
BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

POLICY STATEMENT:

HR Staff n Stuff will make every effort to provide a work environment free from all forms of harassment or intimidation including sexual harassment. It is illegal and against the policies of HR Staff n Stuff for any employee to make any unwelcome sexual advances, request sexual favours, engage in verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature and/or demonstrate any harassing conduct that creates an intimidating work environment for any person in the company. This policy applies to the actions of supervisors, managers, co-workers, customers, outsiders and any other person who comes in contact with employees from HR Staff n Stuff.

Harassment & bullying may take many forms. Bullying has the effect of intimidation, offence or humiliation. Repeated behaviour that may constitute bullying includes offensive language, overpowering communication, putting down techniques, retaining knowledge that should be shared or regularly calling into question another person's abilities. No form of harassment, victimization, bullying or gaslighting, for any reason, is acceptable behaviour at HR Staff n Stuff. All inappropriate commentary or harassment related to a person's marital status, disability, age, race, sex, sexuality or pregnancy is discriminatory and will not be tolerated.

HR Staff n Stuff recognises that the question of whether a particular action, incident or general course of action is harassment or simply a socially acceptable action is sometimes a difficult factual determination. HR Staff n Stuff also recognises that any and all such events will demand a prompt, complete and unbiased investigation that protects the rights of the complaining employee(s) and the alleged harasser(s).

Normal management activity such as discussing an employee's performance or behaviour, implementing corrective or disciplinary action or providing constructive feedback is not considered bullying or harassment unless these actions or feedback is unwarranted

HR Staff n Stuff will not tolerate harassment, nor will it tolerate reprisals against any employee who makes a harassment complaint. All employees who violate this policy are subject to disciplinary action.

PROCEDURES:

1. What is Harassment?

Harassment is any behaviour directed towards an individual that is neither sought nor welcomed. Harassment may offend, upset, humiliate or scare another person. It makes the workplace uncomfortable and unpleasant.

Harassment in the workplace can take many forms.

a. Some forms of verbal harassment are:

- Sexual or suggestive remarks
- Making fun of someone
- Imitating someone's accent
- Propositions (sexual invitations)
- Spreading rumours
- Obscene telephone calls/ unsolicited letters, faxes or email messages
- Repeated unwelcome invitations
- Offensive jokes
- Repeated questions about your personal life
- The use of language that is not suitable in the workplace
- Name calling
- Gaslighting * (see below for further information)

b. Some forms of non-verbal harassment:

- Putting sexually suggestive, offensive or degrading/insulting material on walls, computer screen savers, email and so on
- Suggestive looks or leers
- Unwelcome practical jokes
- Displaying or circulating racist / sexist cartoons or literature
- Mimicking someone with a disability
- Being followed home from work
- Ignoring someone or being particularly cold or distant with them
- Not sharing information
- Offensive hand or body gestures
- Unnecessarily leaning over someone
- Sending offensive material through computer, fax or email
- Continually ignoring or dismissing someone's contribution in a meeting/discussion
- Wolf-whistling

c. Some forms of physical harassment:

- Unnecessary physical contact (e.g. pinching, patting, brushing up against a person, touching, kissing, hugging against a person's will)
- Indecent or sexual assault or attempted assault
- Pushing, shoving or jostling
- Taking away a person's physical possessions
- Blocking a person from going somewhere

2. What is Bullying

Workplace Bullying is defined as repeated unreasonable behaviour by an individual towards a worker which creates a risk to health and safety.

Bullying behaviour can range from obvious verbal or physical assault to subtle psychological abuse. It can include physical or verbal abuse, and can take many forms:

- yelling, screaming or offensive language
- excluding or isolating employees
- psychological harassment including 'picking on' and making the person the ongoing butt of 'jokes'
- intimidation
- assigning meaningless tasks unrelated to the job
- giving employees impossible jobs
- deliberately changing work rosters to inconvenience particular employees
- undermining work performance by deliberately withholding information vital for effective work performance.
- Sabotaging someone's work performance by providing inappropriate or inaccurate advice or information
- Gaslighting * (see below for further information)

3. What is Victimisation?

Victimisation means subjecting or threatening to subject a person to some form of detriment because they have:

- lodged, or is proposing to lodge, a complaint of discrimination or harassment
- provided information or documents to an internal investigation or an external agency
- attended a conciliation conference
- reasonably asserted their rights, or supported someone else's rights, under federal anti-discrimination laws
- made an allegation that a person has acted unlawfully under federal anti-discrimination laws.

4. Addressing Harassing, Bullying and Victimisation Behaviour

Employees who believe they are being harassed or bullied are requested to follow the instructions below:

- Politely but firmly confront the harasser and ask him or her to stop. State how you feel about the actions and explain how you feel intimidated or harassed by these actions. If practical, have a witness present.
- Be specific about the exact behaviour you want stopped.
- Any employees who are uncomfortable with a face-to-face discussion with their harassers may write their complaints in a letter or memo. One copy should be retained by the employee.
- Employees who choose to express their complaints verbally, should document what they have said and the responses made by the alleged harasser, and note the time and date of the discussion.
- If the harassment does not stop, employees should immediately notify the Director. In situations where an employee feels that he or she is unable to address the concern with the Director the external HR Representative should be notified.

- All complaints will be handled in a timely and confidential manner. In no event will information concerning any employee's complaint be released by HR Staff n Stuff to any third person or to anyone within HR Staff n Stuff who is not involved in the investigation.

The purpose of this provision is to maintain impartiality and confidentiality. Both the complaining individual and the accused harasser have equal privacy rights under the law.

Any retaliation against any person who complains about harassment will be considered an act of Victimisation and is illegal.

5. What is Gaslighting?

Gaslighting is a highly covert form of bully behaviour. Whilst we usually believe bullies to be obvious in their behaviour with repeated and sustained attacks on their victim in which humiliation is often an end goal, those engaging in gaslighting will be far more subtle. They plant doubt by making a victim question their own reality. Gaslighting is intentional; a systematic process that uses lying and false information to make the victim doubt themselves, their capabilities, their instincts, and their own sense of reality.

There are definite signs of gaslighting you should be aware of. It is important to recognise these and understand that the behaviour usually happens gradually over time. These behaviours can include:

- Take credit for your work
- Ridicule you in front of other employees
- Make subtle but pointed remarks designed to make you uncomfortable
- Pretend not to understand you
- Falsify evaluation
- Micromanage every aspect of your work
- Blame everything on you
- Question your memory
- Cancel scheduled events and don't tell you
- Spread lies and deny doing so if confronted
- Tell half truths aimed at undermining you
- Provide you with inaccurate information that sabotages your work performance including the way you provide advice to clients

6. Addressing Gaslighting Behaviour

You need to know something's wrong in order to fix it. Before you can document evidence of gaslighting, you need to be aware of exactly what's happening.

Gaslighting only works when a victim isn't aware of what's going on. Once you become alert to the pattern, it will likely not affect you as much. That's not to say you ignore the issue, but it does allow you to understand that you are dealing with an insecure person who needs to feel superior in order to function. In other words, you are in no way to blame; you are right and they are wrong.

You can pre-empt some of the practices gas lighters use. For instance:

- when they tell you the date and time of an important meeting, confirm that information by email. Copy the entire group or meeting organiser in order to force the gaslighter to make their position public.

- When you have ideas on a project, offer them in writing so you are seen as the originator and given credit.
- Meet regularly meet with a senior manager at HR Staff n Stuff (who is someone other than the offender) to update them on the projects you're working on.
- Have a witness present with you in every interaction you have with the gaslighter and never be alone with the gaslighter.
- Document exactly what goes on, especially in instances where you are being given incorrect information
- Record the information on a private device that you own, not on a business phone or tablet, which will be confiscated in the event you are terminated or quit.
- Report the gaslighting behavior to an appropriate manager. Due to the covert nature of gaslighting they may not be able to do much to begin with, but the behavior will be on their radar and they will then be able to look for gaslighting activities and address them accordingly when they are observed.
- If the gaslighting behavior continues, make a formal complaint of bullying.

7. Investigating Claims of Bullying or Harassment

All investigations into bullying or harassment will follow these guidelines:

- a. The complainant will be asked for specifics about what happened, where it happened, when it happened and why.
- b. Co-workers can often be questioned, as they themselves may often be victims or may have witnessed the harassment.
- c. The accused harasser will be questioned. He or she will be informed of who is complaining and be warned not to retaliate nor to discuss the matter with the complainant.
- d. In some cases HR Staff n Stuff may elect to engage an external party to conduct the investigation.
- e. All managers and employees are expected to participate openly, fully and honestly in any investigation.

8. Corrective Action

- a. After all the circumstances of the complaint, including responses of the alleged perpetrator and witnesses, have been documented in detail, a determination will be made as to whether or not harassment has occurred.
- b. The complainant and other directly involved persons will be served notice of the company's findings and decision in the matter.

- c. Prompt corrective action, if warranted, will follow immediately. This may include discipline or termination of the perpetrator and/or the complainant in the case that a falsified complaint or contributory behaviour was discovered.
- d. Whenever any disciplinary action is taken against an accused harasser, the victim will be informed only that "corrective action was taken."
- e. It will be an ongoing policy of HR Staff n Stuff that all prior complainants be contacted by authorised employees of HR Staff n Stuff, on a periodic basis, to be certain they are currently working in an environment free from all forms of harassment or intimidation.
- f. Either the complaining employee or the alleged harasser has the right to appeal the determination of the investigation if he or she indicates so in writing and delivers the appeal to an authorised employee of HR Staff n Stuff within 10 days of the determination.

External HR support

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