

Don't Oversimplify Acknowledgments of Harassment Training, *SHRM*, ft. Philip Voluck

Philip R. Voluck, Esq., Co- Managing Partner of Kaufman Dolowich & Voluck, LLP Pennsylvania offices, was quoted in Allen Smith's May 8th SHRM article.

Employees' acknowledgments that they've attended anti-harassment training should document more than attendance; they should also show that workers understood the training's contents, some legal experts say.

Philip Voluck, an attorney with Kaufman Dolowich Voluck in Philadelphia and Blue Bell, Pa., said that the employee should note in the training acknowledgment that he or she received however many hours of training on sexual and other unlawful forms of harassment. The acknowledgment should note that the training covered state and federal laws, the company's legal obligations regarding harassment and other best practices for preventing workplace harassment, he recommended.

The acknowledgment also should include the statement, "I understand and will conduct myself in a manner consistent with the company's harassment policy. I understand the company's complaint and reporting procedure," he said.

In addition, it should note that harassment and retaliation for reporting harassment are prohibited behavior and against company policy, he added. The acknowledgment might conclude with a statement that the company is committed to providing a work environment free of inappropriate and disrespectful behavior, intimidation, communications and other conduct directed at someone because of that person's protected characteristics, he suggested.

Each employee attending the training should sign and date the acknowledgment and print his or her name. Voluck suggested that either HR, a manager or the trainer also sign and print his or her name on the acknowledgment and date it.

Usefulness of Acknowledgments

Voluck said a signed acknowledgment can be useful if the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) investigates a discrimination charge. The EEOC often asks if the employer has conducted anti-harassment training for employees, he noted.

Don't Ask if Employees Have Been Harassed

Sometimes employees volunteer at the end of anti-harassment training that they've been harassed, in which case they should be directed to report to HR, and the trainer should alert HR, Voluck said.