

Workplace Harassment and Bullying: Workers



Every day at work employees interact with co-workers, supervisors, managers, clients and/or customers. While we may not always think about it, psychological health and safety is a part of all these interactions.

Workplace health and safety includes psychological health and safety. Workplaces have a responsibility to make sure everyone is safe, healthy, and included. This means that interactions that are harassing or bullying need to be recognized as hazards that can directly impact the health and safety of employees.

Starting in September 2024, new supports and benefits will be available from the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) to workers in Nova Scotia who experience a psychological or mental health injury from workplace harassment and bullying.

Examples of workplace harassment and bullying

Harassing and bullying behaviour can include:

- Verbal aggression or yelling.
- Calling someone insulting names.
- Vandalizing personal belongings.
- Sabotaging someone's work.
- Spreading gossip or rumours.
- Engaging in hazing.
- Making threats or personal attacks based on someone's private life or personal characteristics.

Not every unpleasant interaction, instance of disrespectful behaviour, or workplace conflict is considered harassment or bullying. Examples of behaviours that (if communicated in an appropriate manner) are not harassment and bullying include:

- Expressing different opinions.
- Making a legitimate complaint about someone's conduct through approved processes.
- Being asked to perform job duties with reasonable workloads and deadlines.
- Being fired, laid-off, transferred, or having work or a role reorganized.
- Being given feedback or advice about work-related behaviour and performance.

Employers are responsible to identify and address any performance problems in a constructive, objective way that does not humiliate or intimidate workers.

What can workers do?

- Follow workplace harassment and bullying prevention policies and procedures.
- Don't participate in harassment or bullying.
- Don't be a bystander and provide aid to people being bullied or harassed.
- Report harassment and bullying to a trusted supervisor, manager, or other person at work.

If workers feel that they are being bullied, discriminated against, victimized, or subjected to any form of harassment:

- If they feel safe to do so, firmly tell the person that their behaviour is not acceptable and ask them to stop.
Do not retaliate. They can ask a person they trust, such as supervisor to be with them when they approach the person.
- Keep a record of facts. For example, document:
 - The date, time, and what happened in as much detail as possible.
 - The number of times it occurred.
 - The names of witnesses.
 - The outcome of the event.
- Keep copies of any texts, social media posts, emails, etc., received from the person.
- Report the harassment or bullying to the person identified in the workplace policy, their supervisor, or manager and develop a plan to keep them safe.
- If their reports are minimized, proceed to the next level of management.
- Work with management to come up with a plan to help them stay healthy and safe.
- Contact the police if they feel their personal safety is at risk.

To learn more about workplace harassment and bullying

- Talk with employers to see what programs and services they have (for example, worker and family assistance programs).
- The Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia has created a package of tools and resources to help prevent and address workplace harassment and bullying. Access the online toolkit at worksafeforlife.ca.



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