

EEOC Aledges Pharmacy Supervisor Continually Harassed Female Techs

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

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ABERDEEN, Wash. - The EEOC Charges that Grays Harbor Community Hospital violated federal law when it failed to stop a supervisor's continuous sexual harassment of several female employees, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit filed today. According to the EEOC, employee Jamie Toste repeatedly informed upper-level management that a supervising pharmacist was sexually harassing her and several other pharmacy technicians. He started harassing Toste in 2004 when they were both working the evening shift, the EEOC said. The harassment included offensive sexual comments, unsolicited discussion of his sex life and habits, showing explicit material from the Internet, and physically intrusive behavior such as approaching Toste from behind to whisper in her ear, blocking her pathway, and rubbing her back, legs and arms. The agency's investigation showed that his harassment of Toste escalated during 2006 and 2007, and that she felt compelled to resign after the hospital repeatedly failed to take effective corrective action to address her concerns about her safety. Community Hospital was unavailable for comment at the time of this report.

Sexual harassment violates Title VII of Civil Rights Act of 1964. After first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through conciliation, the EEOC filed the lawsuit (EEOC v. Grays Harbor Community Hospital, CV-10-05616) in U.S. District Court for the District of Washington at Seattle, and seeks monetary damages for Toste and a class of similarly situated female employees, training on anti-discrimination laws, posting of notices at the work site and other injunctive relief to prevent future discrimination of this kind. "Grays Harbor violated the law when it repeatedly failed to take action, despite numerous complaints from its employees concerning the conduct of this supervisor," said EEOC San Francisco Regional Attorney William R. Tamayo. "Sweeping this kind of problem under a carpet does not make it disappear, and only makes matters worse. The EEOC will continue to aggressively pursue employers who fail to prevent or promptly correct sexual harassment at their workplaces." Luis Lucero, director of the EEOC's Seattle Field Office, which is overseeing the case, added, "All workers have the right to work free from sexual harassment. Just having a written policy about workplace harassment isn't enough, unless the words are backed up with actions that enforce that policy. Smart employers train their employees on workplace harassment and how to report it, and train their managers on how to respond appropriately with a prompt investigation and effective corrective measures when harassment is found." The EEOC enforces federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. Additional information about the EEOC is available on its web site at www.eeoc.gov.