

Bullying At Work

What is Workplace Bullying?

Bullying is repeated behavior that intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates a particular person or group of people in a workplace. It can also be a single occurrence, if it is shown to have a lasting, harmful effect on a worker.

Examples of workplace bullying include:

- ❖ excluding a person from conversations or activities
- ❖ withholding information needed for a person's work
- ❖ undervaluing a person's effort
- ❖ spreading rumors or gossip
- ❖ taking credit for other people's ideas
- ❖ constant criticism
- ❖ preventing applications for training, leave or promotions
- ❖ yelling or swearing
- ❖ physical abuse or threats of physical abuse
- ❖ using technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target another person

How can bullying affect you?

If you are bullied at work, you may experience the following reactions:

- shock
- anger
- feelings of frustration and/or helplessness
- increased sense of vulnerability
- loss of confidence
- difficulty concentrating
- difficulty sleeping
- loss of appetite
- headaches
- stress
- anxiety
- physical and emotional illnesses

How does bullying affect the workplace?

Bullying in the workplace can have many effects. They include the following:

- increased absenteeism
- increased turnover
- increased stress
- increased benefit costs
- decreased productivity and motivation
- decreased morale

What can you do when you witness bullying at work?

If you witness bullying at work, you may not want to get involved. You may feel loyal to the bully, or you may fear becoming the next target. But you have a responsibility to try to stop the bullying. Some of the responses you may try, if you feel safe, include:

- refuse to participate in the bullying
- do not repeat the rumor
- do not laugh at the put-downs or offensive jokes
- support the person being bullied, publicly or privately
- invite an isolated coworker to lunch or coffee break
- direct the person being bullied to help
- report the bullying to the appropriate person at your workplace

What can you do if you are being bullied at work?

If you are being bullied, you can try to stop it by:

- Firmly telling the person that his/her behavior is not acceptable and ask them to stop.
- Keep a factual journal or diary of daily events. Record the date, time, and what happened in as much detail as possible, names of witnesses and the outcome of the event.
- Keep copies of any letters, memos, emails, texts, or faxes sent by the bully.
- Report the bullying to the appropriate person in your workplace, your supervisor or manager. If your concerns are not taken seriously, take them to the next level of management and inform your union, if you have one.
- Get medical attention if you need it.
- Find support. Use your Employee Assistance Program or ask your health care provider for a referral to a professional counsellor.

What can your employer do?

Manitoba workplace safety and health law prohibits bullying in the workplace.

Your employer is responsible for providing a healthy work environment. Every worker needs to be treated with dignity and respect.

Employers must take the following actions to help prevent bullying and harassment in their workplaces:

- Ensure the workplace has a Harassment Prevention Policy and a Violence Prevention Policy (when a risk of violence is identified in the workplace).
- Make sure all workers know and follow the harassment prevention policy.

Employers should also implement the following practices:

- Raise awareness about what is considered workplace bullying.
- Ensure supervisors and management are trained in how to identify bullying and how to investigate and resolve complaints.
- Deal with all complaints promptly and confidentially.
- Establish clear consequences for inappropriate behavior and hold all employees accountable.
- Have an impartial third-party help with the resolution of complaints if necessary.
- Provide an Employee Assistance Program to offer confidential support and counselling to employees who are dealing with bullying.
- Develop a Respectful Workplace Policy that provides clear expectations for workplace behavior.

This fact sheet is adapted in large part from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety's Answer sheet on "Bullying in the Workplace".

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