



equal employment

EEOC Update

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Cheesecake Factory Settles in Case Alleging 'Severe' Same-Sex Harassment, EEOC Reports

National restaurant chain Cheesecake Factory Inc. (Cheesecake) will pay \$345,000 to settle a case alleging that six male employees were repeatedly sexually harassed at a Chandler Mall restaurant in Chandler, Ariz. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which filed suit on behalf of the men, claimed that Cheesecake "knew about and tolerated repeated sexual assaults against six male employees by a group of male kitchen staffers."

Cheesecake denied the allegations, but according to the federal agency, "the evidence overwhelmingly showed that the men suffered sexually abusive behavior, including abusers directly touching victims' genitals, making sexually charged remarks, grinding their genitals against them, and forcing victims into repeated episodes of simulated rape. Managers witnessed employees dragging their victims kicking and screaming into the refrigerator," the EEOC explained.

The alleged victims reportedly voiced their complaints to every manager at the Chandler Mall location but none of them put a stop to it. "The evidence was clear, and everyone knew about it. Behind the lavish dcor that the company boasts on its web site was a horribly dysfunctional workplace where male workers lived in fear," said Mary Jo O'Neill, regional attorney of the EEOC's Phoenix District Office.