



Preventing bullying and harassment in your small business

As a small business owner, it is important to create a safe and respectful workplace for all employees.

Workplace bullying is defined as repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or a group of workers that creates a risk to health and safety¹.

Here are some steps you can take to prevent bullying and harassment in your workplace:

- 1. Develop clear policies:** that prohibit bullying and harassment in the workplace. Make sure all employees are aware of these policies and the consequences for violating them.
- 2. Policy Promotion:** provide training on what constitutes bullying and harassment, and how to report incidents. You can start with a clear Code of Conduct or a specific Bully and Harassment policy².

1. SafeWork. (2022). Workplace Bullying (a psychosocial hazard).
2. SafeWork (2016). Dealing With Workplace Bullying - A Workers' Guide.

3. Lead by example: as the business owner or manager, it is important to model appropriate behaviour and treat all employees with respect. It is important for workplace leaders to act in a reasonable manner as per bullying and harassment policies. If employees have a perception that colleagues or management's behaviour has deviated from acceptable behaviour, this may give rise to complaints. Creating a respectful workplace is not just about good intention – it is about how your words are received and perceived by others. It is also important to seek employee feedback and create a safe environment where workers are comfortable to raise issues and concerns.

4. Foster a positive workplace culture: support workplace culture that values diversity and inclusion. Encourage teamwork, collaboration and celebrate the success of all employees. Provide regular opportunities for feedback and open communication with employees. If workers see their leaders place high importance on appropriate workplace behaviour, it becomes part of everyday workplace culture. Following this, workers become more likely to follow safety procedures and raise safety issues³.

5. Take complaints seriously: if an employee reports an incident of bullying or harassment, take the incident seriously and investigate the matter promptly. Provide support and take appropriate action to address the behaviour.

3.SafeWork. Managing Health and Safety: Leadership and Culture



6. Encourage bystander intervention: reactively encourage employees to speak up if they witness bullying or harassment. Provide training on how to intervene appropriately and safely in such situations.

7. Monitor the workplace: regularly monitor the workplace for signs of bullying or harassment. This can include conducting surveys, focus groups or speaking with employees one-on-one.

By taking these steps, small business owners can create a safe and respectful workplace that prevents bullying and harassment. It is important to create a culture that values diversity and inclusion and to provide support to all employees who may be affected by these behaviours.

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