

Taking On the Bully at Work



BULLY

WHAT IS A BULLY?

A person or group of persons who engage in repeated, unreasonable actions intended to intimidate, embarrass, frighten, and/or demean an employee or group of employees.

These actions may be direct, indirect or even cyber – using text, email, and social media. Bullying isn't an isolated, aggressive incident. It is an on-going pattern of behaviors that can escalate but are often repeated patterns of humiliation.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A BULLY

The person in charge is not always the bully, although power can be a component where the bully misuses his/her authority.

Many in pseudo-power positions can be bullies – leads, charges, project coordinators. Often times it's a senior employee who feels 'owed' in some way and exhibits this by bullying those who he/she perceives as 'privileged'.

Bullies frequently have very low self-esteem, little emotional intelligence and lack empathy. They can be perceived as arrogant, condescending, and unfeeling.

THE "COST" OF BULLYING

Impacts to the target include:

- **High Stress levels**
(leading to phobias, sleep disturbances, digestive problems, and hypertension)
- **Reduced Self-Esteem**
(feelings of helplessness, self-blame, isolation and depression)
- **Frequent absences**
(leading to decreased accrued benefits, potential loss of income, potential corrective action)

Impacts to the organization and colleagues include:

- Loss of morale for the work group
- Increased absences of non-targeted individuals
- Increased corrective or disciplinary actions
- Loss of productivity – due to time spent investigating or 'coping'
- Increased attrition, turnover, transfers, resignations

BULLY BEHAVIORS & ACTIONS

Gossiping ▪ Isolation ▪ Ignoring
Sabotaging another's work
Targeting for various types of jokes
Hoarding the good projects

Other examples of bullying behavior/actions:

LET'S TALK STATISTICS

37% of workers have been the target of bullying in the work place.

12% have witnessed bullying behavior

More than half of the US work force has been impacted by bullying in the work place.

62% of workplace bully incidents go un-reported

(2007 poll Ronald E. Riggion PhD. Cutting Edge Leadership)

What's the difference between Bullying and Supervising?

A tough or demanding boss may not be a bully as long as their goal is to improve the performance of the employee by setting high standards. It isn't bullying to expect you to comply with company rules, policies and your contract as long as all of these things are reasonable, attainable, negotiated and communicated prior to your being held to them. A bully will change the rules arbitrarily, reset the policies without communicating and ignore the contract.

Steward's should carefully assess if the member is getting supervised or getting bullied. Is the boss/bully treating the member differently than others? Is the member being held to a different set of rules or standards?

What's the difference between Bullying and Harassment?

Harassment is a legal term that describes behaviors and/or actions that threaten an employee or colleague based on their protected class. Protected Classes include: Age, Race, Gender, National Origin, Marital Status, Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation, Disability, HIV Status, Military Status; even the use of Guide Dogs is protected.

Work place actions or behaviors that impact one or more of the protected classes and involve a material change to someone's working conditions is harassment and/or discrimination.

Stewards should seek help from the Union Representative in discerning the difference. While the Union can certainly help, those who are being actively discriminated against have other, more effective avenues to pursue including the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Civil Rights Complaints, L & I, as well as potential civil suits.

THE INCIDENT BREAKDOWN

58% Bullies are Women

42% Bullies are Men

80% Women are Targets

20% Men are Targets

50% Women Bully Women

30% Men Bully Women

12% Men Bully Men

8% Women Bully Men

(By Fary Namie, PhD and Ruth Namie, Phd, Workplace Bullying & Trauma Institute, WBTI)

COUNTER-MEASURES OR ANTI-BULLY STRATEGIES

Use Your Contract

LMC, Conference Committees, Grievance Safety/Staffing Committees, and Negotiations.

Stand in Solidarity with the Target

Be present when the bully gets started, work in pairs if possible. Have a 'code word' when help or a show of force is needed.

Petitions/Vote of No Confidence

Show you're all in this together.

Strategic Assignments

Move the target away from the bully, have the Steward everywhere the bully goes.

Member Education

Share this training!

March on the Boss

Go report the behavior together.

Chain of Command

Use it, if there's no action elevate the concerns to the next in charge.

Report Behavior

Ethics Committee, EEOC, Civil Rights, Dr's Board, Board of Regents/officers of the Hospital.

Screen Social Media Carefully

Get screen shots of texts and posts, restrict the bully's access, save emails.

Document

- ✓ Make a record of the incident, get witness statements, keep a journal, open a running dialog with Steward and/or other targets, send letters to managers and HR (if no action then elevate it).
- ✓ Keep a documented history of the behaviors over time. Create a timeline for ease of recording and sharing the history.
- ✓ Gather copies of policy, guidelines, memos, and/or directives in effect at the time

Document the Bully

- ✓ Seek to clarify and understand as a means to document statements, times, events.
- ✓ Have others, such as witnesses, also document the behavior and statements to ask for clarification.
- ✓ Give the bully choices and mention the consequences of continuing the behavior – ask the bully to stop!
- ✓ Use mirror documentation – to hold the mirror up to the bully.
- ✓ Hold on to copies of documents and policies that contradict the bully's accusations.
- ✓ Be precise, detailed and consistent in your portrayal.
- ✓ Be the best at what you do and how you do it; give the bully no ammunition!



ACTION PLAN

DEALING WITH THE WORKPLACE BULLY

Talk to your Union Rep. or Steward first & define the situation (Is it bullying/harassment/supervising?):

Anticipation of next confrontation (Check Schedules) _____

What have I/we done to record or journal the events in real time? _____

What can I/we do to document the bully? _____

What are three countermeasures I/we can start using immediately to stop the bullying?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Who can help me/us in this situation? (Make a list) _____

Co-worker witnesses who I will approach when I/we are being bullied? _____

Who in management should I/we notify when bullying occurs? _____

Who do I have as part of a support group? _____

Date of my doctor's appointment to discuss the symptoms I am having as a result of the bullying: _____

Date of my counseling appointment to discuss the impact of bullying: _____

If I believe I am a victim of illegal harassment, when will I meet with an attorney or agency to discuss legal impacts and strategies? _____

What other agency or resource should I contact? _____

RESOURCES:

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Washington Field Office

1-800-669-4000

www.eeoc.gov/field/washington/index.cfm

Washington State Human Rights Commission

1-800-233-3247

www.hum.wa.gov

NAACP

(find your chapter)

www.naacpaowsac.org

Washington State Labor and Industries

(360) 902-5800 Switchboard

Web site contains more specific and often toll free numbers. www.lni.wa.gov

The Workplace Bullying Institute

(360) 656-6630 www.bullyinginstitute.org

“The No Asshole Rule: Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One That Isn’t”

By Robert Sutton, Stanford University (2008)

Washington Employment Lawyers Association

www.welaweb.org

“Bullies: From Playground to the Boardroom: Strategies for Survival”

By Jane Middleton-Moz and Mary Lee Zawadski (2002)

UFCW 21

1-800-732-1188

For further help and information, contact your Union Representative.

