

YOUNG WORKERS FACT SHEET

BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE

WHAT IS WORKPLACE BULLYING?

Bullying is any behaviour that you find unwanted, inappropriate, aggressive or unreasonable.

Bullying can cause psychological injuries such as anxiety and depression, and can indirectly cause physical injuries.

Workplace bullying can happen to anyone – it can be from management to workers, but can also be from workers to management or between peers. It can happen to you at any time you are carrying out work-related activities.

Bullying can be carried out verbally, physically or in writing. Examples include:

- insults and constant criticism
- malicious rumours and gossip
- deliberate repeated exclusion from activities
- behaviour or language that frightens you.

Reasonable managerial actions, poor management practices and differences of opinion do not constitute bullying.

Bullying is different from harassment, which disadvantages victims on the basis of their status or beliefs, and does not necessarily put their health or safety at risk.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

- If you are able, tell the bully how their behaviour makes you feel. Often those doing the bullying are simply copying or repeating behaviour without really thinking about it. Sometimes asking a person to stop their behaviour can put an end to it.
- If the bullying doesn't stop, report it to a manager or safety committee representative. Check to see if your workplace has a policy to prevent, report and deal with bullying, and follow the procedures. By law, you cannot be fired for reporting bullying.
- Keep track of all the incidents that have occurred – including names, dates, witnesses and copies of any relevant documents – in a diary or logbook.
- If bullying continues and your employer cannot or does not help, you can report the behaviour to:
 - WorkCover NSW
 - Office of Industrial Relations
 - Anti-Discrimination Board
 - NSW Police
 - any other official government body or union.

Everyone in the workplace can help prevent bullying. If you see or hear bullying behaviour, report it both verbally and in writing.

If any bullying involves violence or the threat of violence, it is a criminal offence. Report it to the police.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

For general guidance, read the following WorkCover publications:

- *Preventing and dealing with workplace bullying* – fact sheet (no WC05379)
- *Being bullied* – brochure (no WC05321)
- *Preventing and dealing with workplace bullying* – guide (no WC04978)
- *Starting work? Know your legal rights* (no WC00915).

You employer should have risk assessments that address the risks of bullying at your workplace. If they do not have a written risk assessment, get them to contact WorkCover for guidance.

For specific advice, WorkCover can send an inspector or a business advisory officer to your workplace, free of charge. They can determine if the behaviour is a risk to health and safety, and assist your employer with preventing it or undertake enforcement action if appropriate.

You can contact WorkCover on **13 10 50** or through contact@workcover.nsw.gov.au. You can remain anonymous if you wish.

You can also get in touch with your occupational health and safety (OHS) or union representative; they can help you check your industrial award or workplace agreement.

Disclaimer

This publication may contain occupational health and safety and workers compensation information. It may include some of your obligations under the various legislations that WorkCover NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website (www.legislation.nsw.gov.au) or by contacting the free hotline service on 02 9321 3333.

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice. You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

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