



LAW ENFORCEMENT BULLETIN



MSI Law Enforcement Bulletin 2022-02

Risk Mitigation Opportunity: Sexual Assault and Harassment Awareness Month

Each April, the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#) is one of many organizations coordinating [National Sexual Assault Awareness Month](#) to educate and engage the public in addressing sexual abuse, assault, and harassment. The first Tuesday of April each year is often designated as [A Day of Action](#) to help initiate efforts in combatting sexual crime and misconduct. Law enforcement leaders can help mitigate risk by reviewing their internal policies and procedures regarding sexual assault and harassment on this *Day of Action* while establishing a regular review period of these critical policies. Additionally, leaders should ensure that all agency personnel have completed meaningful training and that a culture of intolerance for sexual harassment permeates the agency. Law Enforcement leaders should also review their policies and procedures governing sexual assault criminal investigations to ensure they comply with New Jersey mandates.

National research supports the findings that sexual assault within the police ranks remains an ongoing problem that warrants action by the law enforcement leader. Discipline, criminal charges, agency reputation damage, job loss, and litigation are just some of the many outcomes when an agency fails to implement the appropriate mitigation strategies. The monetary costs associated with litigation concerning sexual harassment can be significant. A recent national study examining sexual harassment of female police officers found that the average monetary award after a trial was \$1,160,834.75, and the average settlement was \$389,431.14.¹

Action Item Considerations for the Law Enforcement Leader:

- Utilize the many available workplace conduct training programs on the [MEL Safety Institute Platform](#), including *Sexual Harassment for Employees*, *Handling a Sexual Harassment Investigation*, *Preventing Workplace Discrimination*, and more.
- Ensure that policies and procedures address *Police Sexual Misconduct*, which involves police officers taking advantage of their power and authority to bring some type of sexual reward.² Such victims of police sexual misconduct may be employees, crime victims, witnesses, and other members of vulnerable populations. In addition to having appropriate policies addressing this type of conduct, law enforcement leaders should foster a climate amongst all employees where such actions by other officers are not tolerated and reported to supervisory personnel.
- Ensure that officers are aware of [New Jersey's Panic Button Law](#) which requires employers to equip hotel employees with a panic device to prevent sexual assault. Absent such knowledge, a response may be delayed if officers are unfamiliar with employees wearing such panic devices on their person.

- Review [New Jersey Attorney General Directive 2018-5, Directive Implementing Procedures and Protocols for Sexual Response and Referrals](#), [New Jersey Attorney General Standards for Providing Services to Victims of Sexual Assault](#), and consult with their County Prosecutor, Municipal Attorney, and local stakeholders to ensure their agency policies and procedures are most appropriate.

Supplemental Resource Considerations:

[Preventing and Eliminating Sexual Harassment in New Jersey](#)

[Resources for Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault Crimes - IACP](#)

[IACP Trauma-Informed Sexual Assault Initiatives](#)

[IACP Sexual Assault Kit Initiative](#)

Sources:

¹Dwyer, T. P. (2021, April 8). The high cost and toll of sexual harassment and gender discrimination in law enforcement: Part I. *Police One*.

²McDonald, P. J. (2018, May). Reducing Sexual Harassment and Other Police Sexual Misconduct. *Police Chief Magazine*, p. 20.