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What's Inside

This MyInfo sheet provides resources and tools for excluded employees in the BC public service who are dealing with bullying and harassment.

Some of the topics covered in this MyInfo Sheet include:

- What is bullying and harassment?
- Impacts of bullying and harassment
- How the BCEEAA can help
- Other resources on workplace bullying

Bullying and Harassment

What is Bullying and Harassment?

Bullying and harassment is repeated, persistent behaviour generally associated with a power imbalance between the victim and perpetrator. It includes any inappropriate conduct or comments that a person knows or reasonably ought to have known would be humiliating or intimidating, with or without conscious intent. Bullying and harassment usually includes behaviours that are habitual and occur repeatedly over time, with or without conscious intent. The behaviours can be written, verbal, physical, online, or electronic, a gesture or display, or any combination of these actions. Bullying and harassment can vary considerably, ranging from overt behaviours (e.g., raised voices) to subtle and hidden (e.g., occurs behind closed doors). Bullying is not always blatantly obvious or aggressive, but sometimes subtle and thus difficult to identify.

It does not include reasonable actions taken by a supervisor related to managing staff, a tough management style, or normal worker conflict. Everyone has the responsibility to contribute to a positive work environment and the right to work in an environment free from bullying and harassment.

The [Canadian Institute of Workplace Bullying Resources](#) suggests that bullying and harassment tends to fall into three categories.

Personal Attitude such as being rude or belligerent, non-verbally intimidating and hostile, and/or belittling, degrading, demeaning, subjecting the target to disparaging remarks and criticizing or dismissing their ideas in front of others. Other



examples include treating someone differently than other members of a team, making subtle or overtly disparaging remarks in private but not repeating these comments in front of others, repeatedly glaring, or rolling their eyes at one person when they speak; repeatedly ignoring one person and making someone the target of repeated gossip and innuendo.

Work Attitude such as withholding necessary information or purposely giving the wrong information necessary for achieving objectives; withholding work without a valid reason and/or removing areas of responsibility without cause; excessive monitoring and micromanagement; assigning unreasonable workload; withholding positive recognition or taking credit for someone else's work; unwarranted or invalid criticism about work and work performance; being excluded from regular meetings or social events (i.e. not being invited for coffee when others are included).

Managerial Attitude such as threatening the target with dismissal on fabricated charges or flimsy excuses, abusing the evaluation process by lying about the person's performance, and denying leave, especially compassionate leave.

Examples of Bullying

- Repeated, persistent behaviour including written, verbal, physical and on-line
- Personal attitudes such as rude, belligerent language, demeaning comments
- Work attitudes such as treating someone differently than others
- Managerial attitudes such as threatening dismissal without a reason

Please see the resources section for more information on bullying and harassment.

Impacts of Bullying and Harassment

Since the primary aim of bullying and harassment is to cause harm such as embarrassment, humiliation, degradation, diminishment, shame, silencing or isolation, the impacts can be wide-ranging. BCEEa members have reported that the impact of bullying and harassment can be devastating. Individuals often experience a range of emotions including, feelings of shame and/or confusion about their situation, an increased sense of vulnerability and fear in the workplace, lack of trust in their supervisor or other colleagues, loss of confidence, and inability to concentrate on work tasks. Individuals can also experience physical symptoms related to stress such as headaches, stomach aches, fatigue, inability to sleep, and feelings of anxiety about coming to work in the mornings.

Bullying can also spill over into longer term mental health challenges including depression and anxiety. There is often an impact on family and friends when the situation affects



personal life. Bullying and harassment also impacts the working environment, contributing to low staff morale, absenteeism, and staff turnover.

If you are unsure about whether you or a work colleague might be experiencing bullying and harassment, please contact the BCEEAA. We are a safe place and will listen to your description with compassion and understanding, and help you clarify what is occurring and what options you have for dealing with the situation. We're happy to help.

Preventing, Recognizing, and Addressing Workplace Bullying and Harassment

Prevent

We have found that a negative workplace environment can contribute to bullying and harassment and is often associated with a poor management style and/or a lack of manager presence in a division, branch, or unit. Supervisors are responsible for establishing a respectful workplace and for taking steps to prevent inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour. Ensuring clear communication about expected workplace behaviours and responsibilities outlined in the [BC Public Service Standards of Conduct](#); modelling appropriate behaviour; acknowledging employees' work and effort and respectfully providing constructive feedback; and addressing minor disrespectful behaviour to prevent the situation from becoming worse all contribute to a respectful workplace.

Recognize

Because bullying can potentially have a negative impact on both staff and organizations, it is important to recognize its potential signs in the workplace including:

- Declining work performance of dedicated and hard-working employees
- Increased stress and tension between staff in a unit
- Grievances by employees against their manager
- Poor morale or WES scores
- Increased absenteeism in a team.

[WorkSafe BC](#) provides additional guidance for recognizing workplace bullying and harassment:

Impacts of Bullying

- Feelings of shame, embarrassment, confusion, and fear
- Loss of self-confidence, lack of trust in supervisors and/or colleagues
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, sleeplessness
- Mental health impacts such as depression and anxiety.



Address

If you experience bullying, first consider whether it is possible to address the matter informally, which could include speaking to the other person directly if it feels safe to do so. If you are unsure about this approach, connect with your supervisor, another manager that you trust, or the BCEEAA. We can help you analyze your situation and come up with a plan of action.

Serious inappropriate behaviour that violates the Standards of Conduct should be dealt with through a formal process. More Information about informal and formal processes can be found on the [BCPSA](#) website.

As a supervisor, you are required to act when you become aware of or receive a complaint of bullying and harassment. You can start with an informal process, however, if you receive a formal complaint or become aware of suspected misconduct that may require disciplinary action, you must inform your supervisor and contact the BC Public Service Agency immediately for guidance.

Discrimination

BC's [Human Rights Code](#) protects us from negative treatment in the workplace on the basis of certain personal characteristics including sex, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age and religion. Bullying and harassment that target one or more of the protected characteristics may be found to be discriminatory under the Human Rights Code.

Employers have an obligation under human rights law to provide a safe workplace free of discrimination. If you experience discrimination at work, you can make a complaint to the BC Human Rights Tribunal. To learn more about human rights complaints, visit the website for the [BC Human Rights Tribunal](#).

How the BCEEAA Can Help

BCEEAA Advisors understand what you are going through because of their experience with other members in similar situations. We provide knowledgeable, confidential support. BCEEAA will help members to:

- Understand bullying and harassment and assess the situation

How We Help

- We understand what you are going through and provide knowledgeable, confidential support
- We can help you understand the situation, define your preferred outcomes, and develop a plan
- We can support you through a BCPSA workplace harassment process



- Define your preferred outcome and determine a realistic outcome
- Develop a strategic action plan, and provide coaching, feedback, and support for next steps.

If you decide to use the BCPSA's workplace harassment process, we will continue to provide support.

Resources on Workplace Bullying

[BC Public Service Agency](#)

The BCPSA provides information on employee rights, definitions, and how to address bullying and harassment. Resources on bullying and harassment can be found on the BCPSA website [here](#).

[Canadian Institute of Workplace Bullying Resources](#)

This organization provides prevention, early intervention, restorative and repair services, and resources for psychological safety in the workplace.

[Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](#)

This organization has resources on bullying and harassment including tips for the workplace, the impacts of bullying, and examples of bullying.

[The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada](#)

This site provides more information about the definitions of bullying and harassment as well as its impacts. It also includes actions employees can take.

[WorkSafe BC](#)

WorkSafe BC has an excellent list of resources including identifying bullying, and procedures for workers and employers.

