

This may seem like an obvious point, but you all need to be aware that the federal and state sexual harassment laws apply to minors in the workplace just as much as they apply to adults. So, if your sixteen year old working at a fast food location is being sexually harassed, the child or their parent needs to make a report with Human Resources or go to the EEOC. Parents whose children are in the workplace also need to let their kids know that this kind of conduct does not need to be tolerated.

A perfect example is the latest settlement that Starbucks reached in a case out in California. Starbucks has recently agreed to settle a harassment lawsuit, in which a former barista alleged she was pressed with incessant sexual demands from her manager at only 16 years of age. Kati Moore was only 16-years-old when employed as a barista at a California-based Starbucks coffee shop. Moore, contended Tim Horton, her 24-year-old supervisor, would send her inappropriate text messages on a daily basis. For instance, one of hundreds of unruly messages read, "I'd like to f— tomorrow." Moore accused Starbucks of failing to protect her from the daily workplace harassment. She also asserted her other Starbucks supervisors were conscious of the illicit activity, yet carelessly kept quiet about the matter.

Moore's case was even featured in a "20/20" investigation concerning teenage victims of workplace sexual harassment. Dr. Susan Strauss, a sexual harassment expert interviewed during the report, noted that such workplace issues are not unusual. The problems can be especially common in fast food restaurants where many teens become employed for the first time. "They're vulnerable, they're young, they're new to the workforce," Strauss said. According to a study conducted in Maine, one in three high school students reported experiencing unwarranted sexual advances in the workplace.

If your teen expresses concerns to you about what's going on in his/her workplace speak to an employment law attorney to make sure they are not taken advantage of.