



Safe Environments

Healthy Workers

## WHAT CAN I DO IF I'M BEING HARASSED OR BULLIED AT WORK

Harassment and bullying at work can have an impact on your health and well-being. In fact harassment and bullying may have a psychological impact including causing stress, anxiety, sleeplessness, fatigue, frequent colds, migraines, high blood pressure, and depression.<sup>1</sup> Speaking up about harassment in the workplace is not easy, but this information is meant to help you identify steps you can take to address harassment and bullying at work.



### IF YOU THINK YOU ARE BEING HARASSED AT WORK<sup>ii</sup>:

- Tell the person who is harassing you that the behaviour is unwelcome – be specific about the unwanted behaviour
- If the harassment is threatening to your personal safety (assault, sexual assault, or criminal harassment) you should call the police
- Write down where the harassment occurred, when it occurred, who engaged in the harassment, what specifically was said or done, if anyone saw it happen and what you did
- Keep any correspondence you receive that is related to the harassment (i.e. emails that were sent, social media, text correspondence)
- Find out your workplace policies and procedures and follow the procedures
- Seek emotional support from family and friends

## WHAT IS HARASSMENT?

Harassment is usually an ongoing pattern of behaviour.<sup>iii</sup> According to Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act, harassment is defined as "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 and/or workplace sexual harassment."<sup>iv</sup> Some practical examples of harassment can include:<sup>v</sup>

- Yelling at a person, threatening, constantly interrupting that person
- Prevention a person from expressing him or herself, or from speaking to others
- Unwanted sexual advances which may or may not be accompanied by threats, explicit or implicit promises
- Making rude, degrading or offensive remarks
- Making gestures that seek to intimidate
- Discrediting the person, spreading rumors, gossiping, shouting abuse, calling into question convictions or private life
- Compelling the person to perform tasks that are inferior to their competencies, belittling or name calling, setting the person up for failure
- Making fun of beliefs, values, political or religious choices
- Harassing a person based on prohibited grounds of discrimination as described in the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#)
- Engaging in reprisals for submitting a harassment complaint

## WHAT IS NOT HARRASSMENT

Carrying out managerial duties where the direction was carried out in a respectful and professional manner, allocating work and following up on work absences, requiring performance to a job standard or taking justified corrective or disciplinary measures are not considered to be harassment.<sup>vi</sup>

## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

The reality is that harassment is a widespread issue. A Government of Canada survey found that 60% of workers have experienced harassment, 30% of workers experienced sexual harassment, 21% of workers experienced violence and 3% of workers experienced sexual violence. Unfortunately most workers had experienced harassment more than once in the past 2 years.<sup>vii</sup> Although three types of workplace bullies are typically identified (top down, lateral, & bottom up bullying)<sup>viii</sup> this Gov't of Canada survey identified that 50 % of survey respondents experienced harassment from an individual with authority over them and 44 % experienced harassment from a co-worker.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

It takes a lot of courage to speak up about workplace harassment or bullying. Often we do not speak up because we think that people will not believe what we have to say and you may even feel ashamed about what has happened or worry that you might be blamed.

It is important to know that in Ontario your employer has a responsibility to have a workplace violence and harassment prevention program in place. If you are being harassed at work, can start by learning about your organizations program, and who to talk to about it.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS REGARDING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT:

[Ministry of Labour's Guide on Workplace Violence and Harassment.](#) & [Code of Practice to Address Workplace Harassment](#)

[PSHSA Blog: What are you doing to address counter productive behaviours](#)

Workplace bullying fast fact <https://www.pshsa.ca/products/workplace-bullying/>

Bullying in the Workplace: A Handbook for the workplace <https://www.pshsa.ca/products/bullying-in-the-workplace/>

Workplace bullying poster <https://www.pshsa.ca/products/bullying-poster/>

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health, Bullying Awareness  
<https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/free-training-and-tools/bullying-awareness>

Gov't of Canada "Is it Harassment? A Tool to Guide Employees" <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/healthy-workplace/prevention-resolution-harassment/harassment-tool-employees.html#anna>

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.pshsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/BullyWkplace.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/what-do-i-do-if-i%E2%80%99m-being-sexually-harassed>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/reports/workplace-harassment-sexual-violence.html>

<sup>iv</sup> (OHS 1 (1))

<sup>v</sup> Gov't of Canada "Is it Harassment? A Tool to Guide Employees" <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/healthy-workplace/prevention-resolution-harassment/harassment-tool-employees.html>

<sup>vi</sup> Gov't of Canada "Is it Harassment? A Tool to Guide Employees" <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/healthy-workplace/prevention-resolution-harassment/harassment-tool-employees.html>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/reports/workplace-harassment-sexual-violence.html>

<sup>viii</sup> Namie and Namie, The Bully-Free Workplace, 2011