

Harter Secrest & Emery launches online training platform for employers

■ KEVIN OKLOBZIJA

HARTER, SECREST & EMERY LLP has launched an online training platform with on-demand curriculum to assist employers in delivering comprehensive and legally compliant information to the workforce.



JEFFREY CALABRESE

The HSE Institute programming, created by the lawyers at the firm, gives employers a convenient means of providing web-based training to employees on a variety of topics that are essential under New York State law.

The first course, Preventing Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace, recently went live.

Lawyers at HSE have provided training to clients for years. Creating a similar on-demand platform delivers an added convenience for both employer and employee.

The training can be taken when time allows — whether in one session or over time — and includes self-registration, user engagement reports, user evaluation forms and training completion certificates.

There are many providers of workforce training programs. But HSE, which has an office in Rochester as well as Buffalo, New York City, Albany and Corning, believes its experience representing clients in matters dealing with labor and

employment law adds practical expertise to the training.

“As attorneys, we see what can happen,” said Jeffrey Calabrese, labor and employment practice group leader at Harter Secrest Emery. “There’s a perspective we have from the situations we have encountered.”

The discrimination and harassment prevention training features two HSE lawyers in an alternating discussion of the law and facts. Some of the hypothetical situations may be loosely based on real-life happenings.

“No one is immune from needing this type of training,” Calabrese said. “And it’s not just a discussion about gender or sex discrimination, it’s all protected characteristics. People that feel comfortable and safe in the workplace perform better.”

There are six chapters in the course and includes discussions on harassment, hostile work environments, retaliation, supervisor responsibilities, personal liability, bystander intervention, investigation process and victim resources.

The training platform allows employees to pause the program when necessary, and then resume when time allows. There also are

reminders of what tasks still must be completed.

Since employers must ensure all employees have taken the training, the built-in reminders help ensure compliance requirements are met.

But there’s more to the training than just telling employees it’s required by law, Calabrese said.

“You want to have supervisors and managers buy in, they can’t just be like, ‘Here’s our annual training again,’” he said. “If you’re portraying it in a positive light, that it’s a good thing and that the company believes in it, then employees are going to buy in.”

Subscription pricing is based on company size. Plans start at \$375 a year for employers with 49 or fewer employees, with unlimited access, and go as high as \$3,000 a year for companies with 300 or more employees.

Employers face a liability risk if an employee is accused of misconduct and that employee did not complete the training requirements.

HSE labor and employment lawyers represent nearly every industry sector and regularly counsel employers on state and federal labor law compliance, including whether employment practice and policies are sound and comprehensive.

Calabrese said HSE intends to make other training courses available on the platform in the future.