

Bullying

What is workplace bullying?

Bullying is usually seen as acts or verbal comments that could 'mentally' hurt or isolate a person in the workplace. It usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behaviour that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people. Examples of bullying behaviours:

- Physically abusing, or threatening abuse
- Yelling or using profanity
- Making obviously offensive jokes, spoken or by email
- Spreading malicious gossip
- Undermining or deliberately impeding another's work
- Constantly changing work guidelines
- Criticizing a person consistently
- Belittling another's opinions
- Setting impossible deadlines/Assigning unreasonable duties
- Withholding necessary information or purposely giving wrong information
- Blocking applications for training, leave or promotion.

How can bullying affect an individual?

People who are the targets of bullying may experience a range of effects. These reactions include:

- Shock/Anger/Feelings of frustration and/or helplessness
- Increased sense of vulnerability
- Loss of confidence
- Physical symptoms such as inability to sleep and loss of appetite, stomach pains and headaches
- Panic or anxiety, especially about going to work
- Family tension and stress
- Inability to concentrate , low morale and productivity

What can you do if you think you are being bullied?

Don't suffer in silence. When the bullying starts it's tempting to do nothing and see if the problem goes away. In fact, your best chance of stopping the bullying is to react promptly before a pattern of behaviour becomes established.

1. **FIRMLY** tell the person that his/her behaviour is not acceptable and ask them to stop. You can ask a supervisor or union member to be with you when you approach the person.
2. **KEEP** a factual journal or diary of daily events. Record the date, time and what happened in as much detail as possible and include names of witnesses. **KEEP** copies of any letters, memos, emails, faxes, etc. received from the person.
3. **REPORT** the harassment to your supervisor, or delegated manager. If your concerns are minimized, proceed to the next level, including notifying your union.
4. **DO NOT RETALIATE!** You may end up looking like the perpetrator and will most certainly cause confusion for those responsible for evaluating and responding to the situation.
5. **SEEK** counselling to learn constructive ways to deal with difficult people and how to manage the emotional stress caused by the situation. CBE provides free and confidential employee counselling at the Employee Health Resource Centre.