

# Hiring? Look out for sexual harassers

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Sexual harassment in the workplace is not uncommon, as highlighted in a 2018 survey by Columnite Insites Consulting which surveyed 1000 South African employees. The review revealed that 30% of women and 18% of men indicated that they were victims of sexual harassment in the workplace and that these unwanted advances came from a workplace peer. With such startling results, there is a great need for employers to ensure they play a role in creating positive environments that limit opportunity for sexual harassment and other safety concerns.

General manager at LexisNexis Data Services, Rudi Kruger, said background screening can play a significant role in curbing such incidents as sound screening has the ability to uncover sexual predators or unsavoury characters, before they are employed by an organisation.

## Valuable screening steps:

**Employee reference check:** Through pre-employment screening, businesses are more likely to uncover prior complaints against individuals. Get in touch with the candidate's past employers for an understanding of their general behaviour in the workplace. It is not only important to know how they performed on the job, but also how they conducted themselves in the workplace and to ascertain if there are any areas for concern. Question if the employee has been involved in disputes or had accusations of sexual misconduct laid against them.

**Situational questions in the interview:** Pose scenarios involving employee interactions to the candidate and gauge their responses. Situational questions can also uncover how informed the candidate is with regard to proper conduct in general.

**Criminal checks:** Criminal checks conducted on a potential new hire help the employer truly understand the candidate's potential for dangerous behaviour by uncovering their history of illicit activity, past convictions and misdemeanours. In addition, criminal checks also assist in detecting dishonest and untrustworthy characters, who may have excluded their criminal records from the application. If someone you are interested in hiring has convictions, this could make them unsuitable for certain work roles. Convictions that are sexual in nature are certainly unfavourable in any candidate.

Criminal checks also limit risk to the employer, in addition to promoting workplace safety. Employers face the risk of being found liable for negligent hiring should an incident occur where another employee is harmed in any way.


Verifying a candidate's background is made easier with technology-based solutions like Lexis®RefCheck, an online background screening solution from LexisNexis Data Services. The online solution includes the AFISwitch Criminal Illicit Activity Check, the only criminal verification check available to the South African corporate market since the discontinuation of the SAPS Name Clearance Criminal Check in mid-2011.

In addition to criminal checks, RefCheck services include verification of tertiary and secondary academic qualifications held by the individual from registered local and international institutions; identity and South African citizenship validation; fraud history checks via the South African Fraud Prevention Services; credit history checks through detailed TransUnion and Experian credit bureau reports; verification of local and international employment history and professional association membership; verification of drivers' licence status; and matching of bank account information against an identity number or registration number.

For more information, visit: <https://www.lexisnexis.co.za/lexisrefcheck>

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