



WHAT IS A HOSTILE WORK ENVIRONMENT UNDER WASHINGTON STATE LAW?

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It is unlawful for employers and employees to create a hostile work environment for peers through harassment, employment discrimination, or sexual harassment. A hostile work environment under Washington State law is one in which you do not feel safe or welcome.

If you or someone you care about is working in a hostile environment, or worked in one in the past, you should learn your rights as a victim. For professional legal counsel and representation, contact experienced employment law attorneys for a consultation. You might be eligible for legal reparations like compensation, back pay, or job reinstatement.

What is the Definition of a Hostile Work Environment?

A hostile work environment may be created when an employee is subjected to unwelcome verbal or physical harassment that is sufficiently severe or pervasive as to alter the conditions of the employee's employment to the point of creating an abusive work environment.¹ Subjecting an employee to a hostile work environment is unlawful under Washington State law.

¹ See *Craig v. M.O. Agencies, Inc.*, 496 F.3d 1047, 1055 (9th Cir. 2007).



What Rights Do I Have if I am a Victim of a Hostile Work Environment?

If you or someone you care about is a victim of a hostile work environment, you have the right to take action against your employer.

Federal laws and Washington State laws protect employees from a hostile work environment. This includes preventing employers from discriminating or harassing its employees, retaliating against employees who complain about a hostile work environment, and protecting employees who were constructively discharged due to the hostile work environment.

What Steps Should I Take to Protect Myself?

Your first course of action should be to bring the issue to your employer's attention. It is expected that your employer should have internal processes to respond to and remedy issues related to a hostile workplace environment.

If your issues are not addressed satisfactorily, you can go directly to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which is the agency tasked with assisting employees with discrimination and harassment cases. You can also request the commission's help with a hostile work environment by lodging a formal complaint. If, after reviewing your complaint, the EEOC agrees that your case has merit, then it can host a mediation between you and your employer to try to find a solution.

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Mediation entails the involvement of an unbiased neutral third party that will help you and your employer reach a mutual agreement. If mediation fails, you still have a right to sue your employer for damages suffered as a result of the hostile work environment and any adverse employment actions.

Hiring an experienced employment law attorney at Athan Law to represent you during this process will help you find the justice you need. Call us anytime at (509) 215-4679.

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