

## A QUICK REFERENCE ON BULLYING

### DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is interpersonal hostility that is deliberate, repeated and sufficiently severe as to harm the targeted person's health (mental, emotional and/or physical), safety or economic well-being.

Bullying usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behaviour that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people.

Bullying is a form of Harassment.

It is driven by the perpetrator's (bully's) need to control another individual, not by a legitimate business need.

### WHO IS TYPICALLY A BULLY?

Research indicates that over 80% of bullies are bosses and the remainder is mostly co-workers. A small number of employees bully their supervisors.

Adult bullies tend to be insecure people with poor or non-existent social skills and little empathy for others.

A bully is equally likely to be a man or a woman.

### WHO TYPICALLY GETS TARGETED?

The target chosen by an adult bully will very often be a capable, dedicated staff member who is well liked by co-workers. Bullies are most likely to pick on people with an ability to cooperate and who have a non-confrontative interpersonal style.

### EXAMPLES OF BULLYING BEHAVIOR

- Spreading malicious rumours, gossip, or innuendo that is not true;
- Excluding or isolating someone socially;
- Intimidating a person;
- Undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work;
- Physically abusing or threatening abuse;
- Establishing impossible deadlines that will set up the individual to fail;
- Withholding necessary information or purposefully giving wrong information;
- Overloading the person with work, or taking work away;
- Intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking;
- Criticizing a person persistently or constantly; belittling their opinions;
- Unwarranted punishment; and
- Tampering with a person's personal belongs or work equipment.

### EFFECTS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

People who are targets of bullying may experience a range of unhealthy effects including:

- High stress levels, anxiety and sleep disturbances;
- Ill health, severe fatigue, panic attacks, impaired ability to make decisions;
- Incapacity to work, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem, reduced output and performance.



Effects on the workplace include:

- Reduced efficiency, productivity and profitability;
- Increased absenteeism, sick leave and staff turnover;
- Poor morale;
- Increased costs associated with counseling, employee assistance, workers' compensation claims, etc.

### WHAT TO DO WHEN BULLYING HAPPENS

1. Firmly tell the person that his/her behavior is not acceptable and ask them to stop.
2. Keep a factual record of the event(s): date; time; what happened; names of witnesses; and the outcome of the event.
3. Keep copies of any written communication received from the person.
4. Report the harassment to a supervisor.
5. Use the informal and formal steps outlined in Petro-Canada's 'Prevention of Workplace Harassment' Procedure.

### DO NOT RETALIATE

#### WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- Canadian Centre For Occupational Health & Safety @ <http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/bullying.html>
- Canada Safety Council @ <http://www.safety-council.org/info/OSH/bullies.html>
- <http://www.B-free.ca>
- <http://www.bullyfreealberta.ca>