

Workplace Bullying

Bullying often comes in subtle ways and affects the overall workplace climate so should be addressed immediately when detected.

DEFINITION

Workplace bullying can be defined as the repeated less favorable treatment of a person by another or others in the workplace, which may be considered unreasonable and inappropriate workplace practice.

Workplace bullying includes negative acts directed toward employees. It includes behavior that intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates a worker, possibly in front of co-workers, clients, or customers.

- Bullies can be supervisors, subordinates, co-workers, and colleagues
- Bullies often operate within the established rules and policies of their organization
- While actions are not necessarily illegal and may not even be against the policies, the damage that such actions cause—both to the targeted employee and to workplace morale is significant.

REPEATED BEHAVIORS THAT COULD CONSTITUTE BULLYING

- Intimidating or undermining employees by demeaning their work standards, not giving them credit, setting them up for failure and constantly reminding them of old mistakes.
- Threatening employees' personal self-esteem and work status.
- Isolating employees from opportunities, information, and interaction with others.
- Giving impossible deadlines, creating undue pressure and stress, and overworking employees
- Giving constant and unfair criticism
- Blaming without factual justification
- Making unreasonable demands
- Giving hostile glares and other intimidating gestures
- Yelling, screaming, and swearing
- Purposely excluding or isolating a coworker
- Sending aggressive emails or notes
- Monopolizing supplies and other resources
- Engaging in excessive social bantering, teasing, and humiliation
- Deliberately insulting others and behind-the-back put downs
- Monitoring another excessively

- Stealing credit for other employees' work

What we can do about Bullying?

Employees:

If you believe you are being bullied, possible action steps include:

- Bringing the situation to the attention of a supervisor, the next person in the chain of command (if supervisor is the issue) , or HR.
- Keeping notes detailing the nature of the bullying (e.g., dates, times, places, what was said or done and who was present).
- Obtaining copies of harassing / bullying paper trails; hold onto copies of documents that contradict the bully's accusations against you (e.g., time sheets, audit reports, etc.).
- Expecting the bully to deny and perhaps misconstrue your accusations; have a witness with you during any meetings with the bully; report the behavior to an appropriate person.

Other Employees:

- If you witness someone being bullied, show support for the individual being bullied and if comfortable, confront the bully in a constructive manner about his/her behavior and its effect on the workplace. Let a supervisor or HR know if the situation persists.

Supervisors:

Ways to minimize and discourage bullying:

- Educate your employees on respectful workplace behaviors and what acts could constitute bullying
- Encourage reporting
- Encourage an open door policy
- Develop your sensitivity and skills in dealing with and responding to conflict
- Structure your work environment to incorporate a sense of autonomy, individual challenge, and clarity of expectations. Include your staff in decision-making processes.
- Have a demonstrated commitment about what is and is not acceptable behavior.

When bullying is witnessed or reported:

- Take the complaint or situation seriously and investigate it promptly.

- Address the bullying behavior by stating specific examples of actions that are being perceived as bullying and the impact on others.
- Assess the extend and pervasiveness of the bullying.
- Consult with HR on appropriate next steps.