

# Hospitals lag in sexual harassment policies

November 30 2021

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(HealthDay)—Few institutions have clear policies that specifically address sexual harassment from patients toward physicians and staff, according to a research letter published online Nov. 17 in *JAMA*

*Network Open.*

Gabriela Reed, M.D., from University of California in San Francisco, and colleagues emailed chief medical officers (or equivalent), requesting policies on [sexual harassment](#) by patients and/or their families toward physicians for the top 50 U.S. hospitals using 2020 *Newsweek* rankings.

Among the 28 respondents, the researchers reported four institutions reported no applicable policies, six reported having a policy they were unable to share, and 18 shared one or more policies or relevant documents. Six institutions not sharing their policy provided a description by email. Based on the 24 evaluable institutions, the following behaviors were explicitly described in at least one policy: sexual harassment (75 percent), [physical assault](#)/violence (58 percent), verbal harassment/intimidation (50 percent), and discrimination (54 percent). Seventeen of 24 institutions described a response to [inappropriate behavior](#), with one having a designated response team to support those who experienced harassment. Of the 24 institutions, 14 addressed sexual harassment from patients toward physicians, but only three institutions specifically mentioned sexual harassment with regard to patient treatment of staff.

"Institutions can rely on exemplar policies like Mayo Clinic's, which clearly defines sexual harassment and outlines a stepwise institutional response," the authors write. "We hope that highlighting top hospitals' policies may galvanize constructive changes to other institutional policies."

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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Citation: Hospitals lag in sexual harassment policies (2021, November 30) retrieved 21 December 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-11-hospitals-lag-sexual-policies.html>

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