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Healthy Work Strategies

SAG-AFTRA creates code of conduct to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace

In the Fall of 2017, well known women in entertainment and media began to share personal experiences of sexual harassment and assault in their professional lives. Some occurred in a workplace, while others occurred at work-related locations such as private property and hotel rooms, where auditions and interviews regularly took place. Entertainment and media professionals - often young women whose careers were just beginning - were at risk of being sexually harassed by men in positions of authority and power, both in traditional workplaces and other locations. Work stressors related to sexual harassment and assault include worry about retaliation such as loss of future work if one refused sexual advances, lack of control at work, and may result in trauma and isolation resulting from sexual assault.

SAG-AFTRA Code of Conduct

In response to this increased awareness of sexual misconduct affecting workers, the Screen Actors Guild - American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) created a code of conduct on sexual harassment and a series of standards and guidelines specific to common industry scenarios. This began with Code of Conduct Guideline No. 1: No Auditions or Interviews in Private Hotel Rooms or Residences. Recommendations of this guideline include:

- Not using high-risk locations such as private residences and private hotel rooms for auditions, interviews, and other professional meetings, and using more appropriate locations
- Bringing a support peer along to any meeting that will not be held in an appropriate, professional location and ensuring that the support peer is present at all times in the company of and accessible to the SAG-AFTRA member
- All industry partners are urged to review and implement guideline policies, and to support the goal of ending the practice of holding auditions and meetings in hotel rooms and private residences

On July 21, 2019, SAG-AFTRA announced that it will work together with the creator of the role of the “intimacy coordinator”, whose job it is to provide guidance, direction, and support on film and theatrical sets for actors who have scenes involving nudity and simulated sex. The team will develop and implement guidelines for intimacy coordinators, and promote the use of intimacy coordinators within the industry.

In its Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment, SAG-AFTRA states that employers are legally and contractually required to maintain a workplace free from sexual harassment, and adds that, while prepared to work with employers towards achievement of this goal, it is also prepared to use the union's enforcement powers to protect members, and to advise union members not to work for employers who do not comply with the Code.

The Code defines sexual harassment and describes forms of it, such as “quid pro quo” sexual harassment, hostile work environment sexual harassment, and retaliation against those who complain about sexual harassment. The code further describes employers' responsibilities in situations specific to entertainment where sexual harassment might occur, such as non-traditional worksites, working with and ensuring safety for child performers, and protecting union members from sexual harassment initiated by employees of vendors and other third parties. The Code also offers guidance on reporting sexual harassment and related misconduct, such as retaliation, discusses the consequences of harassment, and strongly urges members to take action to stop inappropriate behavior, to support those who speak up, and to be willing to report misconduct.

SAG-AFTRA

A union affiliate of the AFL-CIO (the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations), SAG-AFTRA represents a broad range of professionals in the entertainment industry, from actors and dancers to recording artists and program hosts to puppeteers and stunt performers. With national and local offices, SAG-AFTRA provides guidance and enforcement of workplace standards, benefits, and protections to its members.

References:

1. Four Pillars of Change Initiative. <https://www.sagaftra.org/>.
2. SAG-AFTRA to Standardize Guidelines for Intimacy Coordinators. <https://www.sagaftra.org/>.
3. Ensuring Safe and Equitable Workplaces: A Call to Action. <https://www.sagaftra.org/>.
4. Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment. <https://www.sagaftra.org/>.
5. Code of Conduct Guideline No. 1: No Auditions or Interviews in Private Hotel Rooms or Residences. <https://www.sagaftra.org/>.

6. Turchiano, D. (July 21, 2019) *HBO Intimacy Coordinator Alicia Rodis on Importance of Consent Beginning in Casting*. <https://variety.com/>.