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ELIMINATING THE RISK OF HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Employment practices liability insurance (EPLI) has become an increasingly prevalent policy for organizations varying in size. These types of policies not only cover alleged sexual harassment claims, but also other alleged wrongful acts in the workplace, including racial discrimination, defamation, wrongful termination or failure to promote based on race, gender or sexual orientation.

[The Denver Post](#) recently reported a sharp increase in EPLI policies as a result of the many allegations against high-profile individuals in 2017. While these policies are important in protecting companies from alleged employment practices type claims, recent news has proven that claims are a real concern which organizations must address head-on.

Ensuring that all employees feel safe at work does not start with insurance policies – it starts with the right education, training and culture. It is important that organizations work with their insurance brokers to implement best practices in the workplace regarding employment issues such as harassment and discrimination. A few best practices for companies include:

1. Educate employees: The lines are often blurred when it comes to appropriateness in the workplace. It is crucial that employees are informed of specific organizational policies so that they can determine what constitutes harassment and a hostile work environment. When employees are educated they will be equipped to follow the guidelines if they find themselves or others in an unwanted situation.

2. Promote the culture: A company's culture is something that should be valued by all employees. An inclusive work environment is integral to a business' ultimate success. It is imperative that organizations make it clear that harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated. If an individual is acting in a way that is making others uncomfortable or organizational leadership deems to be inappropriate, it should be addressed quickly and thoroughly for the safety and wellbeing of others. Employees should feel respected by colleagues and safe to speak with their managers and human resources department regarding potential issues in the workplace.

3. Hire for fit: It is not only important to hire based on credentials and competency, but also for fit within the culture of the company. Weaving questions into the interview process that give executives insight into who the candidate is as a person will help to ensure that they will fit in culturally. Background and reference checks are also best practices to verify that there hasn't been past history of inappropriate behavior in the workplace.

Harassment and discrimination are difficult issues that, unfortunately, can occur in the workplace. Creating an environment in which everyone - no matter their gender, race or sexuality - feels comfortable and safe is the most important thing an organization can do to protect its employees and its bottom line.



C.J. MOONEY, ARM

Producer

CMooney@grahamco.com

The Graham Building

Philadelphia, PA, 19102

215-701-5275