



Case Study 2 – Amelie

This is a fictional case study but is like many of the complaints that the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission receives.

Amelie is a cisgender, heterosexual, 23-year-old, white woman. Her family is Acadian, and French is her first language. Amelie has been employed as a reception clerk with ‘Your Neighborhood’ Medical Centre in Sydney, Nova Scotia for three years. She was hired shortly after she completed a college program focusing on medical terminology and clerical studies. Amelie grew up in Cheticamp but moved to Sydney after graduating high school to enroll in college. She is fluent in English; however, people have often remarked that she has a “thick accent.”

Amelie was in a car accident a year ago, and thus she suffered a moderate traumatic brain injury. Her symptoms included increased fatigue, decreased concentration, and difficulty with memory retention. Her workplace appropriately accommodated her after the accident, including allowing her time off for physiotherapy, and implementing a gradual return to work plan. All her symptoms were mild and with the appropriate workplace modifications, Amelie was able to continue to work as a reception clerk. Her manager, Bernie, was very supportive throughout her recovery. Bernie was one of the founding physicians at the clinic, he had been practicing at the clinic for 16 years, and he had been responsible for hiring Amelie.

Four months ago, Bernie retired, and a new doctor named Shawn took over for him and became Amelie’s new manager. Shawn was aware of the workplace accommodations that were in place for Amelie when he was hired. A few weeks ago, Shawn began to criticize Amelie and was telling her that she was “too slow” at filing and preparing office correspondence, remarking that she “must have been a turtle in another life.” Shawn also made comments about Amelie’s accent, and routinely said things like “I can’t understand you”, and “you have to speak more clearly.”

Last week Amelie walked into the lunchroom and overheard Shawn speaking to the social worker and one of the nurses who are both employed at the Medical Centre. As Amelie came around the corner, she heard Shawn say, “I mean come on, no one can understand her.”



Group Discussion Questions

1. Did Shawn violate the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*? If so, how?

2. When Shawn first began to criticize Amelie, should she have said something? If so, to whom?

3. Is there a responsibility for anyone else other than Amelie to speak up about this incident?
