believes they are a victim of sexual harassment, they should file a complaint through the agency's normal Client Grievance Process or Foster Parent Grievance process by submitting the complaint verbally and/or in writing to the Supervisor or Program Manager, as soon as possible. Such complaints will be reviewed with the HR Director who is designated to handle sexual harassment complaints. All charges, including anonymous complaints will be accepted and investigated regardless of how the matter comes to the attention of the agency. However, because of the serious implications of sexual harassment charges and the difficulties associated with their investigation and the questions of credibility involved, the claimant's willing cooperation is a vital component of an effective inquiry and an appropriate outcome. No one will be victimized or retaliated against for making such a complaint.

The agency will fully investigate the complaint and advise the complainant and the alleged harasser of the results of the investigation. False and frivolous charges refer to cases where the accuser is using a sexual harassment complaint to accomplish some end other than stopping sexual harassment. It does not refer to charges made in good faith which cannot be proven. Given the seriousness of the consequences for the accused, a false and frivolous charge is a severe offense that can itself result in disciplinary or corrective actions.

A person who has been subject to sexual harassment can also make a complaint outside of YSB. This can be done through the several mechanisms:

Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR)

Chicago: 312-814-6200 or 800-662-3942
Chicago TTY: 866-740-3953
Springfield: 217-785-5100
Springfield TTY: 866-740-3953
Marion: 618-993-7463
Marion TTY: 866-740-3953

Illinois Human Rights Commission (IHRC)

Chicago: 812-814-6269
Chicago TTY: 312-814-4760
Springfield: 217-785-4350
Springfield TTY: 217-557-1500

United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

Chicago: 800-669-4000
Chicago TTY: 800-869-8001

Advocacy Office for Children and Families

Toll Free: 800-232-3798
Springfield: 217-557-7278
Email: dcfs.advocacy@illinois.gov

Acknowledgement

As foster parents of the agency, I/We _____, acknowledge that have received a copy of the Sexual Harassment Policy and agree to abide by this policy.

Foster Parent Signature

Date

Foster Parent Signature

Date