

Chicago Says Hands Off The Help – New Law Protects Hotel Workers From Guest Harassment

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Basic rules of etiquette and kindness should cover the workplace and extend to travel away from home – fundamentally, treat others as you would want to be treated if the situation were reversed. And yet, some folks just can't seem to keep their hands to themselves. Thus, a law set to go into effect July 1 within the City of Chicago will provide “panic button” protection for hotel staff against harassment and assault by hotel guests. Known as the “hands off, pants on” ordinance, it requires hotels to provide housekeeping employees with notification devices that they can use to summon help if an employee reasonably believes that an ongoing crime, sexual harassment, sexual assault or other emergency is occurring in the employee's presence. Chicago also requires hotels to develop, maintain and comply with a written anti-sexual harassment policy to protect employees against sexual assault and sexual harassment by guests. The policy must encourage immediate reporting and describe procedures to be followed in the event of an alleged sexual harassment or sexual assault by a hotel guest. The anti-harassment policy also must include the following provisions:

- Instruct the complaining employee to cease work and leave the immediate area where danger is perceived until hotel security or police arrive to provide assistance.
- Offer temporary work assignments to the complaining employee for the duration of the offending guest's stay at the hotel.
- Provide the complaining employee with paid time off from work to sign a police complaint against the offending hotel guest and paid time off to testify as a witness in any legal proceedings that may result from the complaint if the employee still works for the hotel at the time such testimony is needed.

Employees also must be notified that state and federal laws provide additional protections against sexual harassment in the workplace and that retaliation is prohibited. The Chicago Commission on Human Relations will have the power to receive and investigate complaints alleging violations of the new law. The full text of the ordinance is available [here](#).

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