



8/26/2010 11:55:00 AM

Toy distributor faces sexual harassment claims

BY KENT DARR

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An Indianola toy distributor has been sued by two former employees who allege they were victims of sexual harassment and discrimination by a supervisor and a co-worker.

Manley Toy Direct LLC, a distributor of children's toys, school paraphernalia and other items, did not respond to complaints from two women who were hired as customer representatives, according to a lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Des Moines.

Two other lawsuits representing three more women will be filed against the company this week in Warren County District Court, said attorney Jill Zwagerman, who is representing the women.

The lawsuits target the actions of a supervisor who has not been with the company since 2008 and another male worker, according to the lawsuit and an employee with Manley Toy Direct. The allegations involve "ongoing" incidents that date at least to 2005 and ended only when the women left the company, Zwagerman said.

All of the plaintiffs have left the company. Some were terminated or left the company after they complained about sexually harassing and threatening actions and language. Others left after their complaints were ignored, Zwagerman said.

The lawsuits claim that, among other things, one of the two men simulated pelvic thrusts behind a female employee who was bent over, grabbed breasts and buttocks, rubbed and touched the back, neck or hair, and tried to force one woman's head into a man's genital area.

Official company spokesmen had not commented on the allegations by the Business Record Daily's deadline this morning.

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