

# Psychosocial Safety tip sheet

## Psychosocial hazard #13: Bullying



Bullying is defined as repeated and unreasonable behaviour that is directed towards a worker or group or workers and that creates a risk to health and safety. This includes bullying by co-workers, leaders, clients, patients, students, visitors, or others.

- **Repeated behaviour** refers to the persistent nature of the behaviour and can involve a range of behaviours over time. There is no specific number of incidents required for the behaviour to be repeated, nor does the same behaviour need to be repeated. The pattern of behaviour must demonstrate a persistent nature.
- **Unreasonable behaviour** means behaviour that a reasonable person, having considered the circumstances, would see as unreasonable, including behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating, or threatening.

Bullying is very serious behaviour that can:



### Are We OK?

#### Watch out for:

- Protracted and unresolved conflict and poor group dynamics can escalate into bullying behaviour over time.
- Unclear processes, absence of feedback around appropriate behaviour, and poor psychosocial safety can contribute to bullying behaviour.

#### It looks & sounds like:

- Verbal abuse.
- Threats of punishment for no reason.
- Ridicule and being put down.
- Offensive messages via phone, email, chat, or other means.
- Sabotage of work.
- Exclusion or isolation from workplace activities.
- Persistent and unjustified criticism.
- Humiliation through gestures, sarcasm, criticism, or insults.
- Subject of gossip or false, malicious rumours.

Importantly, reasonable management action taken in a reasonable way is not work-related bullying.

Reasonable management action (e.g., performance management or administrative actions) when carried out lawfully and in a reasonable way, while potentially uncomfortable or distressing, is a legitimate way for manager and supervisors to:

- Lead, direct and control how work is done.
- Give feedback and manage performance, including around harmful or inappropriate workplace behaviours.
- Deal with differences of opinion and disagreements.
- Recruit, assign, transfer and/or terminate employment.

#### For More Info:

- Visit the [Work Safe Queensland Website](#).
- Review the [Guide for Preventing & Responding to Workplace Bullying](#).
- Contact us on: [HealthandWellbeing@griffith.edu.au](mailto:HealthandWellbeing@griffith.edu.au).

### Tips for building psychosocial safety:

- Set clear expectations around appropriate workplace behaviour, proactively respond to instances of inappropriate behaviour, and resolve conflict or disagreements early.
- Communicate Griffith's Code of Conduct and the definition of bullying to employees. Encourage examples of workplace bullying to be reported.
- Continuously develop leadership and interpersonal skills of all employees, especially skills for responding to and resolving conflict.
- Proactively build positive team dynamics and supportive relationships.
- Use psychosocial hazard tip sheets to proactively manage other psychosocial hazards and reduce workplace stress.