Safety 1-0-1: 15 September 2021

Bullying & harassment

Bullying and harassment in the workplace can take many forms, including verbal aggression, personal attacks, and other intimidating or humiliating behaviours. If workplace bullying and harassment is not addressed, it can lead to lost productivity, anxiety, and depression.

## **What is bullying and harassment?**

A worker is bullied and harassed when someone takes an action that he or she knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause that worker to be humiliated or intimidated. When an employer or supervisor takes reasonable action to manage and direct workers, it is not bullying and harassment ([see OHS policy P2-21-2](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/law-policy/occupational-health-safety/searchable-ohs-regulation/ohs-policies/policies-for-the-workers-compensation-act#SectionNumber:P2-21-2) for more information).

Examples of behaviour or comments that might constitute bullying and harassment include verbal aggression or insults, calling someone derogatory names, harmful hazing or initiation practices, vandalizing personal belongings, and spreading malicious rumours.

## **Responding to bullying and harassment**

If you are a worker and you have witnessed or experienced bullying and harassment in your workplace, you must report it to your employer. If your employer has not taken reasonable steps to address the incident, you can call the [Prevention Information Line](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/contact-us/departments-and-services/health-safety-prevention) to contact an officer to discuss the incident. If the matter is still not resolved after reporting to your employer and speaking with a prevention officer, you may submit a [Bullying and Harassment Questionnaire](https://blhr.online.worksafebc.com/default?_ga=2.259630348.784694197.1631675714-1288987443.1631675713).

Learn more about [responding to workplace bullying and harassment](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/health-safety/hazards-exposures/bullying-harassment/responding-bullying-harassment).

## **Procedures for employers**

Employers must implement procedures for responding to reports or incidents of bullying and harassment. The procedures must ensure a reasonable response to the report or incident and aim to fully address the incident and ensure that bullying and harassment is prevented or minimized in the future.

Developing and implementing procedures for how the employer will deal with incidents or reports of workplace bullying and harassment must include the following:

* How and when investigations will be conducted
* What will be included in the investigation
* The roles and responsibilities of employers, supervisors, workers, and others (such as investigators, witnesses, or union representatives)
* Follow-up to the investigation (description of corrective actions, time frame, dealing with adverse symptoms, etc.)
* Record-keeping requirements

In addition to establishing procedures, employers are responsible for ensuring they are followed.

Workers are expected to cooperate with investigators and provide any details of acts of bullying or harassment they have experienced or witnessed.

**Bullying and Harassment Quiz:**

1. Does an incident have to happen at work to count as workplace harassment?

A. Yes

B. No

*Workplace can be office, training facility, clients home, another org, work function.*

2. Does the inappropriate behaviour have to come from or be against another employee to count as workplace harassment?

A. Yes

B. No

*Can be volunteer, client, contractor or visitor*

3. Does inappropriate workplace behaviour have to be repeated for it to be harassment?

A. Yes

B. No

*Only a single incident*

4. Does the offending behaviour have to be deliberate or intentional to be harassment or bullying?

A. Yes

B. No

*Unintentional such as overhearing a joke*

5. Do you have to tell the other person to "stop" their behaviour before it counts as harassment?

A. Yes

B. No

*You may not feel comfortable to*

6. Can it be harassment if someone tells me that something I have been doing for a while is harassing them when they haven't said anything before?

A. Yes

B. No

7. If I ask someone out, can it ever be considered as harassment?

A. Yes

B. No

*Depends on how it is asked, is there a threat?*

8. If I tell somebody that they look good, can it be seen that I am harassing them?

A. Yes

B. No

*Compliment is not harassment however it depends on how and expressions used*

9. Can it be harassment if I touch someone?

A. Yes

B. No  
  
10. If everybody thinks that telling certain types of jokes (for example, sexist or racist jokes) is all right, can we do it?

A. Yes

B. No

11. If the majority of us like certain pictures (for example, nude pin-ups) on the walls, is that all right?

A. Yes

B. No

12. With regards to harassment, the feelings of the victim are what counts, not the intentions of the harasser?

A. Yes

B. No

13. Can you make a formal complaint anonymously?

A. Yes

B. No

14. Can the employer be liable for harassment in the workplace even if they didn't know it was happening, but should have known?

A. Yes

B. No

*The organisation needs to take all reasonal steps to eliminate the bad behavior and has a duty of care.*

15. Can a person be held individually and personally liable for their actions and behaviour?

A. Yes

B. No

*Personally liable for compensation, damages, legal fees*

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