

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY AND RELATED PROCEDURES

WHY DO PERSONS CONDUCTING A BUSINESS OR UNDERTAKING (PCBUS) NEED A BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES?

Bullying behaviour may sometimes be obvious – eg yelling, aggressive body language or social exclusion. Other instances of bullying may be less obvious – eg gossiping, malicious text messages and emails.

A workplace bullying prevention policy and procedures will ensure that workers are aware of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, and the risks associated with bullying. A policy and procedures will also outline how to prevent and respond to bullying in the workplace.

Workplace policies and procedures also specify the appropriate bullying control measures as a sequence of steps. Most effective when developed in consultation with workers, a workplace policy and procedure are useful tools for training and supervising workers and for responding to incident reports and changes in the workplace.

Where the red zone is ticked...

Workers are unlikely to have documented instructions to help them identify and respond to bullying behaviour in the workplace.

Ticks in the **red** zone indicate that action needs to be taken immediately to identify the behaviours workers may be exposed to while in the workplace. Develop procedures to address bullying incidents.

Preventing and responding to bullying in the workplace.

Develop a workplace policy and procedures for preventing and responding to bullying.

Workers should be included in the identification and control of workplace bullying. Consideration should be given to the likely consequences of bullying, if it's not managed.

Priority action should be taken in the areas where the greatest risks are identified. These are usually in areas where the most serious consequences are likely.

Workplace health and safety legislation requires that foreseeable hazards are identified and the risks arising from these hazards are eliminated entirely – or controlled.

Develop a bullying prevention policy and procedures.

Develop a policy and procedures for preventing and responding to bullying as follows:

- workers are more likely to follow a policy and procedures if they're involved in their development. Involve workers who have knowledge in the prevention of workplace bullying.
- with worker involvement, identify the elements of bullying associated with the workplace. The workplace's culture should be taken into account – are there increased risks of bullying in certain areas of the organisation? Are workers aware of bullying behaviours?
- once bullying behaviours and their associated risks have been identified, a decision on how to eliminate or minimise them should be made. Consideration should be given to the most effective way of minimising risks. Information, supervision and training can be used as effective means of bullying prevention.
- a bullying prevention policy and procedures, along with a complaint handling procedure, should be developed. These should be easy to understand and easy for workers to follow.
- the draft policy and procedures, along with the complaint handling procedure, should be distributed to workers for review. Consultation should involve workers who have knowledge in bullying prevention.

A bullying prevention policy and procedures, along with a complaint handling procedures, should be implemented through training.

- Proper implementation of a bullying prevention policy and complaint handling procedures involves training and supervision. Workers must be trained to identify bullying behaviours and how to respond to incidents. Simply reading the documented policy and associated procedures is not enough. The organisation must ensure that the policy and procedures are followed at all times. Workers and managers not following the policy and procedures should be disciplined.

Review of procedures.

- A review of workplace policy and associated procedures should be done when there is a change or impending change in the workplace or after a report of bullying is made. As a general rule, a periodic review of all workplace policies and associated procedures should be done to ensure they are current and effective. Workers should be involved in this review.

Where the orange zone is ticked...

The PCBU is on the right track, but there needs to be more done to address the risks of bullying.

Ticks in the **orange** zone indicate that there has been a start on addressing the risks associated with bullying, but the organisation needs to look more closely at the policy and procedures to make the workplace safe from bullying behaviour. There may be a need for the following action.

If the PCBU has not already begun documenting bullying prevention procedures, refer to the red zone section for advice on how it should be undertaken.

Review bullying issues in the workplace

Has there been a thorough discussion with workers to identify inappropriate behaviours that have been overlooked? Perhaps there are risks associated with:

- workforce characteristics – eg apprentices, new employees, rostering
- lack of appropriate work systems – eg poor role definition, lack of support systems
- poor workplace relationships – eg interpersonal conflict, workers excluded
- negative leadership styles – eg autocratic.

Workers should be involved in identifying the risks associated with bullying in the workplace. Development and implementation of an improved bullying prevention policy and complaint handling procedures with associated training should be provided to all workers. Consult workers throughout the development phase.

Planning approaches to prevent workplace bullying.

Sometimes, business pressures or uncertainty about what to do next may stall the development and implementation of a bullying prevention policy and associated procedures.

The PCBU needs to ask:

- have bullying risk factors been identified and addressed in the course of developing the workplace bullying prevention policy and associated procedures?
- are workers involved in developing bullying prevention procedures?
- have workers been trained in the bullying prevention policy and associated procedures?
- are investigations into bullying allegations carried out in a timely and transparent manner according to agreed procedures?
- have timeframes been included in procedures for investigating complaints?

The process should be planned carefully so that the organisation is able to develop the bullying prevention policy and associated procedures gradually within the constraints of other business demands. A good plan helps overcome time and resource limitations.

Involvement of workers.

Consultation should be undertaken with workers throughout all the stages of developing bullying policies and complaint handling procedures in the workplace – it will ensure that the procedures are comprehensive, accurate and useful.

Workers should be involved in identifying and assessing the risks of workplace bullying, the development of suitable measures to control the risks, and the documenting and reviewing of the bullying prevention policy and procedures.

Ensure procedures are up-to-date.

If workers are not always following the workplace bullying prevention policy and procedures, the policy and procedures should be reviewed to ensure that they provide appropriate safeguards and that they reflect current work processes. The organisation should ensure that the procedures consider the different workplace circumstances in which bullying may occur.

If the procedures appear up-to-date and appropriate, is the lack of adherence to the policy/procedures related to lack of training or supervision? Are workers adequately supervised according to the policy and procedures? Do employers and supervisors always follow the bullying prevention policy and associated procedures?

For further information on training and supervision, see Advice Sheet 4 – Training and Supervision.

Where the green zone is ticked...

Workers understand and adopt appropriate workplace behaviour outlined in the bullying prevention policy and procedures.

Ticks in the **green** zone indicate that the PCBU effectively manages bullying risks in the workplace through a bullying prevention policy and complaint handling procedures. PCBUs should be aware, however, that changes in the workplace and work processes can render the policy and procedures ineffective. A regular review will ensure that these measures will continue to reflect the workplace's conditions.

The PCBU should determine if any changes have occurred since the last review that could make the workplace less safe. A review of the effectiveness of the bullying prevention training and workplace supervision should also be undertaken regularly.

Regularly discuss bullying matters with vulnerable workers, including young people, people with disabilities and those with language difficulties, so that they understand the policy and the associated procedures and use them effectively. Ensure they are properly represented during consultations that addresses bullying issues and related matters.

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Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website www.legislation.nsw.gov.au

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