

Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- ✓ Define the job of a server.
- ✓ Distinguish between service and hospitality.
- ✓ List the advantages of the job as server.
- ✓ Understand the job qualifications.
- ✓ Realize the importance of good personal appearance.
- ✓ Understand how a server fits into the restaurant organization.
- ✓ Understand the importance of getting along with coworkers.
- ✓ Value diversity in guests and coworkers.
- ✓ Handle harassment on the job.
- ✓ Keep violence and drugs out of the workplace.
- ✓ Understand the importance of safety and sanitation in a restaurant.

Servers, also referred to as **waitstaff**, are restaurant employees who create a dining experience for guests in a restaurant by making them feel welcome and comfortable, taking their orders, serving the meal, clearing the area, and setting the table for the

next party of guests. Servers also maintain the service areas of the dining room and the kitchen so that everything is ready for smooth, efficient service (see Job Description for a Server, Figure 1-1, and www.nraef.org for descriptions of related jobs). This chapter discusses service and hospitality, the advantages of a server's job, the qualifications necessary to become a server, the importance of the server's personal appearance on the job, the server's position in the organizational structure of the restaurant, and the server's role within a team of fellow employees and supervisors.

Although the server's tasks may seem clear, many aspects of the job involve issues of great concern to the guest and the establishment, as well as the server. In this chapter, we will discuss issues that include recognizing the diversity of coworkers and guests, preventing harassment on the job, deterring violence and drugs in the workplace, and practicing restaurant safety and sanitation. Some of these issues are discussed in greater detail later in this book.



Service and Hospitality

While a close relationship exists between service and hospitality, there is a distinct difference between the two. **Service** is the act of filling the needs, wants, and desires of the guests. Service is what servers provide to meet the expectations of the guests when they come to dine. Guests expect a clean table, clean dishes and utensils, safe food, hot foods served hot, and cold foods served cold.

Hospitality goes beyond the service guests expect of servers. **Hospitality** means creating a pleasant dining experience for your guests with small gestures like giving a friendly greeting, smiling—even when very tired, remembering names, hanging up coats, pulling out chairs, remembering a returning guest's favorite drink, knowing exactly what is ordered, and anticipating what the guest needs next. It is paying close attention to detail. It is acknowledging guests promptly, making friendly small talk, and saying a pleasant goodbye when the guests leave the restaurant. It is reading the guests and always making them feel comfortable, welcome, and important. Hospitality is a key element to bringing guests back and to increasing the amount of your tip.



Advantages of Being a Server

Despite tired feet, unruly guests, and job demands, there are many advantages to holding a job as a server. These include:

- Monetary benefits
- Flexible hours

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR SERVER

- PREPARE RESTAURANT FOR DINING by
- Cleaning tables in an assigned area of the restaurant
 - Arranging the china, silverware, napkins, glassware, and centerpieces
 - Stocking and maintaining serving area
- MAINTAIN FOOD AND RESTAURANT SAFETY AND SANITATION by
- Adhering to safe handling of food and utensils according to Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) guidelines
 - Attending to accident prevention
 - Being prepared for unforeseen accidents and emergencies
- INITIATE THE DINING EXPERIENCE FOR GUESTS by
- Making guests feel welcome, comfortable, and important
 - Maintaining an atmosphere of hospitality
 - Working as a team member with coworkers for smooth restaurant operation
- HELP GUESTS MAKE FOOD AND BEVERAGE SELECTIONS by
- Presenting the menus
 - Suggesting special food and beverages
 - Offering cocktails and suggesting wine
 - Answering questions
- SUBMIT FOOD AND BEVERAGE ORDERS TO KITCHEN AND BAR by
- Taking the order
 - Identifying dietary requests
 - Submitting the order to the kitchen and bar
 - Timing the meal
- SERVE THE MEAL by
- Staging meal according to prescribed rules of service
 - Serving beverages, cocktails, or beer
 - Opening and serving wines
 - Picking up, garnishing, and serving food
 - Providing any meal accompaniments
- MONITOR THE MEAL IN PROGRESS by
- Inquiring of needs
 - Replenishing utensils
 - Refilling water, reordering more beverages
 - Removing completed courses
 - Adhering to alcohol control policies
- CONCLUDE THE DINING EXPERIENCE by
- Totaling charges and presenting the guest check
 - Accepting and settling payment
 - Taking leave of guests and inviting them back again

FIGURE 1-1 Sample Job Description for a Server: Management looks for employees who have the qualifications to become good servers and perform the tasks required of them.

- Contact with people
- Minimal investment in wardrobe
- Pleasant surroundings
- Job satisfaction

One of the advantages of being a server is that you may be compensated well for providing good services to the guests you serve in a restaurant. In elegant restaurants and restaurants with quick turnover, a server who provides good service can make more money in tips and wages than a cook, administrative assistant, police officer, flight attendant, or schoolteacher. You may also be eligible for free or reduced-priced meals from the restaurant.

Restaurant establishments operate for several hours extending over the periods for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and into the evening. You might consider working weekends and evenings a disadvantage, but the flexible hours allow many people to work around another job or family responsibilities.

As a server, another advantage is that you can meet many interesting people as you serve your guests. You have the chance to interact with people of all ages and from all walks of life. Occasionally, you may even serve a celebrity.

Unlike a job in an office, which requires a large investment in business clothing, as a server, you are only required to buy a few uniforms and comfortable shoes.

Some people also find working as a server in pleasant surroundings advantageous. Many restaurants have a very elaborate decor and atmosphere. You may also have an opportunity to sample a variety of food.

Finally, you can gain personal satisfaction from doing a job exceptionally well and making people happy. Compliments and tips from the guests and words of praise from your manager are your rewards for providing good service. Take pride in your job. Waiting tables can be a rewarding part-time position or a full-time career that provides you with a very good living. The skills and knowledge you acquire will translate to all aspects of your life.



Qualifications for the Job

Management looks for employees who are:

- Reliable
- Cooperative
- Personable
- Healthy
- Clean and neat

- Knowledgeable
- Persuasive
- Attentive
- Diplomatic
- Good managers

People who have these qualifications make good servers. To qualify for a waitstaff position, you must be:

1. *Reliable.* Management must feel confident that you are capable of fulfilling your job responsibilities. You must report to work on time, serve the guests properly, and complete all tasks assigned to you.
2. *Cooperative.* You must have a good attitude. You must be willing to work hard with your coworkers to complete the work assigned. If you are a good team player, and strive to make your team successful, you will be successful at your job. Being cooperative also means adapting to the policies of management. You should work hard and learn and stay focused on your job even under pressure and time restraints.
3. *Personable.* A server is chosen for his or her pleasant personality, comfort around people, ability to make small talk, and social skills. Take the initiative to be friendly, patient, and courteous to guests, coworkers, and management, and never be rude. A server should have a good sense of humor. However, never be familiar with guests or use terms such as “folks,” “honey,” or “you guys” when addressing guests.
4. *Healthy.* Because a serving job requires the server to be in close contact with guests, coworkers, and food, you must maintain good health. Staying healthy helps you to avoid spreading disease and to maintain a good appearance. A healthy server looks good, performs well on the job, and is able to lift and carry heavy trays.
5. *Clean and neat.* A server may be one of the only restaurant employees that the guest sees and must present a tidy appearance that reflects the image of a clean and neat restaurant. Particular attention should be given to hair, nails, uniform, and shoes. A server should be clean and neat in both appearance and with respect to handling food and serviceware in the restaurant.
6. *Knowledgeable.* A good server must know the appropriate methods for serving tables and how to apply them in a seamless and efficient manner. You must have an extensive knowledge of the menu so that you can answer guests’ questions intelligently, suggest foods, and help increase sales. To complete the guest’s order and total the guest check, you must know basic math and have simple

computer skills. Make note of local history, events, and cuisine trends so you can make conversation with guests.

7. *Persuasive*. You must have the ability to sell yourself, the restaurant, and menu items as you serve your guests. To do this, you must be able to communicate well. Your persuasive talent ensures that the guest's wants and needs are met, and **suggestive selling**—that is, suggesting additional food items—adds to the pleasure of the meal, as well as increases the size of the check, the restaurant profits, and your tip.
8. *Attentive*. Guests may need their server at any time during the meal, so a good server always concentrates on the job and never leaves a station unattended for long. You must be aware of the progress of the meal at each table and anticipate needs as they arise. When guests toy with an empty glass, gaze into space, or peek at their watches, they are sending signals that they need something. If a guest tastes the food, puts down his or her fork, and pushes the plate away, something is wrong and servers need to remedy the situation. Refill empty water glasses and coffee cups, but do not hover to an excessive degree. Take pride in the appearance of the dining room by keeping it orderly as you work.
9. *Diplomatic*. Servers should handle complaints in a diplomatic way to assure the guest is satisfied and will come back again. A good server must be thick-skinned and not take criticism personally.
10. *A good manager*. You must know how to manage your time well. Prepare your area in advance, do the most important tasks first, multitask so you address your guests' every need, and do so in a quiet, controlled manner that is not interruptive to the dining room.



Personal Appearance on the Job

Your appearance as a server on the job gives guests their first impression of you and, consequently, a lasting impression of the restaurant. Because you are one of the few members of the restaurant staff a guest sees, a guest may judge the restaurant largely on your appearance and service.

THE UNIFORM

A **uniform** is a garment that identifies the occupation of the wearer. Nurses, police officers, pilots, and members of the armed service, as well as servers, wear uniforms. The appearance of your uniform leaves an impression on your guests (Figure 1-2). A clean and neat uniform reflects an image of a sanitary restaurant. If your uniform is soiled or wrinkled, you will not impress the guests favorably, and the guests,



FIGURE 1-2 Server in Uniform: You are the main restaurant employee the guest sees so be sure your uniform is clean and neat. Your appearance can help create a good impression for the entire operation.

Courtesy of PhotoDisc/Getty Images

deciding that your uniform reflects the standards of the whole operation, may never return.

A server should wear a clean uniform each workday and keep an extra one at work in case of emergency. Skirts, pants, jackets, and ties should be neat, clean, and pressed. Most uniforms today are made of synthetic fiber blends that are easy to maintain. If you do spill food on a uniform, remove the stains as soon as possible and launder the garment according to the manufacturer's directions. Uniforms in disrepair are as unacceptable as soiled uniforms. Repair torn hems and seams, and replace buttons before you wear the uniform again.

A uniform should fit well; if it is too small, it restricts movement. Pants should fit smoothly and not be too tight. If a female server wears a skirt as part of a uniform, it should have a fashionable hem length, but not be so short that she feels conspicuous when reaching or bending.

Shoes are part of the uniform and should receive daily attention. Buy sturdy shoes with closed toes, low heels, and arch supports. Shoes should have rubber soles to minimize slips and falls. Replace shoes or have worn heels and soles repaired, and be sure your shoes are clean and polished for work. Have a second pair of shoes at work, especially if you are a full-time server, and change your shoes occasionally to prevent foot and back problems.

Female servers might consider wearing support hose for comfort and pantyhose for good appearance, because the job requires reaching and bending. Keep an extra pair in your locker or purse in case of a run.

Wedding and engagement rings and classic watches may be worn, but decorative jewelry, such as bracelets, dinner rings, and lapel pins are not appropriate as part of a uniform. Decorative jewelry does not look professional and is not sanitary when you are working with food.

HYGIENE AND GROOMING

Because you are working with the public, careful attention must be given to your personal hygiene and grooming. **Hygiene** means practices that promote personal cleanliness and good health, and **grooming** means the process of making your appearance neat and attractive. For proper appearance and to look well physically, you must have the proper amount of rest each night. Bathe daily, and apply an antiperspirant to prevent body odors. Brush your teeth, use a mouthwash, and see a dentist twice a year. Use breath mints or breath sprays at work. Never smoke or chew gum in front of guests.

Wear your hair in a simple, stylish manner pulled back from your face, and avoid extreme hairstyles. Be sure your hair is clean and combed. Use effective hair restraints, such as caps, ponytail bands, headbands, barrettes, and other accessories designed to be part of the uniform, to prevent the contamination of food or food contact surfaces.

Servers should be sure their hands and nails are clean, because they are on display and touching food and utensils. Scrub your nails, and trim them to a short, even length. Female servers may wear a conservative color or clear nail polish. Keep your hands away from your hair and face. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap after using the restroom, clearing soiled dishes, or handling money.

Male servers should be clean shaven. Female servers should use a minimum amount of makeup, such as a conservative application of eye makeup and lipstick. Perfumes and colognes do not enhance food aromas and should not be worn.

Check your total appearance in a mirror before you start work. Ask yourself, “If I owned a restaurant, would I want me as an employee?”



Your Role in the Restaurant Organization

The goals of a restaurant organization are to satisfy the guests and make a profit. To reach these goals, employees should work together in a united effort. Employees

are expected to perform their jobs and to support coworkers in a team approach. This bonding of efforts will give the guests the best service.

Employees are given a job description and assigned activities so that no work is duplicated or omitted. A server's job is to assist management by giving good service, being efficient, avoiding waste, attending to safety and sanitation, and following the rules and regulations set by management. Remember, everyone will have job longevity if the restaurant employees work as a team to please the guests and guests return time after time.

The organization or arrangement of jobs in a restaurant diagrammed on paper is known as the **organization chart**. Knowing how you fit into the organization chart helps you function in your job. In the dining room organizational structure, **bussers** and servers report to their immediate supervisor, who may be a **head server**. The head server reports to the **host** or **maître d'hôtel**, who reports to the **dining room manager**. The dining room manager reports to management. In small restaurants, one person may assume several of these positions. For instance, your immediate supervisor may be a maître d'hôtel or host who also assumes the head server's job. In large restaurants, additional staff, such as an **expeditor**, may help the server bring food from the kitchen. Figure 1-3 shows a traditional organization chart in a restaurant.

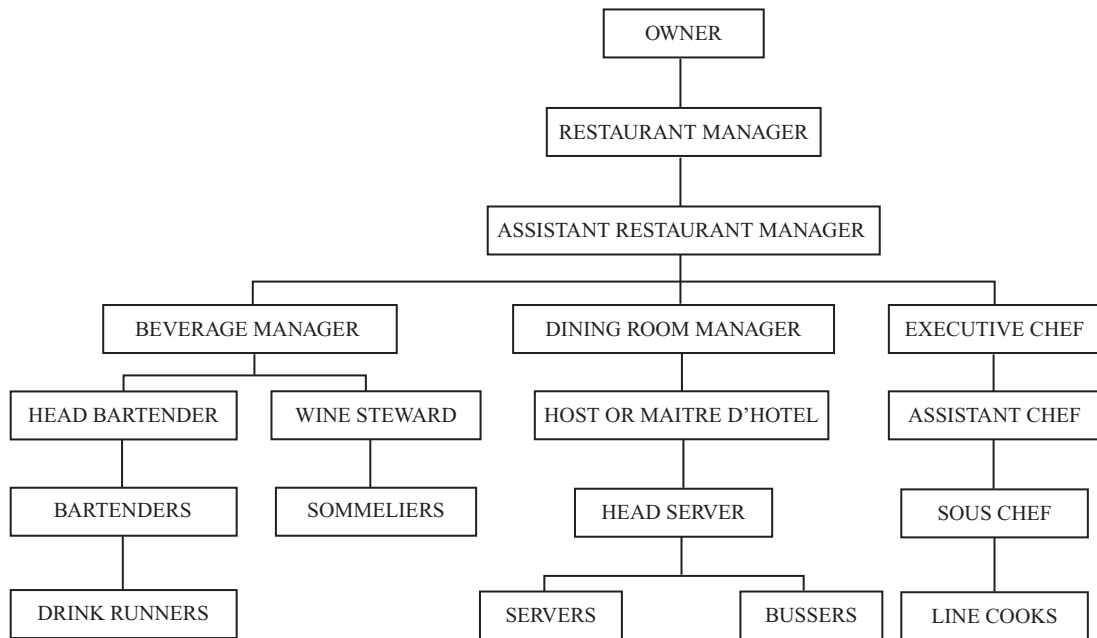
To avoid causing problems within the organization, follow the organizational structure. When you have questions or problems concerning the rules, regulations, or policies, talk to your immediate supervisor. Your supervisor has more experience and is in a position to solve certain problems.



Teamwork with Coworkers and Supervisors

Teamwork means cooperating and working together with coworkers and the supervisor of the dining room to serve the public. A serving team is like a football team, working toward a common goal. Whether the goal is a touchdown or a satisfied guest, the principles are the same. Use the following guidelines to help foster teamwork:

- *Arrive to work with a positive attitude.* Leave your personal problems at home, and do not discuss them with coworkers or guests. Be cheerful and happy in your work; this attitude spreads to other workers and to the guests. Remember, guests come to the restaurant to relax and enjoy a special occasion in pleasant surroundings. If you have problems on the job, work them out or discuss them with your supervisor instead of with coworkers. Work can be pleasant or unpleasant, depending on your attitude toward it.



Restaurant Management: Ensures that the restaurant operates efficiently and profitably.

Dining Room Manager: Directs and coordinates foodservice in the dining room; hires, trains, and supervises employees; handles budgets, payroll, and purchasing.

Host or Maître d'Hôtel: Schedules shifts and assigns stations; holds daily meetings with staff; controls flow of seating; greets, seats, and provides menus to guests.

Head Server: Supervises and coordinates dining room employees for a section of the dining room; may greet and seat guests; may serve guests.

Busser: Assists server in serving water, bread and butter, and coffee refills; clears soiled dinnerware; resets table.

FIGURE 1-3 Dining Room Organization Chart Including a Brief Definition of Service Jobs: The relationship of the personnel in a traditional dining room is shown in this organization chart.

- *Avoid raising your voice to any coworker or the chef when problems arise.* Instead, try to handle the situation calmly. Some managers will train you in other jobs (chef, busser, and host) or allow you to experience other positions to build empathy with coworkers. Remember, you are a professional and a representative of the restaurant, and you should handle problems with coworkers in a professional manner.
- *Give coworkers assistance when they need help and you are not busy.* For example, help them carry trays of food when they are serving an especially large party. If a guest in a coworker's station asks you for service, either cheerfully render

the service or inform the guest's server. As a member of the team, the coworker should return the favor when you are busy.

- *Refrain from chatting or gossiping with coworkers in the dining room.* Your responsibility lies with your guests when you are on duty. If you have spare time, use it productively to check your station, clean and fill condiment containers, fold napkins, and replenish the sidestand.
- *If you are ill, notify your supervisor as soon as possible.* Absenteeism without proper notification may mean that a coworker must assume double duty if a replacement is unobtainable.

If even one member of your restaurant's team falls short of his or her duties, it creates a ripple effect and puts pressure on everyone. The outcome affects the entire operation.



Issues Regarding Restaurant Employment

Current issues in restaurant employment include diversity, harassment, violence and drugs, safety, and sanitation. Some of these issues are covered more thoroughly in other chapters, but they deserve mention here.

RESPECTING THE DIVERSITY OF ALL PEOPLE

Diversity means difference or unlikeness and refers to the fact that each person is unique with regard to race, color, creed, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, socioeconomic status, veteran status, belief, or ideology, to name just a few dimensions. Diversity is reflected in the way each person walks, talks, thinks, and behaves. The concept of diversity encompasses accepting, respecting, and embracing the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual. Your challenge as a server is to recognize, appreciate, value, and respect the differences you encounter in each person, whether you are interacting with coworkers or guests.

The law states that every person—regardless of such things as their race, religion, or nationality—deserves to work in a safe and pleasant environment. If you have intolerance for coworkers' differences, you will undermine the team effort necessary to serve the public well. Likewise, all guests should receive equal treatment regardless of their diverse backgrounds and varying cultural behaviors. As a server, it is imperative that you respect these differences. Your conduct as a server must be tolerant and respectful.

PREVENTING HARASSMENT ON THE JOB

Harassment is to disturb, worry, unnerve, or torment by continuous small attacks. All employees have the legal right to a work environment free of verbal or physical harassment. One form of harassment, sexual harassment, is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment violates employee rights, creates stress, and reduces productivity. If you are sexually harassed on the job, follow these guidelines:

1. Explain to the person doing the harassing that it is objectionable to you and that you would like it stopped.
2. If the behavior does not stop, report the offender to your immediate supervisor or to his or her supervisor if your supervisor is the offender. Some restaurants have a telephone hotline for this purpose.
3. If using the internal complaint procedure does not correct the problem, file a complaint with your state department that deals with human rights or with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

The management of most restaurants has a zero-tolerance policy that states they will not tolerate any acts of harassment, intimidation, or threats among their employees. If reported, most offenders will be investigated discreetly and fairly. Management should take appropriate action, whether it is against innocent injury or criminal intent to harm.

KEEPING VIOLENCE AND DRUGS OUT OF THE WORKPLACE

Violence is rough or harmful action or treatment. Everyone shares responsibility for maintaining a safe work environment. When someone acts out of the ordinary, management should be advised immediately. Unreported situations can have potentially violent consequences.

A potentially violent individual is frequently someone who is depressed, is a loner who intimidates those around him or her, or is lacking self-worth. It can often be a person who is a constant complainer or has a history of violence. Violence in the workplace may be a direct result of problems in the home. Drug and/or alcohol abuse often play a role in violent incidents.

It is against the law to use controlled substances. It is crucial for all employees to be drug-free at the workplace. An employee who uses illegal drugs is more likely to be involved in accidents on the job, typically needs more sick leave, and is more frequently late for work than other employees. Overall productivity also tends to deteriorate, and team goals become less of a priority.

SAFETY AND PREVENTING ACCIDENTS

Safety is freedom from harm or danger. It is important for employees and management to work together to maintain a safe and secure restaurant environment. Servers should be alert to any hazards they encounter. Most accidents are avoidable if a problem is noticed and solved in time. Addressing unsafe work routines, blocked exits, chipped or broken serviceware, and grease and food spills immediately upon notice will prevent accidents from occurring (see Chapter 6, Safety, Sanitation, and Emergency Procedures).

TAKING SANITATION SERIOUSLY

The serving team has almost as much contact with foods served to guests as the kitchen staff. **Sanitation** is the process of working out ways to improve health conditions. It is of the utmost importance that servers adhere to strict sanitation guidelines when handling food to avoid spreading diseases that may be distressing or life-threatening to guests. Good sanitation practices include washing hands and handling serviceware properly. Servers must be very conscientious in this regard. (Sanitation guidelines and proper food-handling techniques are covered in depth in Chapter 6.)



KEY TERMS

Servers	Grooming	Expeditor
Waitstaff	Organization chart	Teamwork
Service	Busser	Diversity
Hospitality	Head server	Harassment
Suggestive selling	Host	Violence
Uniform	Maitre d'hôtel	Safety
Hygiene	Dining room manager	Sanitation



REVIEW

1. Explain the difference between service and hospitality. Give two examples of service and two examples of hospitality.
2. What advantages of a serving position can you list other than those that are mentioned in this chapter? What disadvantages can you think of?
3. What qualifications for a serving position can you identify other than those mentioned in this chapter?
4. List all the hygiene and personal grooming practices that should be given attention in order to promote cleanliness, good health, and neat appearance on the job.
5. Why should a server be knowledgeable about the organization of employees in a restaurant?
6. What part does teamwork play in the operation of a restaurant?
7. Why is it important to accept the diversity of all coworkers and guests?
8. What is the procedure for handling sexual harassment?
9. What is one way that you can reduce the possibility of a violent situation in the workplace?



PROJECTS

1. Design a server's self-evaluation sheet. List both the ideal personality and appearance qualifications for a serving position on the left side of the paper; think of other qualifications you can add to those discussed in this chapter. Across the top, write a rating scale: Poor, Fair, Good, and Excellent. Rate yourself by checking the appropriate column for each qualification. Set a goal to improve yourself in all areas not marked Good or Excellent.
2. Observe the servers in a restaurant of your choice, and note whether their appearance is satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

3. Draw an organization chart of a restaurant of your choice. Indicate who would be your immediate supervisor if you were a server there, and why.
4. Have a group discussion and decide the best course of action to handle the following situations:
 - a. The chef has made a mistake on your order.
 - b. You have taken the order, and the guest states that you did not get the order correct.
 - c. You present the check to your table of guests, and they ask you to divide the check for them because they want to pay separately.
 - d. You are an above-average server and think that the policy of sharing tips equally with fellow workers is unfair.
 - e. You have come down with a bad cold the night before you have to go to work.
5. Have a group discussion about the best plan of action to implement for the following situation: A new employee has just begun to work at the restaurant. She is from another country and speaks with an accent. She needs to be accepted onto the team. What can you, as a peer server, do to help her overcome any anxiety she may have?



CASE PROBLEM

Handling Harassment

While you are working as a server, you are approached by your supervisor, who makes remarks with sexual overtones. You feel uncomfortable about these remarks. The state in which you are working has strong sexual harassment laws, and you are aware of them. You want to curtail this situation before it leads to something you do not want to happen. Answer the following questions:

- What are your rights?
- What steps can you take to make sure your supervisor understands your feelings and that allow you to continue your job in that establishment?
- To whom can you report this situation if it goes beyond your control?

