

## 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-confrontational 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 productivity and profitability;
- Increased absenteeism, 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. Do this once to see if there is a beneficial effect. If so, you may be able to keep working with the individual.
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. First use informal steps, such as coaching from your Human Resources department, and if that doesn't work, formal steps available if your organization has an anti-harassment policy. Fully investigate the process and how it will work so you know what to expect.

### DO NOT RETALIATE

### WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- Canadian Centre For Occupational Health & Safety @ <http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/bullying.html>
- Bully Free BC: [www.bullyfreebc.ca](http://www.bullyfreebc.ca)
- Government of Alberta: <http://www.B-free.ca>

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