Confronting Workplace Bullying

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Report it to your Human Resources Manager as soon as possible…
Objectives

At the close of this session, you will be able to:

• Define workplace bullying.
• List forms of bullying behavior.
• Tell the difference between workplace bullying, illegal discrimination and harassment based on protected group status.
• Give reasons why it is important to confront and stop workplace bullying.
• Cite ways to stop this offensive behavior.
Introduction

“Bullying is the sexual harassment of 20 years ago; everybody knows about it, but nobody wants to admit it.”

Lewis L. Maltby
President, National Workrights Institute
Some Statistics

• 40% of respondents stated they had been victims of workplace bullying

• 59% had observed someone else being bullied at work

Business Research Lab, 2002, 2003 Studies

• In many cases, managers and supervisors are the bullies. 45% of respondents reported they had worked for an abusive boss.

Employment Law Alliance, 2007
Which of the following could constitute workplace bullying?

1. Not giving a colleague credit for work they did on a project
2. Withholding information related to an employee’s work
3. Yelling, screaming, or slamming doors
4. Constantly reminding an employee of old mistakes
5. All of the above
Which of these is not likely a form of workplace bullying?

1. A male supervisor tells his assistant that she looks “cute” but not professional and is better suited for a drink after work – will she go with him?
2. Constantly reprimanding an employee in front of their peers
3. Spreading rumors about an employee to influence perceptions of colleagues
4. Threatening to take a scissors to an employee’s hair since it always looks so sloppy
Definition of Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying is:

- **Repeated mistreatment** of one or more employees with a malicious mix of humiliation, intimidation and sabotage of performance
- **Deliberate, hurtful, repeated** mistreatment of employees driven by a desire to control

(Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute)

- More common than sexual harassment or verbal abuse
- Bullying behavior may exist at any level of an organization
- Bullies can and often are managers and supervisors as well as co-workers
Definition of Workplace Bullying
(continued)

Workplace bullying can generally be considered as negative acts directed toward employees.

These include:

• Intimidating or undermining employees by demeaning their work standards, not giving them credit, setting them up for failure and constantly reminding them of old mistakes.
• Threatening employees’ personal self-esteem and work status.
• Isolating employees from opportunities, information and interaction with others.
• Giving impossible deadlines, creating undue pressure and stress, and overworking employees.
Forms of Bullying Behavior

The forms of bullying behavior include:

- Constant and unfair criticism
- Social bantering and teasing
- Yelling, shouting and screaming
- Insults and behind-the-back put-downs
- Hostile glares and other intimidating gestures
- Malicious gossiping
- Monopolizing supplies and other resources
- Aggressive e-mails or notes
- Overt threats and aggression or violence
Have you observed any of the forms of bullying behavior in your workplace in the last 12 months?

1. YES
2. NO
Have you observed any forms of bullying behavior in your workplace in the last week?

1. YES
2. NO
Have you ever taken any action to stop bullying behavior at your workplace?

1. YES

2. NO
If yes, were your actions successful in stopping the bullying behavior?

1. YES

2. NO
Discuss at your table:

• What bullying have you observed?
• What steps have you or others taken to stop the behavior?
• Did it work?
Difference Between Workplace Bullying and Illegal Discrimination and Harassment

Workplace bullying is inappropriate and unacceptable behavior, but it is not prohibited by any federal or state law.

Illegal discrimination and harassment covered by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and under state fair employment laws pertain to discrimination and harassment based on protected group status such as age, race, gender, ethnic origin, disability and religion.

While workplace bullying may result in a hostile work environment, it is not the same illegal hostile work environment created by, for example, the employer allowing pornographic photos and objects in its workplace.
Choose whether these scenarios are examples of workplace bullying or illegal discrimination/harassment

**Scenario 1:** John Smith, production line manager, calls Mary Adams, one of his assembly line workers, “sweetie pie” in a group meeting in front of her co-workers. Most of her co-workers are men. He continues, saying that she makes lots of mistakes and is slower than everyone else, but she looks really cute in her work overalls and hard hat. He calls her into his office after the meeting and says if she will go out with him, he will give her a desk job to get her off the assembly line.
Select the correct answer

1. Workplace bullying

2. Illegal discrimination or harassment
Scenario 2

Joan Downing yells and curses at her co-worker, Paul Jones, who has a cubicle next to hers. She makes fun of his new haircut and the way he walks. She constantly criticizes his work performance and gossips to other employees about phone conversations between Paul and his girlfriend.
Select the correct answer

1. Workplace bullying

2. Illegal discrimination or harassment
Scenario 3

Kurt Brown, who manages the accounting department, sends nasty e-mail messages to his employee, Peter Marks. He blames him for the backlog in the department and threatens to demote or fire him if the department does not meet its goals. He glares at him and makes fun of questions Peter asks in staff meetings.
Select the correct answer

1. Workplace bullying

2. Illegal discrimination or harassment
Costs to Employees

Workplace bullying results in employees suffering from significant **physical and emotional problems**, including **anxiety**, **depression**, **gastrointestinal disorders**, **headaches**, **insomnia**, **cardiovascular disease**, **poor concentration**, **substance abuse** and **lowered self-esteem**.
Costs to Employers

• Turnover, higher health care costs, low productivity, absenteeism, low morale and retaliation that may reach levels of aggressive and violent behavior.

• Tolerating workplace bullying makes it impossible for employers to reach the goal of treating all employees with respect and dignity.
Reasons to Confront and Stop Workplace Bullying (continued)

- There is **no specific federal or state** anti-bullying legislation in the United States, but that does not mean that employers may not be **held liable for tolerating** bullying in their workplaces.

- If the offending behavior is pervasive enough to be considered threatening, intimidating or creating an environment full of hostility, there is potential for a claim of **constructive discharge**, intentional infliction of emotional distress or relating the bullying to **protected class discrimination**.
Ways to Confront and Stop Workplace Bullying

To confront and stop workplace bullying:

• Establish an anti-bullying **policy** that explains what bullying is and that it is unacceptable behavior.

• **Train** managers and all other employees on the policy.

• Establish **processes for reporting, investigating and resolving complaints**.

• Conduct periodic **employee attitude surveys** to determine if workplace bullying is not being reported.
Policy on Workplace Bullying

SHRM model policy found at:
http://www.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/Samples/Policies/Pages/CMS_018350.aspx

1. Definition of bullying
2. The purpose of this policy is to communicate to all employees, including supervisors, managers and executives that the [Company Name] will not in any instance tolerate bullying behavior. Employees found in violation of this policy will be disciplined, up to and including termination.
3. Bullying may be intentional or unintentional. However, it must be noted that where an allegation of bullying is made, the intention of the alleged bully is irrelevant, and will not be given consideration when meting out discipline. As in sexual harassment, it is the effect of the behavior upon the individual which is important. [Company Name] considers the following types of behavior examples of bullying: (listed examples, including verbal, physical, gesture, exclusion).
Does your workplace currently have workplace bullying policy?

1. YES

2. NO
Do you think your workplace should have a workplace bullying policy?

1. YES
2. NO
Table Work

Discuss the following at your table:

1. Is bullying behavior an issue at your workplace?
2. What do you do to train, educate, or address bullying at your workplace?
3. Do you think you should develop a bullying policy at your workplace?
Summary

Workplace bullying:

- Deliberate, hurtful, negative, repeated mistreatment of one or more employees driven by a desire to control
- Inappropriate and unacceptable behavior
- Not prohibited by any federal or state law (unlike illegal discrimination and harassment covered by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and under state fair employment laws)

Some of the forms it takes:

- constant and unfair criticism, teasing, yelling, insulting, malicious gossiping, aggressive and passive-aggressive behavior.
Summary (continued)

Why Employers should confront and stop workplace bullying:

✓ Significant effects and damage to both employees and to the company.
✓ Physical and emotional problems suffered by employees
✓ High turnover
✓ Low productivity
✓ Low morale
✓ Employer liability under federal and state fair employment laws
Summary Potential Actions

✓ Establish an anti-bullying policy
✓ Train managers and all other employees on workplace bullying (and/or employer’s written policy)
✓ Establish processes for reporting, investigating and resolving complaints
✓ Conduct periodic employee attitude surveys to determine if workplace bullying is not being reported.
Thank you!

Questions or Comments?
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The majority of the information in this power point was gathered from materials on the SHRM website. Thanks to SHRM for having the information available to HR professionals.