

Workplace Cyberbullying Policy



Introduction: How to Use This Tool

Workplace bullying is an old problem with a new face. In the internet age, bullying has become more pervasive and more virulent—all it requires is a cell phone and a vendetta. Like old-fashioned bullying, workplace cyberbullying inflicts mental distress and harms business in the form of higher absenteeism and diminished productivity. Failing to protect employees from being cyberbullied also exposes your organization to liability risks under OHS, human rights and other laws.

What does it take to stamp out workplace cyberbullying? The starting point is to implement a clear policy. A cyberbullying policy can be combined with your existing workplace bullying policy or implemented as a stand-alone supplement. Although there's no such thing as one-size-fits all, the Model Policy below is a good starting point for adaptation because it includes the basic elements you need.

WORKPLACE CYBERBULLYING POLICY

PURPOSE: Management of ABC Company is committed to ensuring that all employees are treated with dignity, civility and respect in the workplace. Bullying behaviour is not compatible with this commitment and will not be tolerated in any form. ABC Company has already adopted a general policy banning bullying in the workplace. The purpose of this Policy is to supplement the existing policy by addressing a specific form of bullying called cyberbullying.

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING: In general, bullying is behaviour that harms, intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates another person, whether committed by a manager, supervisor or employee, including but not limited to:

- > Persistent and excessive criticism of employees or their work without justification;
- > Spreading malicious rumours;
- > Belittling an employee's opinions;

- > Spying, stalking or otherwise violating an employee's privacy;
- > Tampering with an employee's desk, workspace or belongings; > Deliberately excluding or ignoring an employee;
- > Deliberately undermining or sabotaging an employee's work or chances to succeed;
- > Verbal abuse, such as yelling, making threats and name-calling; and
- > Physical abuse or aggressive behaviour, such as pushing, hitting, spitting, finger pointing or aggressively invading an employee's space.

Workplace Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that relies on the use of e-mail, the internet and other electronic means of communication. Common examples:

- Sending nasty, hostile or threatening emails, texts or other electronic messages directly to the victim;
- Cyberstalking, sexting or repeatedly sending the victim text or email messages to the point of harassment;
- Saying derogatory things about the victim on blogs, chat boards and other social media sites;
- Starting rumours or spreading gossip online;
- Impersonating the victim online, e.g., via creating a fake online profile;
- Stealing the victim's password and logging into his/her accounts;
- Signing up the victim to instant message marketing lists from pornography sites or junk mailers;
- Posting embarrassing photos or videos of victims without their consent.

WHAT IS NOT BULLYING: Bullying does not include, and this Policy is not designed to prevent managers, supervisors and others in authority to exercise their legitimate management functions, such as by:

- Ordering employees to carry out assignments;
- Constructively criticizing employees for poor performance; and
- Discipline for poor performance, violations of ABC Company policies or other legitimate grounds.

REPORTING CYBERBULLYING: ABC Company has established the following procedures for employees to use to report incidents of workplace cyberbullying directed against them or that they witness. [*Describe your reporting procedures*]. No employee will suffer reprisal in any form for reporting cyberbullying.

INVESTIGATION & RESOLUTION OF COMPLAINTS: ABC Company has established the following procedures for investigating and resolving complaints about cyberbullying. [*Describe your complaint resolution procedures*.]

DISCIPLINE FOR INFRACTIONS: ABC Company follows a zero tolerance policy with regard to workplace cyberbullying. So any violations that occur will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination, at ABC Company's discretion.