

Bullying in the Workplace – Prevention is the Key

Jan Chappel, Sr. Technical Specialist

Ontario Healthy Workplace Coalition

March 12, 2013



Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety  Centre canadien d'hygiène et de sécurité au travail

www.ccohs-cchst.ca

Objectives

- Recognize the signs of bullying and why it happens
- Understand the effects on the people, and the organization
- Identify the roles of the employer, supervisor and employees in recognizing and preventing bullying
- Use tools to assist the victim, co-workers, supervisors, and the employer to recognize, assess, and control bullying in the workplace



Recognize Bullying



What is Bullying?

Bullying is usually seen as acts or verbal comments that could 'mentally' hurt or isolate a person in the workplace.

Bullying 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.



Workplace examples include:

- Excluding or isolating the target
- Spreading rumours or gossip
- Attacking a person's private life or attributes
- Excessive or unjustified criticism (insults, belittle, scold, yell, profanity, etc.)
- Trivial fault finding, overly critical
- Over-monitoring of work
- Withholding information, promotions, training
- Assigning demeaning tasks
- Setting unrealistic goals or deadlines
- Applying rules inconsistently
- Invading privacy, spying



Harassment (harcèlement)

“improper conduct by an individual, that is directed at and offensive to another individual in the workplace, including at any event or any location related to work, and **that the individual knew or ought reasonably to have known would cause offence or harm.**

It comprises objectionable act(s), comment(s) or display(s) that demean, belittle, or cause personal humiliation or embarrassment, and any act of intimidation or threat.

It also includes harassment within the meaning of the **Canadian Human Rights Act** (i.e. based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability and pardoned conviction).

Harassment is normally a series of incidents but can be one severe incident which has a lasting impact on the individual.”

Treasury Board Policy Suite, 2012. “Policy on Harassment Prevention and Resolution”



Legislation

Ontario

"workplace harassment" means engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome;

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT. R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1 (Ontario)



AN ACT RESPECTING LABOUR STANDARDS

R.S.Q. c. N-1.1 (Quebec)

81.18. For the purposes of this Act, "psychological harassment" means any vexatious behaviour in the form of repeated and hostile or unwanted conduct, verbal comments, actions or gestures, that affects an employee's dignity or psychological or physical integrity and that results in a harmful work environment for the employee.

A single serious incidence of such behaviour that has a lasting harmful effect on an employee may also constitute psychological harassment.

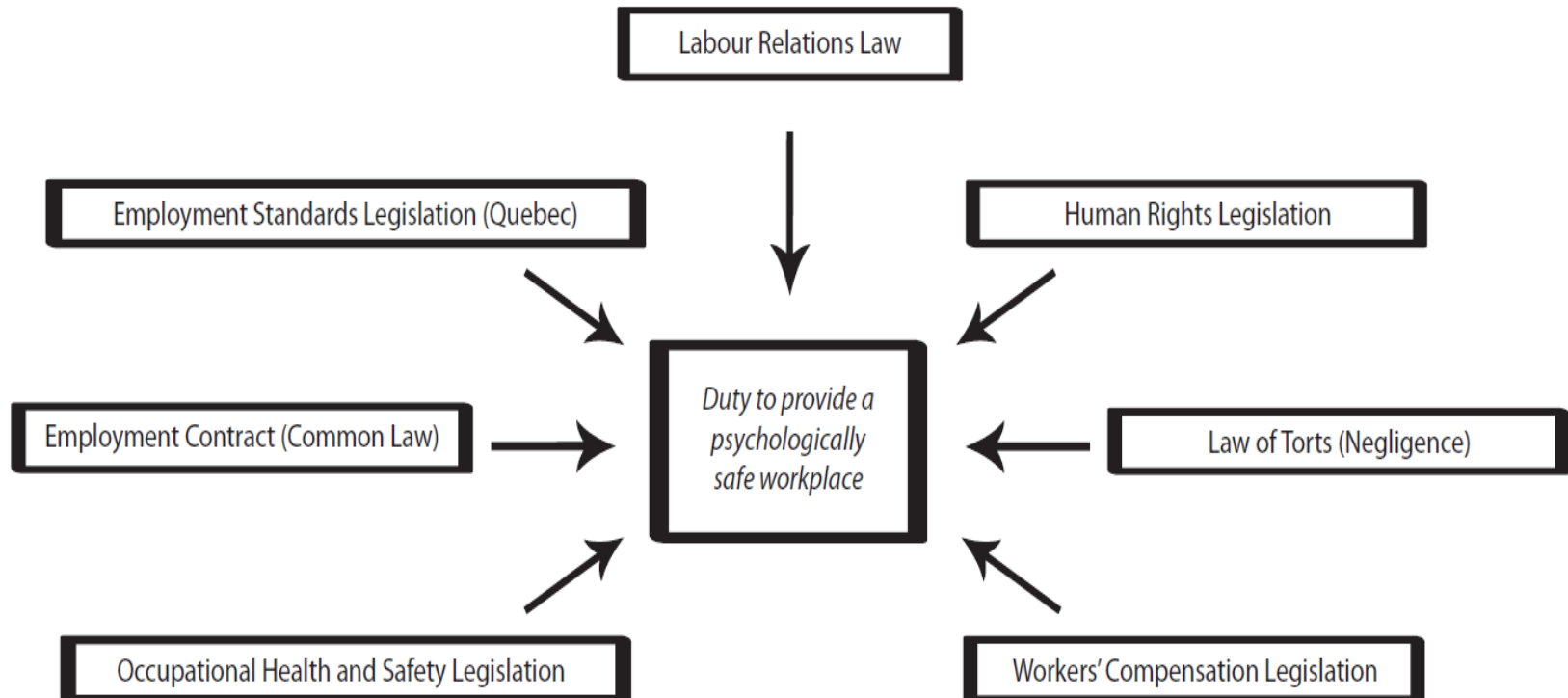
81.19. Every employee has a right to a work environment free from psychological harassment.

Employers must take reasonable action to prevent psychological harassment and, whenever they become aware of such behaviour, to put a stop to it.



Why is this important?

Figure 2: Legal Sources of Duty to Provide a Psychologically Safe Workplace



M. Shain (for the Mental Health Commission of Canada), 2010. "Tracking the Perfect Legal Storm"



CSA Z1003

Psychological health and safety in the workplace



CAN/CSA-Z1003-13/BNQ 9700-803/2013
National Standard of Canada

Psychological health and safety in the workplace —

Prevention, promotion, and guidance to staged implementation

Disponible en français
*Santé et sécurité psychologiques en milieu de travail —
Prévention, promotion et lignes directrices pour une mise en œuvre par étapes*



Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

Commissioned by the
Mental Health Commission of Canada



Above and Beyond

By: Samuel Dunsiger

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013

2013-01-10

TEXT SIZE  

The massive \$1.46 million in compensation awarded last October to a former WalMart employee in Windsor, Ontario has cast a spotlight on bullying and harassment in the workplace.

In September, Meredith Boucher from Chatham, Ontario, filed a lawsuit against WalMart Canada Corp. and Jason Pinnock, her former manager. Boucher alleged that she was forced to leave her position in November of 2009 after suffering mental abuse from Pinnock, who belittled and demeaned her job performance in front of employees she supervised and regularly spoke to her in a coarse and profane manner, notes the statement of claim.

OHS Canada Magazine, January/February 2013



Common Thread

Bullying 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.



Why Define and Recognize Bullying?

Certain acts may not be recognized as a type of violence (e.g., verbal abuse, constant criticism).

Bullying may precede physical violence.

A clear definition may encourage reporting.



Profile of the Bully

- Low self-esteem
- Poor communication skills
- Unresolved work issues from earlier in their career
- Never learned to accept responsibility for their behaviour
- Unable or unwilling to recognize the negative effect of their behaviour on others



Profile of the Target

- A capable, dedicated employee
- Well liked by co-workers
- Vulnerable (need the job, minority, under stress, or ill)

Often, the bully considers the target a threat because of that person's abilities.



The Bully

Bullies are often seen as “charmners” and may be well liked by their supervisors.

They often bully to cover up their own insecurities and weaknesses.



Polling Question

Who is usually the bully at a workplace?

- Manager / Supervisor
- Co-worker
- Client



Who is the bully?

Bullies can be managers, co-workers, or clients.

- ▶ 71 per cent of bullies have a higher rank than their targets
- ▶ 17 per cent of bullies are co-workers, peers or colleagues of their targets
- ▶ 12 per cent of bullies are ranked lower than their targets
- ▶ 58 per cent of bullies are women

Canadian study estimates that bullying in the workplace is **three to four times more common** than sexual harassment or racial discrimination.

Alberta Government, Learning Information Services, Viewed February 2013. "Bullies at Work"



Understanding the effects



Effects on the Target

Both physical and psychological:

- Shock, anger, frustration, helplessness
- Increased stress, anxiety, panic, tension
- Reduced concentration, confidence, morale, productivity
- Changes to sleep, appetite
- Aches/pains
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Effects on home/family



Effects on Organization

- High turnover, absenteeism, injury rates
- Increased EAP costs, WSIB/compensation, legal action
- Reduced productivity, efficiency, commitment, satisfaction, morale
- Decreased organizational image



Conflict vs. Bullying

There will be differences in opinion and sometimes conflicts at work.

However, behaviour that is unreasonable and offends or harms any person should not be tolerated.



Is my manager a bully?

There is a "fine line" between strong management and bullying.

Comments that are objective and are intended to provide constructive feedback are not usually considered bullying, but rather are intended to assist the employee with their work.



Tough management or bullying?

Managers may unknowingly encourage bullying by:

- Emphasizing a competitive work style
- Having a lax style (where employees must determine what is acceptable and what is not)
- Making unreasonable demands and goals
- Setting impossible deadlines or providing insufficient resources to accomplish a goal



“Reasonable Person” Test

If you are not sure an action or statement could be considered bullying, you can use the "reasonable person" test.

Would most people consider the action unacceptable?



Is bullying an issue in your workplace?

Signs and symptoms:

- Grievances by employees against their manager
- Declining work performance of dedicated and hard-working employees
- Increased stress and tensions between staff
- Poor morale
- Reported fear of a co-worker
- Increased absenteeism in a department or unit



Our Roles in Prevention



Employer

Implement a Bullying Prevention Policy and Program

- a statement from senior management endorsing the policy
- define what constitutes unacceptable behaviour
- a statement about who is responsible for action about the bullying
- information about how individuals can raise their concerns
- information about sources of support
- the procedures that the organization will follow for both the target and alleged bully
- information about the potential outcomes

Health and Safety Executive (UK), Viewed February 2013. "Bullying/Advice for Organisations"



Culture of No-Tolerance

- Accept that bullying can occur
- Understand what it is and what the consequences can be
- Consult and discuss with all staff during creation of program
- Create a policy/program, support it
- Train managers/supervisors how to implement it fairly
- Train all staff on their roles
- Promote and enforce the policy



Health and Safety Executive (UK), Viewed February 2013. "Bullying/Advice for Organisations"



Manager / Supervisor

- Follow policy/program
- Be sensitive, objective
- Be fair, equal
- Identify a way forward



How?

- Attend training and education sessions (self, staff)
- Take all complaints seriously
- Investigate complaints promptly and thoroughly
- Use fair and equal management practices
- Bully, target, and co-workers all receive counselling, support



Co-Workers

- Listen
- Provide support
- Encourage the target to report
- Offer to be witness or attend when the target makes a report



If I am being bullied

- Learn about bullying
- Don't ignore the behaviour
- Speak up
- Get help and support from others
- Document every incident
- Report it



CCOHS (2012), "Violence in the Workplace Prevention Guide"



Not sure ...

Check your job description.

Try to get witnesses to the bullying incidents.

Avoid situations where you are alone with the bully.

... **Walk away**

- “Excuse me, I have a meeting now.”
- “Let’s talk about this later. I have to do ___ now.”
- “I don’t agree, but I’m sure we can talk about this in the meeting.”



Documentation

KEEP a factual journal or diary of daily events

- ▶ The date, time and what happened in as much detail as possible.
- ▶ The names of witnesses.
- ▶ The outcome of the event.

KEEP copies of any letters, memos, e-mails, faxes, etc., received from the person.

CCOHS (2012), "Violence in the Workplace Prevention Guide"



Report it

REPORT the harassment to the person identified in your workplace policy, your supervisor, or a delegated manager.

If your concerns are minimized, proceed to the next level of management.



ONLY if you feel comfortable and safe...

- ▶ **FIRMLY** tell the person that his or 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.

- ▶ **DO NOT RETALIATE.**

CCOHS (2012), "Violence in the Workplace Prevention Guide"



Use tools to recognize, assess, and control bullying



Policy and Program

The Occupational Health and Safety Act (Ontario)

- Develop a policy and program
- Develop measures and procedures for reporting incidents
- Outline how the employer will investigate and deal with complaints
- Provide information and instruction to a worker on the policy and program

Work with your existing health and safety committee, human resources, union, etc.



Table 5: Actions employers should take to prevent and respond to bullying incidents

Prevention	Responding to incidents
Consult with workers and safety and representatives	Develop a response plan
Develop a prevention plan and policy	Develop complaint handling and investigation procedures
Manage the hazard	Where possible provide contact and grievance officers
Provide information and training	Ensure the rights of persons accused of bullying are respected
Monitor effectiveness of action taken	Deal with unresolved issues

Government of Western Australia, 2010. "Code of Practice: Violence, Aggression and Bullying at Work"



1. Identify the Hazard

Take steps to address organizational factors

Focus on:

- Talk to people, survey
- Systems or organization of work
- Monitor patterns, feedback, absenteeism/leaves, reports, grievances, exit interviews



Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA), 2010. "Bullying in the Workplace"



2. Assess the Risk Factors

Look for:

- ▶ Repeated or unjustified criticism that targets an individual (rather than work performance)
- ▶ Threats of punishment for no justifiable reason
- ▶ Overloading of a particular person
- ▶ Humiliation of a person through criticism, sarcasm, or insults



3. Controlling Risk Factors

- ▶ Define bullying as psychological abuse that is not acceptable
- ▶ Establish the consequences of inappropriate behaviour
- ▶ Develop a(n):
 - workplace bullying policy
 - complaint resolution process
 - formal investigation procedure
 - educational program



4. Evaluate / Review

Ongoing evaluation and review will help make sure that

- strategies are implemented
- strategies are effective



Pro-Active Steps for Organizations

- Encourage a more collaborative, less domineering management style
- Encourage control and choice for staff, as far as possible
- Publicize your bullying policy and program
- Offer training to all staff on awareness, program
- Explain the consequences of bullying



Health and Safety Executive (UK), Viewed February 2013. "Bullying/Advice for Organisations"



Pro-active steps, continued

- Evaluate
 - management styles – e.g., competition between individuals and teams
 - incentives to achieving high performance
- Learn how to be proactive when managing poor performance
- Consult staff regularly and keep them informed during times of change
- Ensure managers have sufficient support to help them implement the policy

Health and Safety Executive (UK), Viewed February 2013. "Bullying/Advice for Organisations"



Education

- Organization's policies and procedures
- Information on bullying, including definitions, legislation, effects, etc.
- Signs of bullying
- How to report bullying
- Conflict resolution, communications skills, etc.
- How to confront unacceptable behaviour
- How and where to get support
- Importance of documentation



Complaint Resolution Process

- ▶ Try to work out solutions before the situation gets serious or "out of control"
- ▶ Treat all complaints seriously, and deal with complaints promptly and confidentially
- ▶ Train supervisors and managers
 - Encourage addressing situations promptly whether or not a formal complaint has been filed
- ▶ Have an impartial third party help with the resolution, if necessary



Informal

An informal approach does not involve an investigation or disciplinary action.

The focus is to return both individuals to productive work.

May be handled by a manager or other person if they have the skills and it is appropriate for them to do so.



Approach

Determine the nature and the severity of the problem.

Actions could include:

- Asking bully to stop
- Organize work in alternate ways
- Support both parties and work towards a clear solution
- Arrange follow-up steps



Conflict Resolution

- Encourage constructive resolution
- Clarify exactly what the issue is
- Find common ground
- Treat everyone with respect and professionalism
- Learn how to listen effectively
- Move from justification to resolution
- Set clear boundaries

CCOHS, 2008. "Workplace Health and Wellness Guide"



Conflict Resolution, con't.

Understand that for most situations, there is an objective (factual) version of events, and a subjective (personal) view.

Do NOT

- Do not blame anyone. Look for opportunities to resolve the situations.



Formal

Outline clearly what will happen:

- Formally making the complaint (e.g., in writing; with dates, times, events)
- Initial response
- Appointment of investigator
- Conduct the investigation
- Findings
- Appeal
- Access to counselling, professional help
- Review



Steps for Individuals

1. Seek support from friend, co-worker, trusted manager, or other person.
2. Check your job description.
3. Keep a detailed record.
4. Try to get witnesses to the bullying incidents.
5. Avoid situations where you are alone with the bully.



Steps for Individuals, con't.

6. Get advice from your union, human resources, a manager, or health and safety officers at work.
7. Get emotional support from your family and friends, physician, counsellor, EAP
8. If you proceed with a complaint, state the facts clearly.



What do you think?

Your supervisor requests a report by the end of the day, today. This work usually takes at least 3 days to prepare properly.

Is this an example of bullying?

- Yes
- No
- It depends



What would you do?

Cathy has to provide negative feedback to a co-worker who is known to accept criticism poorly. The co-worker often responds by arguing and yelling.

What steps can Cathy take to prevent this event from escalating?



If you are being bullied...

Please know two things:

- ▶ You are not alone
- ▶ You did not cause the bullying to happen

Both you and your workplace can take steps to work towards recognition and prevention.



Thank You

For further information:

1-800-668-4284

905-570-8094

Jan.Chappel@ccohs.ca

www.ccohs.ca

CCOHS

Canadian Centre
for Occupational
Health and Safety



CCHST

Centre canadien
d'hygiène et de
sécurité au travail

135 Hunter Street East

Canada

135 rue Hunter est

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada