

HR4. Workplace Bullying Policy

Policy Objective

To provide all employees, contractors and volunteers with a work environment free from bullying.

Policy Statement

The Shire of Dundas considers workplace bullying unacceptable and will not tolerate it under any circumstances. Workplace bullying is behaviour that harms, intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates an employee, possibly in front of other employees, clients or customers. Workplace bullying may cause the loss of trained and talented employees, reduce productivity and morale and create legal risks.

The Shire of Dundas believes all employees should be able to work in an environment free from bullying. Managers and Supervisors must ensure employees are not bullied.

Definition

Workplace Bullying can be defined as repeated unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour directed towards a worker, or group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety. It includes behaviour that harms, intimidates, offends, degrades, humiliates or excludes

The two main types of bullying behaviours are:

- Overt or obvious, such as physical and verbal abuse; and
- Covert or subtle, such as continually undermining another person or deliberately denying access to information, consultation or resources. It can also be subtle intimidation such as inappropriate comments about personal appearance, constant criticisms, isolation of workers from others and unrealistic, embarrassing or degrading work demands.

Where bullying involves assault or threat of assault it may become a police matter.

Bullying can occur in one-to-one situations, in front of managers or supervisors, co-workers, clients or customers or by written, visual, electronic communications such as letters, drawings, e-mails, and telephone communications or via social media.

Whilst an isolated incident of inappropriate or unreasonable behaviour may not be considered to be bullying, any behaviours that have the potential to harm or offend someone should be identified as a hazard and assessed for its risk to safety and health.

What Isn't Bullying?

Occasional differences of opinion, problems and conflicts in working relationships can happen in the workplace but may not constitute bullying.

HR4. Workplace Bullying Policy

Reasonable management action, carried out in a fair way, is not bullying. All employers have a legal right to direct and control how work is done, and managers and supervisors have a legitimate responsibility to monitor work and practices and give objective feedback on performance.

If an employee is unable to perform their duties to the required standard, then specific issues should be identified and dealt with in a professional and constructive way i.e. that does not involve personal insults or derogatory remarks.

In situations where an employee is dissatisfied with management practices, the issues should be raised in a manner that remains professional and objective.

Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for:

- Building positive working relationships through clear and constructive communication
- Respecting other employees, clients and customers, volunteers and the community
- Demonstrating a willingness to consider different perspectives and a genuine commitment to resolving issues that may occur in the workplace
- Not placing the safety and health of others at risk by engaging in workplace bullying behaviours
- Seeking advice and reporting any incidents of workplace bullying behaviours, either directed at themselves or others

Managers and supervisors are responsible for:

- Demonstrating professional and ethical behaviour
- Promoting a workplace free from workplace bullying
- Ensuring employees are aware of this policy and the processes to report and deal with workplace bullying
- Monitoring the workplace for unreasonable and inappropriate conduct that may constitute bullying and addressing any occurrences
- Implementing strategies and reviewing, if necessary, relevant workplace practices to address potential bullying issues
- Responding promptly and appropriately to all issues/allegations including documenting and reporting workplace bullying allegations.

Chief Executives (or equivalent) are responsible for

- Creating a positive workplace culture
- Developing and implementing strategies to address and/or prevent workplace bullying
- Implementing training and education to assist in the prevention of bullying
- Ensuring appropriate mechanisms are in place for reporting and addressing incidents of bullying

HR4. Workplace Bullying Policy

- Appointment of suitably qualified and independent individual to investigate bullying allegations
- Make the final decision on disciplinary actions required to be taken
- Where the CEO has a conflict of interest in relation to a claim of bullying an independent mediation consultant should be secured to mediate an outcome

Any reports of workplace bullying will be treated seriously and investigated promptly, confidentially and impartially. The Shire of Dundas encourages employees to report workplace bullying. Managers and supervisors must ensure employees who make complaints or witnesses are not victimised. Disciplinary action will be taken against anyone who bullies a co-employee. Discipline may involve a warning, transfer, counselling, demotion or dismissal, depending on the circumstances.

Independent contact person for bullying is the Manager Finance & Administration.

Policy Reviewed October 2020