

Year 1 Public Description of Work for
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Children's Hospital Los Angeles

Creation of "Men As Allies" Groups

This Action Applies to Rubric Item(s): 6

Description of Work:

Summary

We invited a cohort of male faculty who care about gender equity to become Allies. Allies make a commitment to actively advocate and support their female colleagues. Allies are educating themselves through literature review and discussion, and are have been eager to engage additional education and training to expand their knowledge, skills and capabilities to be allies. This has included (i) active bystander training and (ii) trauma-informed responses to be able to appropriately support someone who shares a traumatic experience. We believe that the Men As Allies program is having significant impact in making all members of our community responsible for reducing sexual harassment and gender discrimination.

Description

Children's Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA) convened the Task Force on Equity in the Workplace in March 2018. The Task Force was chartered to identify how to enhance and promote a culture of respect, inclusiveness, and equal opportunity. As the Task Force expanded its knowledge, the members recognized that inequity is rooted in unequal power and privilege – and those with power and privilege can use their power and privilege to be visible and influential allies for those who do not hold equivalent power and privilege.

Male members of the Task Force were modeling allyship by being willing and able to stand up for their female colleagues instead of remaining silent or passive. The Task Force had recurring discussions about how to materially move a culture by engaging a broader constituency beyond the members of the Task Force.

From these behaviors and discussions came the concept of engaging Men As Allies – that is, male colleagues who (i) acknowledge that gender inequity exists, (ii) acknowledge it as a problem, and (iii) are willing and eager to actively address it.

The inaugural group was nominated by members of the Task Force because, based on observations of prior words and deeds, they demonstrated a high regard for female colleagues.

Year 1 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

A member of the Task Force, who has several faculty leadership roles, personally invited the nominees to join the group. Every nominee accepted the invitation. The membership of this inaugural group represents individuals from across the faculty hierarchy. It consists of one department chair, two division chiefs, faculty leaders in education, and other members from across the different divisions.

The group meets regularly to review literature on gender equity and discuss how to support their female colleagues, including education and training needed to enhance skills and capabilities.

One of the areas of training that was requested was active bystander training. This training program was developed internally by members of the hospital's Employee Assistance Program, the Faculty Assistance Program, and the Spiritual Care Department. This training provided tools and techniques to empower, interrupt and intervene in harassment, microaggressions, and gender bias *in the moment* – not after the moment.

Members of this group are now becoming resources to colleagues. They are also delivering content to faculty peers to educate others about allyship. Most have become ambassadors to their divisions and take actions such as holding meetings to bring the concepts of allyship to women to their division colleagues. The group has had multiple trainings in active bystander actions and has been educated on trauma-informed responses to support colleagues who share experiences of harassment.

Next Steps

As awareness of the inaugural Men As Allies group has spread, additional male faculty have requested to join the effort. As a result, Men As Allies has plans to expand.

Key Takeaways

Gender harassment and gender inequity are not “women’s issues” – they are human issues. Power and privilege can and should be harnessed to elevate awareness, action and solutions – not as the leader or fixer, but as an ally and partner.

There are generational differences in how gender equity is understood and expected. In a workplace with five generations, younger generations have demonstrably different expectations of gender equity and gender roles. Younger male faculty also want to be active in raising their children, are single parents, care for aging relatives, and/or have working spouses –

Year 1 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

a shared experience with many of their female colleagues. They have and welcome the parenting and household responsibilities that most male colleagues of older generations did not have. And, it helps them listen, hear and empathize with female colleagues. These younger generations may be early and eager adopters of the opportunity to serve as allies.

To the extent that Men As Allies group discussions may be sensitive and vulnerable, group members may find themselves bonding through stories, experience and shared trust. As awareness grows, there may be men raising their hand to join as an ally. Rather than inject new individuals into a setting where trust and shared experience has already been established, it can be helpful to gather enough members for a new and separate group to allow those individuals to journey together through their own stories, experience and shared trust.

This is our organization's first foray into allyship. The group has created the pathway for future ally groups. They have modelled what healthy allyship looks like. They have taken this to the level of advocacy and are active in moving our culture to a place where sexual harassment and gender discrimination is unacceptable.

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