



BC EXCLUDED EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

This MyInfo sheet offers managers the resources and tools they need to deal with bullying between staff; those who may be the victims of bullying themselves or who may be unwittingly contributing to an environment where bullying occurs.

Bullying can be defined in a variety of ways. It is often captured under the umbrella term, “workplace harassment”. Most bullying experts however, define the behaviour according to a common set of terms: acts or verbal comments that could mentally hurt or isolate a person, usually involving repeated incidents and/or patterns of behaviour that are intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people.

MyInfo: Bullying

Finding Out...

WHAT FORM DOES BULLYING TAKE?

We at the BCEEA are not bullying experts but, based on our experience, we have noticed that bullying occurs at all hierarchical levels. Unionized supervisors, excluded managers, rank and file staff and—at times—even executives can experience bullying. In some situations the bully appears to take a malicious pleasure in demeaning others. More often than not however, we have witnessed what appear to be perfectly reasonable people behave incredibly badly when put under certain kinds of stress. They react to the pressures of meeting challenging deadlines or overwhelming responsibilities by lashing out and bullying. We have also witnessed how staff who lack people management skills, experience or self-management skills, resort to bullying behaviour when trying to deal with a performance or workplace issue. Nevertheless, there is a distinct difference between effectively managing performance or undertaking a disciplinary process, and relentlessly belittling or constantly criticizing someone in a clearly inappropriate manner.

Regardless of what motivates the bullying, the impact can be devastating. We have seen competent, seasoned managers second-guessing themselves, doubting their competence and questioning their abilities when faced with a bully. The victim often feels helpless to stop the bully and negativity creeps into their home lives, affecting their personal relationships. They often become consumed by the bullying experience.

Why?

Your Options

How We Can Help

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AM I BEING BULLIED?

Ontario’s bullying handbook refers to repeated, persistent, continuous behaviour that is generally associated with a power imbalance between the victim and perpetrator. They emphasize that bullying should not be confused with a tough management style or normal worker conflict. The following are some examples of workplace bullying behaviours:

- Social isolation
- Rumours
- Personal attacks on a person’s private life and/or personal attributes
- Excessive or unjustified criticism
- Over-monitoring of work performance
- Verbal aggression
- Withholding information
- Withholding job responsibility
- Trivial fault-finding
- Replacing proper work with demeaning jobs
- Setting unrealistic goals or deadlines

Sometimes it is hard to step back and see your own situation clearly. What follows is a checklist that might help you assess if you are being bullied:

Self-test: Are You Being Bullied? Consider each of the questions in the self-test below, then circle the appropriate number to indicate how often the described behaviour happens.

This checklist was developed by the Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare in *Bullying in the Workplace: A handbook for the workplace.* <http://www.osach.ca/products/resrcdoc/rvioe528.pdf>

Does the person you’re having trouble with:	Never	Not Often	Often	Almost Always/ Always
1. Ignore you, not say hello when you greet them, not return phone calls or emails	0	0	1	2
2. Dismiss what you’re saying or “put you down” while alone or in the presence of others?	0	1	2	3
3. Sabotage you or make you look foolish, such as “forgetting” to tell you about a meeting or, if the person is your boss, set you up to fail by placing impossible demands on you?	0	2	3	4
4. Spread rumours, lies and half-truths about you?	0	2	3	4
5. Frequently act impatient with you, treating you like you’re incompetent?	0	1	2	3
6. Blame and criticize you?	0	1	2	3
7. Try to intimidate you by interrupting, contradicting and glaring at you and giving you the silent treatment?	0	1	2	3
8. Tease, ridicule, insult or play tricks on you, especially in front of others?	0	2	3	4
9. Always insist on getting their own way and never apologize?	0	1	2	3
10. Yell, point their finger, swear, insult or threaten you or call you names?	0	2	3	4
TOTAL SCORE=				

Add up the numbers to get your total score. There is a possible total score of 33. If your score is 5 or below, it doesn't look like you're being bullied. If your score is between 6 and 19, there are indications of bullying behaviour. Naturally the higher the score, the more pronounced the behaviour. If your score is 20 or above, you are definitely being bullied. As scores increase beyond 20, the severity of the bullying is escalating.

HOW CAN THE BCEE A HELP?

If you are a member, call us. We offer a confidential support. We will:

- Help you figure out the best way to manage your situation.
- Help you determine exactly what your situation is, so that you can assess clearly what is occurring.
- Assist you to document your experiences.
- Support you in define what you hope to accomplish and how to achieve it.

We will then work with you to develop a strategic action plan that will include coaching, feedback and support as you seek to resolve the situation. Bottom line? You are not alone. We understand what you are going through. We've plenty of experience working with other members who have experienced similar situations.

The BCEE A does not deal with the bullies themselves: Our priority is to take immediate action to protect the wellbeing of our members. How do we help?

- We work with members to assist them to see the situation clearly.
- We help them understand what reasonable behaviour in the workplace is, and what is clearly bullying.
- We assist them identify a productive course of action to deal with the bullying.

We also help members figure out the most realistic outcome. This can often mean the victim may have to leave their current work assignment at least temporarily, if not permanently. We coach members through the process of securing temporary assignments, lateral transfers or new jobs. If you choose to raise the issue using the BC PSA's workplace harassment process, we will continue to offer our support as you progress. Our aim is to support you, the member.

To locate BC Government support go to the MyHR website and Google bullying.

MORE HELP: The BCEE A offers seminars such as Maintaining Personal Resiliency or Difficult Communications. The aim is to assist our members to manage others more effectively and with less personal stress.

HOW CAN I PREVENT OR ADDRESS BULLYING IN MY WORKPLACE?

Workplace bullying can be subtle and if often hidden. It is usually associated with a poor management style and/or lack of presence of management in a division, branch or unit. Managers need to be aware of the impact that bullying has on staff, clients, and organizations. It is important to be aware of potential signs and symptoms associated with bullying in the workplace.

Signs and symptoms may include:

- Grievances by employees against their manager
- Declining work performance of dedicated and hard-working employees
- Increased stress and tensions between staff in a unit
- Poor morale or WES scores
- Reported fear of a co-worker by other workers
- Individual symptoms of depression
- Increased absenteeism in a department/unit

(Hutchison et al. 2005;Rowell 2005)

Managers may unwittingly encourage bullying by:

- Pitting workers against each other or emphasizing a competitive work style
- Having a lax management style (employees must determine what is acceptable and what is not)

- Making unreasonable demands and setting unrealistic goals for employees and managers
- Failing to give supervisors the authority to reprimand problem workers
- Setting impossible deadlines or providing insufficient funding to accomplish a goal

(Workplace Bullying Institute 2007)

Managers can complete a culture assessment like the one following to help identify the areas requiring further work in building your organization's culture of dignity and respect.

People Focus	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
Do you give people personal responsibility?			
Do you actively seek out the views of others?			
Are you committed to team development?			
Do you instill confidence in others?			
Do you encourage open feedback and debate?			
Personal Integrity	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
Do you do what you say you'll do?			
Do you show respect to everyone?			
Can you say sorry when you've made a mistake?			
Are you open and honest about your mistakes and do you learn from them?			
Are you fair in all dealings with others?			
Visibility	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
Do you actively promote an open door approach?			
Do you champion a culture of respect and dignity?			
Are you available to listen to the views of others?			
Are you prepared to talk to staff and clients about the need for respect and dignity at work?			
Have you put building a culture of dignity and respect on your main agenda?			
Promoting Standards	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
Do you establish individual and team goals?			
Do you give personal recognition to others?			
Do you use feedback and coaching constructively?			
Do you schedule regular time for improving interpersonal relationships?			
Are you constantly looking for opportunities for improvement?			
Challenging the status quo	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
Do you openly challenge unacceptable behaviour?			
Do you unearth and address prejudiced attitudes?			
Do you critically examine policies and procedures to make sure they're fair to everyone?			
How did you do? Add up the ticks in each column			
Now multiply each column total by the appropriate weighting factor	0	2	5
Total score (Maximum Score possible 125)			

If you scored:

0-50	You don't yet understand what is needed to create a culture of dignity and respect
51-75	You have some awareness of requirements but significant effort is still needed
76-100	You have reasonable skills in creating a culture of dignity and respect
101-125	you have excellent skills in creating a culture of dignity and respect

Now ask your team to complete the questionnaire anonymously and see how they rate you.

(Adapted from: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Website, www.cipd.co.uk)

"If organizational leaders fail to enforce their anti-harassment policies, employees may conclude that the climate supports harassment, leading to more harassment and organizational backlash. Building inclusive environments and squelching harassment when it does occur will go a long way toward building an environment for healthy and productive employees. ...Anti-harassment or bullying policies are important, yet will not effectively reduce harassment unless accompanied by genuine efforts to change behaviour." (Raver & Nishi 2010)

IF YOU WITNESS BULLYING?

There are several steps you can take to assess and then prevent bullying in your workplace.

- Make sure you are familiar with, and follow bullying or workplace harassment policies and procedures.
- Have an informal meeting or conversation with staff to explore their concerns.
- If you are the responsible supervisor or in a senior position, make sure to have examples of the alleged bullying and that you understand exactly what outcome the complainant is aiming for. In order to be fair, you need to decide whether the behaviour is bullying or harassment. The alleged bully may have no idea how his or her behaviour is affecting others. Beware of malicious allegations.

(Health & Safety Executive, UK)

Remember to avail yourself of the supports and resources available to you through your home organization, the BCPSA or if you are a member, through the BCEEA.

"It is important for leaders to clearly communicate to employees that they are taking the situation seriously and that all forms of mistreatment are unacceptable. Managing employees' perceptions of organizational tolerance for harassment is especially important in light of evidence on impairment of job attitudes after experiencing a single type of harassment. If organizational leaders fail to enforce their anti-harassment policies, employees may conclude that the climate supports harassment, leading to more harassment and organizational backlash. Although it may be impossible to eradicate all instances of workplace harassment, building inclusive environments and squelching harassment when it does occur will go a long way toward building an environment for healthy and productive employees." (Raver & Nishi 2010)

Workplace Bullying: Resources

Worksafe BC has an excellent list of resources from a wide variety of jurisdictions:

<http://www2.worksafebc.com/Topics/Violence/Resources-WorkplaceBullying.asp>

The following links list tools, publications, and other resources to help prevent violence in the workplace. These resources may not meet all the requirements for health and safety in British Columbia. Please check the Workers Compensation Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, and related materials for specific WorkSafeBC requirements.

Canadian Sources**Bullying in the Workplace: A handbook for the workplace**

Although other types of violence receive more media attention, workplace bullying has increasingly been the focus of researchers, employers, unions and health and safety professionals. Healthcare and community care organizations need new tools to improve their violence prevention strategies including methods to address workplace bullying.

Source: Ontario Safety Association for Community and Healthcare

* [PDF \(732 KB\)](#)

Bullying in the Workplace

This website uses a question-and-answer format to provide information on preventing and dealing with bullying in the workplace.

Source: CCOHS (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety)

* [HTML](#)

Canadian Initiative on Workplace Violence

Website of the Canadian Initiative, a social research firm incorporated in 1999 to study trends in workplace conduct within Canada. Content includes research and practices related to reducing the risk of workplace aggression.

Source: Canadian Initiative on Workplace Violence

* [HTML](#)

Towards a Respectful Workplace

The research generated under this study has produced an online toolkit, an employee guide, and an organization's guide.

Source: University of New Brunswick, Fredericton

* [HTML](#)

Foreign Sources:

Bullying and Harassment

This website provides advice and guidance on dealing with bullying and harassment in the workplace.

Source: HSE (Health & Safety Executive, UK)

* [HTML](#)

Preventing Workplace Bullying

These practical guides for employers and employees recommend that workplace bullying be treated like any other health and safety hazard, which should be identified and assessed for risk.

Source: SafeWork, South Australia

* [HTML](#)

Additional Sources:

- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, <http://www.cipd.co.uk/>
- Once, Twice or Three Times as Harmful? Ethnic Harassment, Gender Harassment, and Generalized Workplace Harassment. (Raver, J.L. and Nishii, L.N. Journal of Applied Psychology 2010, Vol 95, No 2, 236 - 254)
- Workplace Bullying: Aggressive Behavior and Its Effect on Job Satisfaction and Productivity. (Fisher-Blando, J.L., February 2008, University of Phoenix)
- Workplace Bullying Institute: <http://www.workplacebullying.org/>

Please remember that this MyInfo sheet has been developed to provide general tips and does not take into account any individual circumstances, constitute legal advice, represent government policy or replace a personal consultation.