

Bullying in the Workplace

Imagine a workplace where everyone feels safe and respected.

BULLYING

presents a risk to an employee's health, work performance, and personal safety.

Everyone is entitled to the basic right of human dignity in the workplace. Yet every day there are instances of workplace bullying. Bullying occurs when individuals or a group intimidate, shame, embarrass, or undercut another employee, causing harm to him or her.

Employers aren't the only ones who bully. Most workplace bullying is peer-to-peer, rather than supervisor-to-employee. Some examples include:

- Excessive criticism
- Blaming people without gathering facts
- Being singled out in or excluded from groups or activities
- Unfair deadlines or amounts of work
- Being the subject of humiliation

CORPORATE BULLYING

There are times when bullying is embedded and accepted in the workplace culture. This is known as institutional, or corporate, bullying. In these instances, employers will have unrealistic expectations and deadlines for employees. They might ignore employee complaints of stress due to workload. Also, rewards or encouragement are given to bullying coworkers. This behavior is unacceptable and should be reported to human resources, because when you fail to address the problem you might be contributing to it.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF BULLYING

Workplace bullying hurts both the individual and the entire organization, and there can be negative physical, emotional, and social effects. Individuals might face increased sick days, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, low self-esteem, depression symptoms and problems with finances and family life. The company as a whole can also experience negative side effects to bullying, such as a marred reputation, legal costs, low morale, staff changes, and a loss of productivity.

ACTION STEPS

- ✓ **Check your handbook** – Be aware of any policies against bullying in your employee manual or handbook. There might be steps outlined for you to take should the need arise.
- ✓ **Talk to your bully** – If you feel

comfortable, have a conversation with the person bullying you. Let them know their behavior is unacceptable and unprofessional. This communication can be written or verbal. It might be helpful to have a witness or third party with you, as the bully might deny their behavior.

- ✓ **Take notes** – Keep a log detailing the offensive behaviors. Make special note of the times, dates, who was present, what was said, and what was done to you. If you're the target, be sure to keep accurate records of your work (timesheets, work orders, etc.) to defend yourself.
- ✓ **Establish a contact person** – Designate a human resources person who is unbiased and independent of the situation in question. Make sure he or she can listen objectively to all employee concerns regarding bullying and connect people to proper resources if they need counseling or support.

KEEP IN MIND

If you or someone you know is dealing with the negative effects of workplace bullying, consider seeking help. Many businesses have human resources personnel or a recommended counselor that will assist. If additional support is needed, contact your medical or mental health professional.

What steps will you take to address bullying in your workplace today?