



Sexual Harassment Prevention

Case Study: Sexual Harassment

Case of Captain Haleigh Creedon



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Sexual Harassment Prevention

Overview

This facilitation guide and accompanying case study have been prepared to assist all leaders who supervise both military and civilian employees. Equal opportunity (EO) and equal employment opportunity (EEO) professionals, practitioners, and leaders can use this guide to review and educate their members on policies, acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, and tactics to eliminate sexual harassment.

Facilitation Guidance

It is highly encouraged to select facilitators such as EO and (EEO) professionals and practitioners to explore the complex dynamics of real-life situations, identify the issues involved, and utilize tools to address those issues. Facilitators must provide a controlled, safe, and non-attributional environment where individuals will be willing to share their perspectives. Throughout this guide, questions are framed to stimulate thoughts on areas to explore and consider in this process and applicable to the specific topic.

Content and Resources

The case synopsis gives insight into the case, key details, and findings. The case study references section provides additional detailed information relevant to the situation. Below this section, there are additional resources on similar cases that support specific aspects of this case and can be used to promote a more in-depth understanding of the dynamics related to sexual harassment.

Facilitation Instructions

1. Before the training:
 - a. Ensure the location and needed resources are prepared (e.g., handout).
 - b. Ensure the facilitator is prepared.
 - c. Ensure the audience is prepared.
2. During the training:
 - a. Read the purpose and introduction. Answer any questions from the learners.
 - b. Read the definition of sexual harassment or provide a handout/visual aid of the definition.
 - c. Read the case study.
 - d. Use the group discussion questions to facilitate an open dialogue while encouraging independent responses from everyone.
 - e. Use the individual questions with anticipated responses (AR) as an opportunity to include all members in the discussion.
 - f. Conclude the session by summarizing the case study and the main points discussed during the discussion.
3. After the training:
 - a. Conduct a follow-up assessment to determine the training effectiveness:

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- i. What went right?
 - ii. What went wrong?
 - iii. What could be done better next time?
- b. Share the findings with the leadership and revise future training sessions as needed.
 - c. Monitor the organization for progress.

Case Study: Sexual Harassment

Purpose: The purpose of this case study is to provide critical information for:

- Identifying sexual harassment behaviors
- Understanding the leaders' and individuals' roles in preventing sexual harassment
- Responding to individuals who sexually harass, are being sexually harassed, or observe sexual harassment
- Emphasizing how a unit's climate and other factors can influence behaviors
- Acknowledging how other types of harassment are often involved in sexual harassment
- Applying actionable techniques at the individual and leader levels

Introduction

Analyzing case studies reveals the complexities of real-world situations and deepens our understanding of the factors contributing to workplace sexual harassment. By examining elements like organizational climate, power dynamics, and leadership behaviors, we can appreciate the intricacies involved, especially the interplay between different forms of harassment. This exploration equips us to foster a more supportive environment with effective prevention strategies, recognizing that sexual harassment often stems from a combination of factors, including a permissive climate and inadequate leadership response.

For example, in a situation of sexual harassment, the climate likely plays a role in perpetuating behaviors through social acceptance. Equally, leaders who encourage sexual harassment as a tradition or minor happenings, fail to treat it with urgency, neglect to enforce appropriate consequences, or ignore, adding to the likelihood the behavior will continue and increase in severity. Furthermore, the lines may be frequently blurred between acts of sexual harassment and other harassment types, such as bullying, hazing, or discrimination.

This case study exploration will address how different components can influence behaviors and how identifying and addressing these can help to prevent further sexual harassment behaviors and increase the overall climate. Addressing these underlying issues is crucial for preventing future incidents and improving the overall workplace climate.

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Disclaimer:

This training is for awareness and educational purposes only. This case study may evoke feelings or emotions. If anyone experiences any adverse reactions, they should seek professional support. All topics discussed in this session are NOT substitutes for medical advice.

Definitions

Sexual Harassment (military-only) DoDI 1020.03, Change 3. Effective: January 17, 2025

A category of harassment that is sexual in nature, including but not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and repeated deliberate offensive comments or gestures of a sexual nature. Conduct that constitutes an offense at Paragraph 107a of Part IV of the Manual for Courts-Martial is punishable under Article 134 of the UCMJ.

Sexual Harassment (civilian-only) DoDI 1020.04 Change 1. Effective January 17, 2025

Unlawful discriminatory harassment that is based on conduct of a sexual nature. It involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

It explicitly or implicitly becomes a term or condition of a person's job, pay, or career. For example:

- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by a person is used as a basis for career or employment decisions affecting that person; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance.
- It is so severe or pervasive that a reasonable person would perceive, and the DoD civilian employee does perceive, the environment as hostile or offensive.
- Conduct that constitutes an offense at Paragraph 107a of Part IV of the Manual for Courts-Martial is punishable under Article 134 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Other Harassment Behaviors

Other harassment behaviors may also appear in cases of sexual harassment, such as hazing, bullying, or stalking. As a result, defining a situation can sometimes be difficult, as the overlap in behaviors can muddle the understanding of what motivated the incident and what is occurring.

Case Synopsis

During Captain Haleigh Creedon's time at Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM), she encountered many instances of sexual harassment by her direct supervisor, Lieutenant Colonel Herman West. Creedon recounts instances where West would come into the women's restroom while they were showering and changing. She described that he then started asking about her dating life and, during a training mission, stroked her hair and ears. He also demanded that she drive him from his house to work and lunch. During these trips, she said that the touching continued. While testifying against West, Creedon reported she was nervous about fulfilling a trip to Indonesia because West had discussed wanting to get drunk and share a hotel room with

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Creedon. She stated that her final straw was when West unbuckled his pants while she was driving him from lunch back to the base. Creedon would say 'No' or 'Stop,' he would not stop. She filed a formal complaint in 2023.

This case was the first time the Army prosecuted someone for sexual harassment under the UCMJ. This came after Executive Order 14062 targeted at reforming Army policy. During the sentencing, West was found guilty and addressed Creedon, saying, "My actions towards you were despicable. You've done nothing wrong." (Daniels, 2024). He also directed a statement at family members, saying he was embarrassed by his actions. West was not discharged from the Army but was formally reprimanded by the Army judge and was forced to pay the financial cost of Creedon's counseling because of the sexual harassment she faced. The exact amount was \$3,871 for 24 months.

Creedon explained she had lost trust and faith in Army leaders and plans to leave the Army early next year. Unfortunately, she finds that justice was only partially served. She wishes he had been discharged as he should not have been allowed to lead others in the Army. However, she is glad that he was charged for his actions of sexual harassment and acknowledges how that will follow him along in his career. She hopes her case can shed light on others experiencing sexual harassment, saying, "You are strong enough to do this; you're strong enough to see it through. I think that's empowering." (Daniels, 2024).

Group Discussion

*Note: These are suggested questions. Potential responses are included below each question.

1. What sexual harassment behaviors were displayed throughout the case?
 - a. Inappropriate touching and comments by West
 - b. West walking into the women's restroom
 - c. Abuse of power
2. What factors could have prevented Creedon from reporting sooner?
 - a. Fear of retaliation- he was her supervisor
 - b. A climate where inappropriate actions were acceptable
 - c. Instances where Creedon and West were alone on unauthorized business (traveling to lunch together)
3. What factors may have contributed to this situation?
 - a. A climate accepting of sexual harassment behaviors
 - b. Feelings that her leadership would not believe her over the senior officer
 - c. Lack of trust in the complaint process
 - d. Fear of retaliation
4. What are some of the long-term effects of a case like this on the organization regarding:
 - a. Climate
 - i. Low productivity and inability to accomplish mission requirements
 - ii. Loss of trust and confidence in leadership
 - b. Decreased morale

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- c. Increased absenteeism
 - i. Mission/productivity
 - ii. Failure to accomplish individual duties
 - iii. Inhibited ability to accomplish the organization's mission
- d. Mental health
 - i. Increased anxiety/depression
 - ii. Feelings of isolation

Questions

1. How could you support someone in your current role if they came to you in a similar situation?

Responses to listen for:

- a. Listen to them without judgment and offer support.
 - b. Offer encouragement without interrupting.
 - c. Discuss reporting options (e.g., EOA, IG).
 - d. Continual support (e.g., checking in).
 - e. Offer to help find support resources (e.g., mental health, chaplain).
2. What intervention tactics and techniques could you use if you became aware of a sexual harassment situation similar to the case study?

Responses to listen for: If I noticed sexual harassment, I would:

- a. Directly intervene by immediately calling out the inappropriate behavior, pulling the offender aside, and telling them what they did was inappropriate.
 - b. If it is unsafe to intervene directly, I would wait for an opportunity to let the person being sexually harassed know I am here for them, that I saw the behavior, and that it is not okay and should be taken seriously.
 - c. If I were in a public setting (e.g., bar, night club), I would ask an employee to assist in creating a distraction, and I would get the person being sexually harassed away from the other person.
3. What steps or mitigating approaches could help support a better climate in a situation like what is described in the case study?

Responses to listen for: It is a leader's responsibility to:

- a. Set the tone for a respectful and supportive environment where harassment is not tolerated.
- b. Be proactive in communicating amongst the unit that any sexual harassment complaints will be taken seriously. This means not just speaking out against inappropriate behavior when it happens but also creating a climate where everyone understands the importance of respect and dignity for all.



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- c. Model expectations as a leader.
 - d. Conduct training focusing on bystander intervention.
 - e. Provide information on exactly where and how to report sexual harassment.
 - f. Educate all members that it is never the victim's fault for being sexually harassed.
4. Do you feel comfortable expressing concerns about sexual harassment in your organization? Why?

Responses to listen for:

- a. Yes, I feel comfortable speaking up. My chain of command supports me, and my report will be taken seriously. It is also easier when there is a straightforward process for raising issues without fearing retaliation.
- b. No, I worry about backlash or being seen as not a team player or just someone complaining, especially if the climate isn't that open.

Conclusion

During this discussion, we explored areas of sexual harassment, climate, and leadership. As indicated in the case study, the climate and leaders can significantly affect the likelihood and severity of sexual harassment behaviors. Likewise, it is important to note that sexual harassment and other unfavorable behaviors are likely to persist if perpetrators do not think their actions are wrong because they are accepted within the climate or do not believe they will be held accountable for them.

Leaders must be self-reflective and conscious of their subordinates' and peers' behaviors. Furthermore, leaders should recognize when an individual's behavior changes (e.g., if you were Creedon's immediate supervisor and West came into the room, would you be able to recognize changes in Creedon's body language?).

Recognizing and discussing the harmful effects of sexual harassment, along with providing training on appropriate behaviors and prevention methods, helps raise awareness in the workplace. It is essential for everyone to feel appreciated, valued, and safe within their organization, as every service member and civilian deserves to work in a harassment-free workplace environment.



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References

*Note: Each reference below contains pieces of this story. Please review them to ensure you have the full perspective.

Daniels, C. (2024, December 17). JBLM soldier finds justice in unprecedented military sexual harassment case. KOMO News. <https://komonews.com/news/local/joint-base-lewis-mcchord-jblm-sexual-harassment-victim-haleigh-credon-artillery-regiment-battalion-commander-direct-superior-military-ucmj-2022-executive-order>

Warner, G. (2024, January 4). Army moves to court-martial ex-JBLM battalion commander over sexual harassment allegations. Stars and Stripes. <https://www.stripes.com/branches/army/2024-01-04/army-lewis-mcchord-court-martial-sex-harassment-12557954.html>

Warner, G. (2024, December 14). Army lieutenant colonel at JBLM receives reprimand, nearly \$100,000 fine for harassing 3 female officers. Stars and Stripes. <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2024-12-14/army-commander-sex-harassment-court-martial-16156826.html>



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Handout

1. How could you support someone in your current role if they came to you in a similar situation?
2. What intervention tactics and techniques could you use if you became aware of a sexual harassment situation similar to the case study?
3. What steps or mitigating approaches could help support a better climate in a situation like what is described in the case study?
4. Do you feel comfortable expressing concerns about sexual harassment in your organization? Why?