

Building a Respectful Workplace

What is a respectful workplace?

A respectful workplace supports the physical, psychological and social well-being of all workers. In a respectful workplace:

- employees are valued
- in-person and online communication is positive and productive
- people feel comfortable to be their authentic selves at work
- differences in culture and religion are accepted and supported
- people feel safe to express their gender identity and others use their chosen name and preferred pronouns
- everyone is treated as they wish to be treated
- workers feel safe to raise their concerns and differences of opinion are encouraged
- conflict is addressed in a positive and respectful manner
- disrespectful behaviour and harassment are addressed

Why do we need a respectful workplace?

We all deserve a respectful workplace. When people at work offend, embarrass or humiliate us, it hurts our dignity and well-being. It also hurts our working relationships, undermines trust and can lower our productivity. It can contribute to stress, mental health problems, and burnout. Over time, disrespect in the workplace erodes workers' sense of value and purpose, decreases motivation, lowers morale, and leads to higher employee turnover.

Who is responsible to prevent disrespect?

Your employer is ultimately responsible to provide a respectful work environment. Supervisors should be expected to model respectful behavior. Yet everyone has a role to play to prevent disrespect and create a respectful workplace.

The Source

The person whose action offends others. If you think your behaviour might offend someone else, stop the behaviour.

The Target

The person who feels disrespected. If you feel safe, you can tell someone if their behaviour offends you. Ask them to stop.

If you don't feel safe to do so, or if the behaviour continues or is serious, report the incident to the appropriate person in the workplace.

The Observer

The person who sees disrespectful behaviour occur. You have a responsibility to address disrespectful behaviour, support the target, and/or report it to a person with authority.

Persons with Authority

Supervisors and managers should address disrespect and harmful behaviors immediately. Ultimately, it is the employer's responsibility to provide a respectful and harassment-free workplace.

Adapted from: Mediation Services

What can your employer do?

Your employer is responsible to provide a healthy work environment. It is important for employers to take action in all of the following areas to ensure a respectful workplace.

Training

- Provide training on respectful workplaces to all workers and management.
- Hold orientations with all new employees and review their rights, responsibilities and obligations toward other employees.
- Offer skills-based emotional intelligence training for supervisors.
- Provide diversity, equity and anti-racism training.
- Provide conflict resolution training and make sure all management and supervisors are skilled in handling conflict.

Policies & Practices

- Develop a respectful workplace policy with the involvement of workers.
- Ensure a harassment & bullying prevention policy is in place and followed.
- Develop clear mechanisms for workers to report disrespect and harassment when it is done by people who hold power in the workplace.
- Support and encourage people who practice respectful behaviour.

Build accountability

- Hold management and workers responsible for their behaviour.
- Investigate all complaints of disrespect and harassment promptly.
- Assess respectful behaviour in performance evaluations.

What can you do?

You can model respect by practicing the following behaviours:

- use positive communication practices such as listening without interrupting and checking to see if you understood correctly

- try to understand values and opinions that differ from your own and find areas in common where possible
- thank a co-worker for their help with a project or task
- talk with someone instead of about them
- ask for consent to engage with others respect their boundaries
- avoid blaming, threatening and name-calling
- report abuse, discrimination, and harassment

What is Harassment?

Harassment is abusive and unwelcome behaviour or comments toward an individual because of a group to which they belong or appear to belong. It can also be unwelcome sexual advances. The Manitoba Human Rights Code prohibits harassment in employment and other situations.

Harassment is also repeated conduct often called “bullying” that causes a worker to be humiliated or intimidated and affects a worker’s well-being. It may also be a single serious occurrence. Workplace Safety and Health law in Manitoba prohibits this type of harassment.

For more information

Occupational Health Centre

167 Sherbrook St.
Winnipeg, Manitoba Phone: 204-949-0811
Email: info@ohcmb.ca
Website: ohcmb.ca

Manitoba Human Rights Commission

Winnipeg Office
700- 175 Hargrave Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Phone: 204-945-3007

Brandon Office

341-340 Ninth Street
Brandon, MB
Phone: 204-726-6261
Toll free: 1-888-884-8681
Email: hrc@gov.mb.ca
Website: manitobahumanrights.ca/

Workplace Safety and Health Branch

Winnipeg: 204-957-SAFE (7233)
Toll-free: 1-855-957-SAFE (7233)
Website: www.manitoba.ca/labour/safety/