Providing a supportive and resilient workplace

A guide for managers

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# The critical role of a manager

Managers provide an important role in supporting employees. Understanding and responsive managers recognise that leaders are critical in creating a positive workplace culture and appropriate workplace behaviour. This may be achieved in the workplace by:

* promoting a safe and cohesive work environment that encourages appropriate behaviour
* assessing team risks and continuously improving culture and systems
* recognising and responding to inappropriate behaviour when it occurs
* encouraging employees to ‘speak up’
* responding positively and pro-actively to concerns raised by inappropriate behaviour
* promoting work-life balance including managing work demands and resources
* recognising and celebrating differences in an inclusive workplace.

# What is bullying?

Bullying in the workplace can be defined as repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or a group that may result in a risk to health and safety.

It may take the form of actions such as verbal, non-verbal, psychological, physical abuse or humiliation.

# Employer’s role

While some practices in the workplace may not seem fair, it does not necessarily equate to bullying in the workplace.

Conversations and behaviour need to be appropriate for a professional workplace setting. Employees should be mindful that tone and language may be misinterpreted and there needs to be a positive approach to resolving misunderstandings.

Your employer is allowed to manage employee’s performance, transfer and discipline staff and set challenging goals in relation to work.

Managers and supervisors require strong communications skills to ensure the correct messages are sent and received.

All employees and managers are entitled to work in an environment free of harassment and where everyone is treated with respect.

We all have a role to play in maintaining a positive workplace culture.

# See the signs, build the skills

The following table highlights both corporate and personal factors that may impact perceptions of bullying or inappropriate behaviour in the workplace. The table identifies personal skills and relevant corporate capabilities to minimising the risks.

|  | Warning signs | Relevant skills/training | What/who can help |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Corporate** | **Lead indicators:**   * Machinery of Government changes * Significant structural change or workforce reform * Unfilled vacancies * Unusually high workloads   **Lag indicators:**   * Increase in unplanned absences * Spikes in workplace grievances * Declining employee engagement outcomes * Allegations of bullying | * Effective change management * Frontline supervisor training * Equipping managers with conciliation and mediation skills * Health and wellbeing programs * Effective performance management arrangements * Mental health information and awareness programs | * Supportive, frequent and authentic communication by leadership group * Clear change management plans * Empathetic/sympathetic leaders and managers * Early intervention by managers when there is friction * Culture and engagement surveys (that are acted on) * Employee Assistance Program |
| **Personal** | **Feelings of:**   * Anxiety * Victimisation * Not coping or being overwhelmed * Low personal resilience * Inadequacy in your work role or feeling ‘out of your depth’   **Experiencing:**  Regular interpersonal friction with colleagues  Acting out or losing your temper at others  Absenteeism | * Training in ‘leading and managing self’ e.g. mindfulness * Manager as coach training * Verbal communication * Conflict management skills * Difficult conversations training * Work-life balance * Time management training or skills * Setting priorities * Mental health ‘first-aid’ training for managers | * Managers/supervisors – have an early conversation * Employee Assistance Program * Executive coaches * Other relevant mentors and coaches * Getting involved in wellness programs |

# Further information and resources

Your own personal and professional development plan may include training or development designed to enhance the skills and knowledge required to deal with work pressures, work load, effective communication, conflict management or people management.

Your authority’s Employee Assistance Program provides resources to support employees and managers.

The Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety – Worksafe area has toolkits and information resources available on [bullying in the workplace](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe).

The Public Sector Commission’s [Managing workplace behaviour – A guide for agencies](https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/managing-workplace-behaviour-guide-agencies) provides policy advice for public authorities.

Managers and supervisors within your public authority may also be able to assist further.