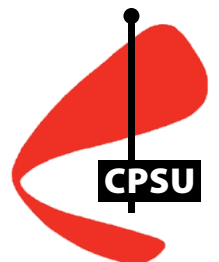




**BULLYING**

Info Sheet:  
Bullying & Harassment



## Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and harassment are not acceptable forms of workplace behavior in any workplace. Apart from being illegal, these types of behaviors destroy relationships, reduce productivity and result in illness. Everyone in a workplace has a role in ensuring bullying and harassment are eliminated.

Workplace bullying refers to any behavior that is repeated, systematic and directed towards a single employee or group of employees that a reasonable person, having regard to the circumstances, would expect to victimise, humiliate, undermine or threaten and which creates a risk to health and safety.

The key elements are that the behavior is:

1. Repeated – this means the behavior or a range of unacceptable behaviors are persistent or ongoing.
2. Systematic – this means the behavior exhibits or involves a method or a plan.
3. Risks health and safety – this means the behavior involves an increased risk to the emotional, mental or physical health of a person (s) in the workplace.

### What is Bullying?

Examples of bullying behavior may include:

- Abusive, insulting or offensive language
- Behavior or language that frightens, humiliates, belittles or degrades, including criticism that is delivered with yelling and screaming
- Teasing or regularly making someone the brunt of practical jokes
- Displaying material that is degrading or offending
- Spreading gossip, rumors and innuendo of a malicious nature

Violence, assault and stalking are extreme forms of bullying that constitute a criminal offence. Such behavior should be reported directly to the police. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Harmful or offensive initiation practices;
- Physical assault or unlawful threats.

Workplace bullying can also be subtle and may include behavior such as:

- Deliberately excluding, isolating or marginalising a person from normal workplace activities;
- Intruding on a person's space by pestering, spying or tampering with their personal effects or work equipment;
- Intimidating a person through inappropriate personal comments, belittling opinions or unjustified criticism.

Covert behaviour that undermines, treats less favorably or disempowers others is also bullying. For example:

- Overloading a person with work;
- Setting timelines that are very difficult to achieve, or constantly changing deadlines;
- Setting tasks that are unreasonably beyond a person's ability;
- Ignoring or isolating a person;
- Deliberately denying access to information, consultation or resources;
- Unfair treatment in relation to accessing workplace entitlements, such as leave or training.

## **What Isn't Bullying?**

Bullying behavior does not include:

- Friendly banter, light hearted exchanges, mutually acceptable jokes and compliments;
- Friendship, sexual or otherwise, where both parties consent to the relationship;
- Issuing a reasonable instruction and expecting it to be carried out;
- Warning or disciplining a person consistent with an organisational policy;
- Insisting on high standards of performance in terms of quality, safety and teamwork;
- Legitimate criticism about work performance delivered in a reasonable manner;
- Providing negative feedback on performance as part of a performance appraisal and requiring justified performance improvements;
- Expressing alternate views in an assertive manner;
- Open and frank discussion on workplace issues; or
- Reasonable action taken in a reasonable manner under an Act affecting an employee;

## **Rights and responsibilities with regard to Bullying**

All workers including managers have a right to:

- a safe and harassment free workplace;
- complain about behavior they consider to be inappropriate and for their complaint to be taken seriously;
- to be treated with natural justice in circumstances where allegations of bullying are made against them; and
- to talk to and be represented by a union Delegate or Organiser.

Workers are responsible to:

- not be involved in behavior that constitutes bullying or harassment;
- to treat other workers in the same manner they expect to be treated;
- to tell other workers about how their behavior makes them feel;
- to listen to other workers tell them about how their behavior makes them feel;
- to intervene when they witness inappropriate behavior; and
- to comply with legal requirements and organisational policies.

Employers and managers are responsible to:

- Maintain a safe and harassment free workplace;
- Educate staff to ensure they comply with legal requirements and organisational policies;
- Conduct complaint processes in a manner consistent with policies and that upholds the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness;
- Model appropriate behavior at all times;
- Intervene to stop any inappropriate behavior; and
- Ensure suitable support systems are in place for those who have been bullied or harassed.