

E. Protecting Our Nation's Workers From The Start: EEOC's Youth @Work Initiative

In 2004, EEOC launched its Youth@Work Initiative to promote equal employment opportunity for our nation's younger workers. This program is aimed at one of the more vulnerable groups in the workplace teenagers, often working their first job, without any knowledge of their right to a discrimination-free work environment. Through outreach programs and partnerships with the business community, EEOC is raising awareness among teenagers and employers of the unique risks young people face during their early employment experiences.

Much of EEOC's litigation on behalf of young workers highlights the disturbing fact that many teens nationwide face sexual harassment at the very beginning of their working lives. Often, these cases arise in a restaurant setting, a common after-school or entry-level job for many teenagers. For example, in Tampa, a 36-year-old male assistant manager subjected a 16-year-old hostess to physical and verbal abuse, including grabbing her breast and other inappropriate touching. After the hostess complained of this behavior, her hours were reduced and she was eventually fired. In New Mexico, the male general manager of a fast food restaurant subjected three 16-year-old female employees to unwelcome physical and verbal sexual conduct, also firing them after they complained. A 'family' restaurant chain in Utah subjected its female teenage workers to grabbing, unwelcome kisses, vulgar comments, and, in one case, sexual assault by male supervisors and employees. Female teenage workers at a Northern Illinois ice cream parlor were kissed, groped, and subjected to offensive sexual comments by male coworkers. In a suburban Baltimore restaurant, an assistant manager ground his erect penis against female teenage workers and inappropriately touched them on their breasts and buttocks.

The EEOC sued to obtain compensation for the above victims and prevent future violations of the law. *EEOC v. Rare Hospitality Int'l, Inc., d/b/a/ Longhorn Steakhouse* (M.D. Fla. Dec. 30, 2003) (\$200,000 and an injunction against sex discrimination and retaliation); *EEOC v. B&B Mgt., Inc., d/b/a/ Taco Bell* (D.N.M. Nov. 14, 2003) (\$100,000 total for three claimants plus letters of recommendation; injunction against sex discrimination and retaliation at the employer's New Mexico facilities); *EEOC v. JB's Family Restaurants, Inc., & Summit Family Restaurants, Inc.* (D. Utah March 26, 2004) (\$435,000 to a dozen claimants, plus an injunction, letters of apology, and offers of rehire with retroactive benefits and seniority); *EEOC v. Colonial Ice Cream, Inc.* (N.D. Ill. Oct. 1, 2003) (\$368,000 to 13 claimants, EEO training in English and Spanish, and an injunction against sex discrimination); *EEOC v. Brinker Int'l, Inc., Chili's of MD, Chili's of Bel Air* (D. Md. July 28, 2004) (\$283,000 and an injunction against sexual harassment and retaliation).