



## Navigating Toxic Work and School Environments Addressing Bias, Harassment, and Discrimination at Work and School

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When solving issues like harassment and discrimination in workplaces and schools, there are a variety of approaches that currently exist. These approaches include the following organizations and approaches:

- **Government** – legislation and policies at the federal, state, and local levels
- **Non-profits and Non-government Organizations** – Activists, Awards, and Lobbyists
- **Workplaces** – mandatory harassment trainings, diversity and inclusion efforts within organization, human resource departments
- **Schools and Universities** – Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (or similar), student organizations, mandatory harassment trainings, Ombudsman office, counseling services, career center, and more.
- **Diversity and Inclusion Consulting Companies** – Crescendo, Every Point One
- **Inclusive Support Networks** - #movethedial, Accelerate Her Future, The STEM Squad, Lean In
- **Anti-Racism and Diversity & Inclusion Educators, Speakers, and Trainers**

At each level, these organizations promote positive change by addressing systemic problems. Some tackle funding lawsuits for women to achieve justice in sexual harassment cases. Others create incentives for businesses and institutions to prioritize diversity and inclusion.

Depending on where you are in your education or career, there are wide range of resources available to you. The following list highlights some of the organizations and systems working to solve issues like harassment and discrimination. As you read this list, reflect on:

- Who each party listed supports or helps,
- Whether each party is working toward *systemic change* or helping *individuals*,
- How effective each approach is at addressing the underlying issues.
  - How is the party measuring its effectiveness in achieving its mission?



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Note that none of these solutions provides victims of harassment and discrimination immediate support and help through navigating bias, harassment, and discrimination in their school or workplace. Traditionally, only exclusive mentors and coaches have been resources for navigating careers. This is precisely what led me (Jill) to create The STEM Thrive Guides, an accessible resource that helps individuals learn the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate these difficult situations.

## **Athena Swan Award:**

"The Athena SWAN Charter was established in the UK in 2005 to encourage and recognize the commitment of higher education and research institutions to advancing careers of women in science, and in 2015, it was expanded to arts, humanities, social sciences, business, and law [13]. When institutions join the Athena SWAN Charter, they commit to systematically assessing and advancing gender equality through action planning and apply for awards recognizing their success. Applications are peer reviewed by academics, subject experts, human resources and equality and diversity practitioners from other member institutions who then make recommendations on the level of awards [13]:

- A Bronze award requires an assessment of gender equality and the related challenges as well as a 4-year action plan to address these challenges;
- A Silver award recognizes the successful implementation of the proposed action plan and its measurable impact;
- A Gold award recognizes beacons of achievement in gender equality and champions in promoting good practice in wider community.

Athena SWAN has become a common means to address barriers for women's advancement and leadership in the UK, Ireland, and Australia; the United States of America (USA) and Canada use modified approaches, and discussions are underway in India and Japan. In the UK, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) requires the Athena SWAN Silver award as a prerequisite for applying for competitive biomedical research funding [14]. In Ireland, by 2023, higher education and research institutions will be required to hold the Athena SWAN Silver award to be eligible for competitive government research funding [15]. In Australia, the Australian Academy of Science and the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering runs the Athena SWAN gender equality award scheme as part of the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) program [16]. In the USA, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) uses a



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modified Athena SWAN self-assessment and improvement framework as part of its STEM Equity Achievement (SEA) Change programme [17]. In Canada, the government has committed to implementing a “made-in-Canada” Athena SWAN initiative [18]. India and Japan have also expressed interest in trialling the Athena SWAN framework [19].”

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bioRxiv 555482; doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/555482>

### **Research on effectiveness of Athena Swan Award:**

<https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/555482v2.full>



## **Non-profits and Non-government Organizations:**

### **Me Too Movement #metoo**

<https://metoomvmt.org/about/#history>

"The 'me too.' movement was founded in 2006 to help survivors of sexual violence, particularly Black women and girls, and other young women of color from low wealth communities, find pathways to healing. Our vision from the beginning was to address both the dearth in resources for survivors of sexual violence and to build a community of advocates, driven by survivors, who will be at the forefront of creating solutions to interrupt sexual violence in their communities.

In less than six months, because of the viral #metoo hashtag, a vital conversation about sexual violence has been thrust into the national dialogue. What started as local grassroots work has expanded to reach a global community of survivors from all walks of life and helped to de-stigmatize the act of surviving by highlighting the breadth and impact of a sexual violence worldwide.

Our work continues to focus on helping those who need it to find entry points for individual healing and galvanizing a broad base of survivors to disrupt the systems that allow for the global proliferation of sexual violence.

Our goal is also to reframe and expand the global conversation around sexual violence to speak to the needs of a broader spectrum of survivors. Young people, queer, trans, and disabled folks, Black women and girls, and all communities of color. We want perpetrators to be held accountable and we want strategies implemented to sustain long term, systemic change.



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### Time's Up #timesup

<https://timesupnow.org/about/>

"We insist upon a world where everyone is safe and respected at work. A world where women have an equal shot at success and security. A world where no one lives in fear of sexual harassment or assault.

By helping change culture, companies, and laws, TIME'S UP Now aims to create a society free of gender-based discrimination in the workplace and beyond. We want every person — across race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, gender identity, and income level — to be safe on the job and have equal opportunity for economic success and security. TIME'S UP Now is an independent, nonpartisan, and not-for-profit 501(c)(4) charitable organization."

### National Women's Law Center (NWLC)

<https://nwlc.org/legal-assistance/>

"The National Women's Law Center fights for gender justice — in the courts, in public policy, and in our society — working across the issues that are central to the lives of women and girls. We use the law in all its forms to change culture and drive solutions to the gender inequity that shapes our society and to break down the barriers that harm all of us — especially those who face multiple forms of discrimination, including women of color, LGBTQ people, and low-income women and families. For more than 45 years, we have been on the leading edge of every major legal and policy victory for women."



## **USA State and Federal Policies**

### **National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)**

- <https://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/addressing-sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace.aspx>

### **US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)**

- <https://www.eeoc.gov/publications/facts-about-sexual-harassment>

### **New legislation Me Too Movement and others are working to implement:**

#### **Bringing an End to Harassment by Enhancing Accountability and Rejecting Discrimination in the Workplace Act (or Be HEARD Act):**

- Introduced to House of Representatives in 2019
- <https://www.aclu.org/blog/womens-rights/womens-rights-workplace/be-heard-act-will-overhaul-workplace-harassment-laws>
- <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2148>

“This bill sets forth provisions to prevent discrimination and harassment in the workplace and raises the minimum wage for tipped employees.

Specifically, the bill (1) makes it an unlawful employment practice to discriminate against an individual in the workplace based on sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, childbirth, a medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth, and a sex stereotype; (2) prohibits employers from entering into contracts or agreements with workers that contain certain nondisparagement or nondisclosure clauses; (3) prohibits predispute



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arbitration agreements and postdispute agreements with certain exceptions, and (4) establishes grant programs to prevent and respond to workplace discrimination and harassment, provide legal assistance for low-income workers related to employment discrimination, and establish a system of legal advocacy in states to protect the rights of workers.

Additionally, the bill, among other things:

- requires employers who have 15 or more employees to adopt a comprehensive nondiscrimination policy;
- requires the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to provide specified training and resource materials, establish and convene a harassment prevention task force, and establish an Office of Education and Outreach with regard to prohibited discrimination and harassment in employment;
- requires specified studies, reports, and research on prohibited harassment in employment; and
- grants employees the right to retain their tips.”



## **Companies Working to Solve Harassment and Discrimination Issues in the Workplace:**

- **Crescendo:** <https://crescendowork.com/>
  - Crescendo delivers tailored microlearning for every employee inside of Slack (an app that provides a platform for team communication).
  - Employees use Crescendo to:
    - Receive curated learning paths about the experiences of people from different cultures.
    - Gain actionable tips on how they can be inclusive.
    - Start conversations with their peers about diversity and inclusion.
- **Every Point One:** [www.everypointone.com](http://www.everypointone.com)
  - The first auditing agency that works with STEM organizations to evaluate and create actionable processes that focus on:
    - Diverse Recruitment & Retention
    - Reduction of Bias in Product Development
    - Communicating in an Inclusive Manner to your Audience
- **The STEM Thrive Guides:** Instagram - @stemthriveguides
  - Provides the first online courses teaching how to navigate bias, harassment and discrimination at work and school.

## **Anti-Racism and Diversity & Inclusion Educators, Speakers, and Trainers**

- Dr. Tiffany Bowden: [tiffanybowden.com](http://tiffanybowden.com) , [antiracismforbeginners.com](http://antiracismforbeginners.com)