

WORDS ARE GHOSTS THAT HAUNT US

The Importance of Empathetic Advocacy in Technical Communication

by

Harmony Rose Vodicka

April 2026

A Senior Honors Project

Submitted to the Department of English and the Honors College

Missouri State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

Departmental Distinction in Professional Writing

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Abstract

Technical writers have a responsibility to incorporate empathetic language in their writings, and they should choose to prioritize empathy in their document creation; therefore, they need to understand the set processes required to maintain a strong audience connection and to utilize inclusive language. There are many tools that technical writers should train with that can assist in the pursuit of elevated and empathetic writing, including audience analyses, inclusivity guides, and outside research in advocacy. By focusing on the experience of the audience and the overall impact of the final message, technical writers can create documents that deliver impactful and long-lasting impressions. Through proper research and execution, technical writers can combine all of the necessary engineering aspects of technical writing (for example, heading hierarchies, document formatting, and style corrections) with the advancements of empathetic writing (inclusive language, disability advocacy, and advocacy outreach) to create highly successful documents.

Keywords: inclusive language, empathetic communication, advocacy, technical writing

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Introduction

There are certain stories and phrases, from many childhood homes within Western cultures, which begin to hold even more importance as the children grow up. Somewhat common phrases like “Do unto others as you would like others to do unto you” and “Put yourself in someone else’s shoes” are elevated by the concepts attached to them throughout adolescence and adulthood. Those same children begin to learn about empathy, advocacy, and emotional maturity. Suddenly, a simple teaching phrase, often used to scold young children who are choosing to use negative words with their friends, takes on a new level of meaning. The power of words begins to feel more prevalent, more impactful, especially as each child moves through the building blocks leading to being an established adult.

As each individual grows through academia and into the workforce, they are all taught the importance of communication, no matter what each person chooses to specialize in. The various elements of communication can be highlighted or minimized depending on each field, but it is of established importance for everyone to understand how written and spoken words are used as tools. In the world of technical writing, using the craft of words as an industry tool takes on even more significant relevance to each specialization. For technical writers, their schooling and training have routinely been focused on grammar, structure, format, and all of the engineering that goes into creating useful documentation. Attention to detail when it comes to style, spacing, and graphic use is a key stepping stone that must be placed on the road to mastery in the technical writing field. However, there is a much quieter and much more impactful side of technical writing that can fall to the wayside in a world full of highlighted professionalism and succinctness.

To leave a positive, lasting impact on an audience member of a document, the reader must feel understood and respected. While an audience may appreciate an aesthetically pleasing

document or a document that is especially easy to navigate, there needs to be a personal connection to audience members, themselves, in order to create an outstanding impression. These connections can be created through successful technical execution just as simply as they can be executed by writing kindly to a person. Using inclusive language for members of all communities, creating documents that prioritize accessibility for the targeted audience groups, and delivering messages in a way that accomplishes the intended goals while remaining respectful to a document's community members allows technical writers to show utmost prowess in their field.

Technical writers must be able to ensure that all anticipated audience members can understand and connect with the messages of their projects. With that, there are many tools that technical writers should train with that can assist in the pursuit of elevated and empathetic writing, including audience analyses, inclusivity guides, and outside research in advocacy. Technical writers have a responsibility to incorporate empathetic language in their writings, and they should choose to prioritize empathy in their document creation; therefore, they need to understand these set processes required to maintain a strong audience connection and to utilize inclusive language.

Adapting an Audience Analysis

Technical writers must develop an extensive understanding of the intended audience of their document before they begin working on any stage of a given project. There is a primary step that should always be taken, once a project has been officially accepted, and that is the crafting of an audience analysis. An audience analysis is a separate reference document created by the technical writer and based on a series of questions being asked about the audience of a piece. It is created following research into the needs, goals, biases, and desires of the audience for whom the document is being created, and compiles answers to these questions that all team members can

utilize to make choices about the document's final presentation. The importance of this analysis and the understanding of the relationship that is created between a technical writer and their audience has been documented as an influential tool toward the success of a project within multiple online studies. Especially in current times and within the utilization of modern electronics, it is more important now than ever that technical writers understand who they are writing to while creating their pieces. As all groups of people who do not fit into the mold of dominant communities are pushed to the sidelines of communication, prioritization, and safety around the world, writers must call them back from the shadows and offer safe spaces in their words, in order for their work to be well-received.

The Importance of an Audience Analysis

To shape the reception of a document, technical writers must first understand who will be receiving it. One such article that analyses the importance and challenges of audience-writer relations is “How Are New Technologies Affecting the Technical Writer/Audience Relationship?” by Osha Roopnarine. The author utilizes conducted surveys to outline the ways that audience interaction with documentation has been shifting and discusses the importance of technical writers to understand these changes:

... new and emerging technologies are increasing the interaction of the audience with social media, wearables, augmented, and assistive technologies. This gives them easy access to new and archived information, which increases their cognition of the technological world. As a result, they seek alternate ways to comprehend technical information such as in choosing online technical manuals over the printed document, video tutorials over the written format, and opinions and evaluations of products from other users who are posting online.

(Roopnarine)

The digital age has increased the immersion and collaboration of technical writers and their audience. This shift in digital activity means that the relationship between technical writers and their audiences must routinely be analyzed. It is crucial to understand who the audience is and where the document is going while designing for the web, as it is simpler than ever for a document to be made completely inaccessible due to a lack of preparation. From links not leading to proper locations, crucial images being warped for mobile viewers, and audience members scrolling past documents that do not use the correct community names, an ever-shifting society evolving technologically and diversely can lead to increased failures in the technical communication realm. In order to navigate the complications that can come with the growing expectations of an audience, technical writers must engage in conversations with their clients about who the intended audience is, conduct outside research on that audience group, and “place themselves in the shoes” of the audience members to maximize visualization of the effectiveness of their document.

The Pieces of an Audience Analysis

There are many elements of an audience's demographic that technical writers can choose to focus on, depending on the purpose of their document, while conducting their audience analysis. Seen within *Figure 1* is a table collected from an article entitled “Audience Analysis: Importance, Benefits, Definition & Types” that depicts the main categories of demographics and examples of topics to focus on about an audience group. The figure outlines a breakdown of audience analysis topics to generate questions around, specifically featuring geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioral categories:

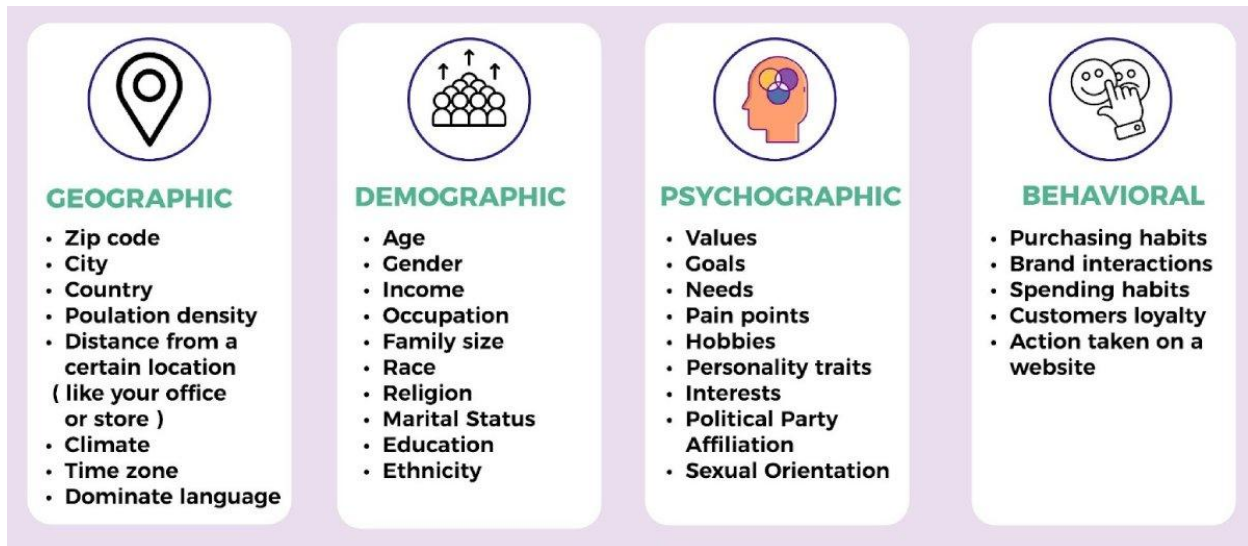


Figure 1: A graphic depicting some of the main categories of audience demographics, including geographic, psychographic, and behavioral considerations.

(*Source:* Hakob, Mike. "Audience Analysis: Importance, Benefits, Definition & Types." *Formstory.io*, 24 July 2025, formstory.io/learn/audience-analysis/.)

These categories offer a variety of focuses that can lead technical writers to ask critical questions about their audiences. Asking questions like, "What age will my intended audience members be?" and "What goals are my audience members hoping to achieve with this document?" will adjust the design choices associated with any given project. Based on these areas or any other designated areas of concern, technical writers should draft a list of questions like these that they hope to answer before they begin working on their project. Once this list has been made, the technical writer can begin step two, which is conducting research to answer the questions. By taking the time to understand the audience at such an integral level by learning about the aspects of their lives that can impact their interpretation of a document and empathizing with their situations in a way that leads to the design choices of a document, technical writers can utilize empathy as a tool to better their final project.

These questions can then be answered through client interactions, previous studies, outside research, or intended audience interviews. A separate document featuring what questions were considered and the answers that were found or, in the case of necessary inference,

hypothesized should be made, referenced, and saved throughout the entirety of the project. The interaction between the intended audience members, clientele research, and the brainstorming associated with answering these types of user questions will lead to an in-depth audience analysis. There is no perfect way to conduct an audience analysis, and each technical writer should feel comfortable creating a process and document that works best for them. Once these steps have been conducted and a separate document of the results has been saved, the project can begin, and the results of the analysis can be applied to the final document.

How to Apply an Audience Analysis to a Document

Every design choice and functionality consideration that is made for a document should be motivated by the results of the audience analysis. Main features affected by these results can include font style and color choices, background color or design choices, and graphic display and sizing choices. Some examples of an applied audience analysis would be sizing up texts and graphics for an audience of the visually impaired or using many images to depict instructions for a juvenile audience. While every technical writer will conduct their analysis differently and every audience will require different applications of an analysis, it is important to conduct personal learning through sourcing examples in order to learn what to look for and how to organize an analysis. Feeling comfortable looking into different examples of conducting and applying an audience analysis, including from various resources and articles like “Audience Analysis: What It Is and How to Do It” by Marilyn Wilkinson, is a necessary part of learning how to properly engage with this process. Each analysis will be different, and each resulting document will be unique, all depending on the audience of a piece. The necessary constant of choosing to utilize this tool is allowing oneself to feel empathy and concern for the audience of a piece, which can prompt a technical writer to make beneficial choices that enhance the audience's experience through care and compassion.

Matching Mediums with Messages

Once there is an understanding of the project's goals and the intended audience, it is time to select the proper medium for the final presentation. Between the physical and the digital realm, there is an abundance of presentation media that can be chosen to deliver any given message. As the age of the internet continues to grow and expand, technical writers must learn the proper tools to utilize for the presentation of their message in both hard copies and digital copies of works. All media serve very specific purposes and change the experience of the user, so careful selection of a medium is critical in the world of technical writing. Some examples of useful mediums and their purposes may be the use of a flyer and QR code pairing for an upcoming event or a webpage for the presentation of a new organization and its available resources. Additional research into the needs of the project and similar project examples should be used during the media selection process in order to streamline the effectiveness of a given project.

How to Choose the Correct Medium

Outside research into each medium and an understanding of each purpose are requirements for a technical writer. Creating a cheat sheet based on the outside research for each medium that allows the writer to quickly reference and select the proper media can be a worthwhile investment. One such example is Harry Saddler and Lori Kaplan's "Choosing a Medium for Your Message," which discusses the differences that can arise when choosing to present information in the digital realm rather than the physical. The article outlines three goals that are kept in mind while developing guidelines to teach technical writers how to choose their media: address the needs of the audience, take advantage of new information technologies, and investigate and prove concepts in the application of new media techniques in technical documentation (Saddler and Kaplan). These goals can also be applied on the micro level to each document that a technical writer creates to allow for elevated design choices. For each project, these three goals

should be mirrored to advocate for the usability of an audience and utilize the proper medium for a given message as well as to research how each document will be perceived and how best to support the author's goals.

With all of these goals in mind, technical writers can begin to once again, ask questions about what their document needs to do and how best to do it. Some important questions a technical writer should ask while they are selecting a medium include:

- How interactive should this piece be?
- Is there a need for graphics, and if so, how many will be included?
- Where will this piece be displayed?
- How will it be accessed?

These guiding questions can help draw conclusions that will allow for the most successful medium to be utilized. For example, if a client asks for a variety of graphics and company photos to be used, a webpage or an infographic may be the best choice. If the piece will be displayed both digitally and in a printed copy, a flyer may easily move between the two formats. Working out the needs of the audience, as well as the client, should allow for a clear choice when it comes to media selection, but it is important to organize this information through research and a structure that allows technical writers to construct the most impactful delivery method.

Identifying the Importance of Inclusivity

Once the primary foundations have been laid, the main structure of a document can be placed, and the words can now be written. Language choice is an increasingly important part of a technical writer's work. Clarity and conciseness can often influence a technical writer's choice of words; however, inclusivity and advocacy should impact these choices just as much. When an audience feels properly represented and advocated for within a document's presentation, there is a direct correlation to the impact and longevity of a piece's message.

The Importance of Inclusive Language

The Giampaolo Viglia et al article, “Inclusive Advertising for a Better World,” demonstrates the benefits of using inclusive language and diversity in company advertising. The article presents a published series of examples that actively chose to use inclusive language and support the groups they are targeting. Each article found that the loyalty, emotional appeal, and connection between the writing and the audience members were strengthened and elevated by these choices (Viglia et al). The connection between a document and its audience is the most important element of determining whether a document was successful. Whether it be for a manual, a presentation at a conference, or a fun company infographic, there is no measurable impact if an audience cannot leave a document after reading with the necessary key takeaways of the piece. If the choice to use inclusive language strengthens that bond, then those choices in turn make for a more successful technical writer. The presentation of information has a direct connection to the effect strong writing will have on its readers. Not only does choosing empathy through this language use create well-rounded and good-natured technical writers, but it also creates better documentation overall.

How to Choose Inclusive Language

There are many resources that can be used to learn about the proper tools and terms to utilize while prioritizing inclusive language. Depending on the community that writers are attempting to reach, guidelines and training materials have been created for support in remaining inclusive and can be accessed as resources for all writers. One such guidebook is the “Inclusive Language Guide,” an online guidebook that presents different definitions of inclusive terminology, harmful terminology, and words carrying stigmas for a variety of marginalized groups that technical writers should be aware of (“Inclusive Language Guide”). This guide was originally created by the American Psychological Association and offers an extensive list of terms that guide writers

and professionals toward choosing inclusivity in their communication. Another such example of a reference that demonstrates how to use inclusive language, as well as which words to use for each community by Neveu, Candice et al is titled “3.2 Inclusive Writing.” This guide presents sections of appropriate words that should be used to refer to various communities, including disability-inclusive language and ways to reference Indigenous peoples in a text, and includes an introductory section that explains why inclusive language is necessary, “Inclusive language is integral to communication, and the technical field is no exception. When you communicate, you want to ensure that your language conveys respect and creates a safe environment for your audience” (Neveu et al). References like these, audience group interaction, and continual outside research are all tools that technical writers should apply to their project creation in order to better educate themselves about how to use inclusive language.

Empowering Through Empathy

By focusing on the experience of the audience and the overall impact of the final message, technical writers can create documents that deliver impactful and long-lasting impressions. Through proper research and execution, technical writers can combine all of the necessary engineering aspects of technical writing, including heading hierarchies, document formatting, and style corrections, with the advancements of empathetic writing like inclusive language, disability advocacy, and advocacy outreach to create highly successful documents.

The Need to Prioritize Empathy

Readers from all groups can feel the impacts of empathy in a technical writer's work. In an article by Wan-Hsiu Sunny Tsai entitled “How Minority Consumers Use Targeted Advertising as Pathways to Self-Empowerment,” a survey example showed the ways in which minority groups navigated the internet and shaped their identities around the words that were used for them in digital advertising. The article presented quotes and data that showcased the importance of

empathetic language for minority consumers: “The findings highlight the sociocultural role of advertising and the power of consumer myth, and illuminate disenfranchised consumers' struggles to seek public validation of their subcultural identity while evading potentially stigmatic subcultural distinctiveness” (Tsai). There is an established understanding that language choice is crucial in technical writing, but it is clearly outlined that this is never more important than when writing is attempting to reference or reach out to marginalized groups. The survey presented by Tsai shows the impact that branding and language use can have on an individual's time navigating the internet, as well as their choices in the media they consume. For many technical writers, the majority of the documents they create will require the understanding of a minority group in some way, whether that be a community with a disability, a specific ethnic group, a specific field of study, or any community that has needs outside of the mainstream world perspective. Understanding that their outreach has the potential to impact the lives of their audience members is a level of power that should be handled with care.

The Impact of Empathy

Empathetic writing is actively sought out and chosen by audience groups who have learned to understand the attention and care that goes into an empathetic document. Many technical writers often feel that choosing to switch to this type of language structure will make their text convoluted or less succinct; however, simple changes with inclusive language can add significant impact. To provide a topical example, one can look to the ongoing debates about the choice to push for a mainstream shift from the community name “homeless” to “unsheltered.” A writer may feel that their audience is not *unsheltered*; they are *homeless*, and referring to them as the former distracts from the meaning. However, the definition of these terms is not changing. It is the connotation that is affected. Whether a word or phrase has a positive or negative connotation in society does not inversely affect the definition of the word in written language. Restructuring

the context or statements surrounding the example can allow the definition of a more empathetic term to accomplish the same task. It is the writer's responsibility to select language that carries the same or a similar definition to replace non-inclusive word choices and to format their language in a way that allows them to lean on words with positive connotations.

When a writer is representing a community of people that lacks a strong voice of its own, as many groups in need of advocacy do, they take on an important list of responsibilities: addressing them respectfully, acknowledging society's stigmas toward them, and continuing to get their point across accurately. It can be a heavy burden to hold, but it is just as important, if not more so, as things like using correct grammar and properly formatting graphics.

Application

In order to demonstrate the editing process that comes with prioritizing inclusive language and empathy, I have presented a demonstration via the editing of an official document within Appendices A–C. To find the original document, I chose to examine various Missouri government websites and policies to find an example of documentation that was failing to effectively utilize inclusive language. I found an example in the form of the Missouri Office of Administration's sexual harassment policy. The original policy can be found in *Appendix A: Original Document*.

While preparing to edit this piece, I noted a few key issues that would need to be addressed. First was the issue of outdated language. This policy was initially authorized in 1988 and has only been updated since then in 2011, according to the heading information. This led to the use of outdated language, both grammatically and regarding discussions of gender. The policy used isolating and binary language, specifically separating everyone into either “male” or “female.” Not only is this not inclusive for all readers, but it also creates unnecessary repetition and excessive use of text, both of which are problems that could easily be solved by referring to all people as “individuals.” By switching to the use of plural language or referring to someone as

an individual, I was able to remove all of the gendered language from the policy, the process of which can be seen in *Appendix B: Revised Text*, making it more inclusive and more concise overall. Next was the problem with formatting and structure. The document utilized a variety of numbered lists rather than bulleted lists and included improper lead-ins for such lists. This caused the text to be confusing to read at times and needed to be updated. In my final version, seen in *Appendix C: Final Version*, I opted for a fairly minimal but formal structure that followed formatting rules and prioritized legibility.

Overall, the edits that I made to the original document were inherently quick and easy to implement due to my studies in empathy and inclusivity. The original text was not hostile or actively attempting to isolate anyone; however, it still utilized text that created those types of barriers for various groups. By approaching the document with a mindset that allowed me to focus on advocating for all, especially while handling a topic like sexual harassment that affects all people in harmful ways, I was able to quickly note which language could lead readers to feel excluded and unsafe. Combining that with my skills as a technical writer in document design, I was able to create a document that successfully presents both empathy and legibility to its readers. The tools and skills I have advocated for prioritizing within this paper are not only impactful when challenging those who openly discriminate, but they are also often most impactful when used to tweak language within neutral documents, allowing us to always advocate for as many readers as we can.

Concluding Reflection

The movement of language and communication between various peoples and cultures around the world is one of the great beauties of the current age. Never before has humanity been so connected and collaborative in writing and discussion. This interconnectedness is something that professionals across all fields should treasure and utilize to elevate themselves to a place where

they can consistently provide quality products to as many people as possible. In technical writing, writers are tasked with creating the words that are used to continue to connect the cultures of the world. Though inclusivity has come a long way, there is still documentation being presented to the public and in use today that is insensitive and hurtful. Sometimes, it all comes back to the chants of childhood, the songs of youth that seem to be circumstantial prodding, and the learning from the origins of phrases like “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can also hurt me.” Taking the time to understand the readers a writer is trying to reach, what their needs are as an audience, and what the tools of documentation are that can best support them in those needs is the responsibility of technical writers, which allows them to build these bridges to communication. Through the use of tools like audience analyses, inclusivity guides, and outside research in advocacy, technical writers can create a landscape of empathy that uses written language to create stronger bonds throughout the human world.

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Appendix A: Original Document

The original document is an administrative policy from the Missouri Office of Administration

(OA), policy B-26, which discusses how sexual harassment will be handled in the OA office. The original document can be found here:

“OA Administrative Policies, Policy B-26.” *Missouri Office of Administration*, 2011,

oa.mo.gov/commissioners-office/policies/administrative

This document was originally implemented in 1988 and was last updated in 2011.



OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

POLICY TITLE: Sexual Harassment	AUTHORIZED BY: Kelvin L. Simmons Commissioner
POLICY: B-26	PAGE: 1 of 3
ISSUED: August 1, 1988	REVISED: September 2011

I. General Statement

The Office of Administration (OA) is committed to creating a professional and productive environment for its employees and for those it serves. In furtherance of that commitment, OA will not tolerate sexual harassment.

OA supervisors and managers are responsible for helping create a professional and productive environment free of sexual harassment.

If OA has reasonable cause to believe that unlawful or inappropriate conduct is occurring, then it will take appropriate action, which could include discipline or dismissal of an employee or agent.

OA supports and empowers employees to clearly communicate to persons who are engaging in unwelcome or inappropriate conduct that such conduct should stop immediately.

II. Definition

Sexual harassment may be defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when

1. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment,
2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or
3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. This type of sexual harassment is known as hostile environment sexual harassment. It exists when the sexual conduct is so pervasive and/or severe that it creates an abusive working environment.

Another type of sexual harassment is gender-based harassment. It does not involve explicit sexual behavior. Instead, it may include epithets, slurs and negative stereotyping of men or women, directed at a female or male employee. It could also include denigrating or hostile written material about the employee posted or circulated in the workplace. "Dumb blonde" jokes and male-bashing jokes could be examples of gender-based harassment. Harassment due to gender is similar to harassment due to race. If it is severe and/or pervasive enough to create an abusive working environment, then it can violate the law.

Acts of sexual harassment can be committed by a person of either sex, against a person of either sex.



OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

POLICY TITLE: Sexual Harassment	AUTHORIZED BY: Kelvin L. Simmons Commissioner
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The following are examples of behaviors that must be avoided because they might be unlawful if they meet the definition of harassment.

1. Verbal conduct: sexual innuendo, suggestive comments, threats, insults, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions;
2. Non-verbal conduct: making suggestive or insulting noises, making obscene gestures, whistling, leering, and giving the employee "the once-over";
3. Physical conduct: touching, pinching, brushing against, massaging, other sexual contact.

Employees who witness any such conduct should refrain from laughing or smiling.

III. Complaints

- A. Any employee who believes that he or she has been sexually harassed shall immediately initiate a formal complaint with any of the following OA representatives:
 1. His or her supervisor, or if the employee believes that the supervisor is involved in the sexual harassment or will not be impartial, then the employee may report the complaint to the supervisor's immediate or subsequent supervisor(s) with whom the employee feels comfortable reporting;
 2. The Human Resource contact person within the employee's Division;
 3. The Human Resources Director for OA. The Human Resources Director can be contacted at Truman Building, Room 430, Jefferson City, MO 65102, telephone number (573) 522-4169; or
 4. The Deputy Commissioner of OA. The Deputy Commissioner's contact information is: Commissioner's Office, Capitol Building, Room 125, Jefferson City, MO 65102, telephone number (573) 751-1851.
- B. All formal complaints will be reviewed by the Human Resources Director and appropriate action will be taken to address the complaint. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent reasonably possible under the circumstances.
- C. Any OA employee receiving a complaint shall provide the complaint and related information to the Human Resources Director.



OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

POLICY TITLE: Sexual Harassment	AUTHORIZED BY: Kelvin L. Simmons Commissioner
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D. The Human Resources Director is available to advise employees concerning the procedure to be followed in making a complaint of sexual harassment or to otherwise assist in the process of handling complaints.

IV. Prohibition Against Retaliation

The Office of Administration prohibits retaliation against any person who in good faith files a complaint of sexual harassment, or who testifies, assists, or participates in any investigation, proceeding or hearing conducted pursuant to an allegation of sexual harassment. Retaliation is a serious violation of this policy, and any employee who retaliates will be appropriately disciplined. Any employee who believes that he or she has been retaliated against shall immediately report it to any of the four contacts listed above.

Appendix B: Revised Text

Utilizing the Track Changes function in Microsoft Word, I have included a mid-stage

presentation of the edits I made to the content of the original document found in *Appendix A*.

I isolated the text itself, removing the original formatting outside of paragraph and list structures, and edited the content for inclusive language and grammatical correctness. These edits included updating outdated language, updating language relating to discussions of gender, and adjusting list formatting. My comments on the document can be seen in a sidebar to the right of the text, and my edits are indicated in green throughout the document.

POLICY TITLE: ~~AUTHORIZED BY: Sexual Harassment Kelvin L. Simmons Commissioner~~
 POLICY: B-26 PAGE: 1 of 3 ISSUED: August 1, 1988 REVISED: September 2011



I. General Statement

The Office of Administration (OA) is committed to creating a professional and productive environment for its employees and for those it serves. In furtherance of that commitment, OA will not tolerate sexual harassment. OA supervisors and managers are responsible for helping create a professional and productive environment free of sexual harassment. If OA has reasonable cause to believe that unlawful or inappropriate conduct is occurring, ~~then it will take appropriate action, which could include discipline;~~ it will take appropriate action, which could include disciplinary action or dismissal of an employee or agent. OA supports and empowers employees to clearly communicate to persons who are engaging in unwelcome or inappropriate conduct that such conduct should stop immediately.

II. Definition

Sexual harassment may be defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when

- ~~o 1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment;~~
- ~~o 2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual;~~ or
- ~~o 3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.~~

This type of sexual harassment is known as hostile environment sexual harassment. It exists when the sexual conduct is so pervasive and/or severe that it creates an abusive working environment.

Another type of sexual harassment is gender-based harassment. It does not involve explicit sexual behavior. Instead, it may include epithets, slurs, and negative stereotyping of any person, specifically based on the individual's gender identity, men or women, directed at a female or male employee. It could also include denigrating or hostile written material about the employee posted or circulated in



Harmony Rose



This format of page header seems to be something utilized by the Office of Administration. I will adjust the contents for the purposes of this project, as this will not be an authorized version, and I will not include this information on every page as they have.

April 25, 2025, 9:48 AM

Reply

the workplace. Degrading jokes that attack or stereotype a person's gender identity, "Dumb blonde" jokes and mate-bashing jokes could be examples of gender-based harassment. Harassment due to gender is similar to harassment due to race. If it acts of gender-based harassment are severe and/or pervasive enough to create an abusive working environment, they can violate the law.

Acts of sexual harassment can be committed by and against a person of any gender identity, ~~either sex, against a person of either sex.~~

~~The~~ following are examples of behaviors that must be avoided because they ~~might~~ be unlawful if they meet ~~meet~~ the definition of harassment.

- o 1- Verbal conduct: sexual innuendo, suggestive comments, threats, insults, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions;
- o 2- Non-verbal conduct: making suggestive or insulting noises, making obscene gestures, whistling, and leering, ~~and giving the employee "the once-over";~~
- o 3- Physical conduct: touching, pinching, brushing against, massaging, other sexual contact.

Employees who witness any such conduct should refrain from laughing or smiling. Encouragement of this behavior through such interactions can result in disciplinary action.

III. Complaints

A. Any Employee who believes that they ~~he or she~~ has been sexually harassed ~~should~~ immediately initiate a formal complaint with any of the following OA representatives:

- 1- ~~His or her~~ An immediate supervisor
 - o ~~or~~ if the employee believes that the supervisor is involved in the sexual harassment or will not be impartial, then the employee may report the complaint to the supervisor's immediate or subsequent supervisor(s) with whom the employee feels comfortable reporting;
- 2- The Human Resource contact person within the employee's Division;
- 3- The Human Resources Director for OA.

- o The Human Resources Director can be contacted at Truman Building, Room 430, Jefferson City, MO 65102, telephone number (573) 522-4169.
- 4. The Deputy Commissioner of OA.
 - o The Deputy Commissioner's contact information is: Commissioner's Office, Capitol Building, Room 125, Jefferson City, MO 65102, telephone number (573) 751-1851.

B. All formal complaints will be reviewed by the Human Resources Director and appropriate action will be taken to address the complaint.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent reasonably possible under the circumstances.

C. Any OA employee receiving a complaint shall provide the complaint and related information to the Human Resources Director.

D. The Human Resources Director is available to advise employees concerning the procedure to be followed in making a complaint of sexual harassment or to otherwise assist in the process of handling complaints.

IV. Prohibition Against Retaliation

The Office of Administration prohibits retaliation against any person who ~~in good faith~~ files a complaint of sexual harassment, or who testifies, assists, or participates in any investigation, proceeding or hearing conducted pursuant to an allegation of sexual harassment. Retaliation is a serious violation of this policy, and any employee who retaliates will be appropriately disciplined. ~~Any~~ Employees who believes that ~~he or she~~ they ~~have~~ been retaliated against shall immediately report it to any of the four contacts listed above.

Appendix C: Final Version

The final version of the edited original document, found in *Appendix A*, with my final changes has been included below. This version of the document has not been authorized because the original serves only as an editing example for the use of inclusive language. Minor edits not shown in *Appendix B* were made to the text as needed to finalize the correctness of formatting changes, including, but not limited to, grammar edits, adjusting heading names, and adding context to sentences above lists.

MISSOURI OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION

Administrative Policy B-26: Sexual Harassment

General Statement

The Office of Administration (OA) is committed to creating a professional and productive environment for its employees and for those it serves. In furtherance of that commitment, OA will not tolerate sexual harassment. OA supervisors and managers are responsible for helping create a professional and productive environment free of sexual harassment. If OA has reasonable cause to believe that unlawful or inappropriate conduct is occurring, it will take appropriate action, which could include disciplinary action or dismissal of an employee or agent. OA supports and empowers employees to clearly communicate to persons who are engaging in unwelcome or inappropriate conduct that such conduct should stop immediately.

Definition

Sexual harassment may be defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when the following criteria are exhibited:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly as a term or condition of an individual's employment.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

This type of sexual harassment is known as hostile environment sexual harassment. It exists when the sexual conduct is so pervasive and/or severe that it creates an abusive working environment.

Another type of sexual harassment is gender-based harassment. It does not involve explicit sexual behavior. Instead, it may include epithets, slurs, and negative stereotyping of any person, specifically based on the individual's gender identity. It could also include denigrating or hostile written material about the employee posted or circulated in the workplace. Degrading jokes that attack or stereotype a person's gender identity are examples of gender-based harassment. If acts of gender-based harassment are severe and/or pervasive enough to create an abusive working environment, they can violate the law.

Acts of sexual harassment can be committed by and against a person of any gender identity. The following are examples of behaviors that must be avoided because they meet the definition of harassment:

- Verbal Conduct: sexual innuendo, suggestive comments, threats, insults, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions.
- Non-Verbal Conduct: making suggestive or insulting noises, making obscene gestures, whistling, and leering.
- Physical Conduct: touching, pinching, brushing against, massaging, and other sexual contact.

Employees who witness any such conduct should refrain from laughing, smiling, or otherwise positively engaging with such conduct. Encouragement of this behavior through such interactions can result in disciplinary action.

Filing Complaints

Employees who believe that they have been sexually harassed should immediately initiate a formal complaint with any of the following OA representatives:

- An immediate supervisor
 - If the employee believes that the supervisor is involved in the sexual harassment or will not be impartial, then the employee may report the complaint to the supervisor's immediate or subsequent supervisor(s) with whom the employee feels comfortable reporting.
- The Human Resource contact person within the employee's Division.
- The Human Resources Director for OA.
 - The Human Resources Director can be contacted at Truman Building, Room 430, Jefferson City, MO 65102, telephone number (573) 522-4169.
- The Deputy Commissioner of OA.
 - The Deputy Commissioner's contact information is: Commissioner's Office, Capitol Building, Room 125, Jefferson City, MO 65102, telephone number (573) 751-1851.

All formal complaints will be reviewed by the Human Resources Director and appropriate action will be taken to address the complaint. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent reasonably possible under the circumstances.

Any OA employee receiving a complaint should provide the complaint and related information to the Human Resources Director.

The Human Resources Director is available to advise employees concerning the procedure to be followed in making a complaint of sexual harassment or to otherwise assist in the process of handling complaints.

Prohibition Against Retaliation

The Office of Administration prohibits retaliation against any person who files a complaint of sexual harassment, or who testifies, assists, or participates in any investigation, proceeding or hearing conducted pursuant to an allegation of sexual harassment. Retaliation is a serious violation of this policy, and any employee who retaliates will be appropriately disciplined. Employees who believe that they have been retaliated against should immediately report it to any of the four contacts listed above.