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## **BULLYING PREVENTION – HR-XI-28**

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### **POLICY:**

OPTIONS NORTHWEST is committed to providing and maintaining a working environment that is based on respect for the dignity and rights of everyone in the organization. It is the organization's goal to provide a secure work and/or living environment that is free from bullying, for people supported, staff, volunteers, students, and visitors to our agency.

OPTIONS NORTHWEST will not tolerate any behaviour in the workplace that constitutes bullying activity as defined in this Policy. This Policy also applies to the use of any electronic communication system, such as email, text and social media to engage in bullying activities. Any employee who has been identified violating this Policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **A. Definition**

The following definition is provided by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety;

"Bullying is usually seen as acts or verbal comments that could "mentally" hurt or isolate a person in the workplace. Sometimes, bullying can involve negative physical contact as well. Bullying usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behavior that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people. It has also been described as the assertion of power through aggression".

NOTE: Situations of bullying do not include normal workplace conflict that may arise between individuals. See policy HR-III-14.

### **B. Examples**

While bullying is a form of aggression, the actions can be both obvious and subtle. It is important to note that the following is not a checklist, nor does it mention all forms of bullying. This list is provided to show some of the ways bullying may happen in the workplace.

Bullying encompasses not just the character of the incidents, but the number, frequency, and especially the pattern that can reveal the bullying.

Examples include;

- Spreading malicious rumors, gossip, or innuendo that is not true
- Excluding or isolating someone socially
- Intimidating a person
- Undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work
- Physically abusing or threatening abuse
- Removing areas of responsibility without cause
- Withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information
- Making jokes that are "obviously offensive" by spoken word or sent electronically
- Intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking
- Yelling or using profanity
- Criticizing a person persistently or constantly
- Belittling a person's opinions
- Unwarranted (or undeserved) punishment
- Blocking applications for training, leaves or promotion
- Tampering with a person's personal belongings or work equipment

### **C. Effects of Bullying**

People who are the targets of bullying may experience a range of effects. These reactions can include;

- Shock
- Anger
- Feelings of frustration and/or helplessness
- Increased sense of vulnerability
- Inability to sleep, lack of appetite
- Panic or anxiety, especially about going to work
- Family tension and stress

Bullying affects the overall "health" of an organization. An "unhealthy" workplace can have some of these indicators;

- Increased absenteeism
- Increased turnover
- Increased stress
- Increased risk for accidents/injury
- Decrease in motivation and productivity
- Decreased morale

#### **D. Responsibilities**

##### **Complainant**

**It is the responsibility of the complainant to make their disapproval and/or unease immediately known to the offender.** If this action is difficult to carry out independently, report the behaviour to a designated person and ask for assistance. Keep track of each incident of bullying, where and when it occurred, what was said and done, and the names of any witnesses.

##### **Offender**

**It is the responsibility of the offender to stop the offending action immediately.** The designated persons are available to answer any questions or concerns. Any retaliation towards the complainant or any witnesses will be considered ground for disciplinary action.

##### **Designated Persons**

**It is the responsibility of the designated persons to immediately attend to the matter.** If necessary, provide flexibility in work schedule or work area to reduce contact between the complainant and the offender. The designated persons are available to assist with any formal complaint procedure, and must advise the Manager, Human Resources of any incidents of bullying.

##### **Management Personnel**

**It is the responsibility of every management personnel to establish, and maintain a work environment that is free from bullying and be a role model for accepted behaviour.** Management personnel are to recognize incidents that are, or could lead to bullying. Whether brought to their attention or personally observed, appropriate action must be taken. The situation shall be handled confidentially and in compliance with policy. Under no circumstance shall a legitimate complaint be dismissed, or downplayed, or the complainant told to deal with it personally, without support.

##### **Employees**

**It is the responsibility of every employee to understand the Bullying Prevention Policy and Procedure, and to help ensure that the workplace is free of bullying.** All employees are expected to do their part by ensuring their behaviour does not violate this policy and by fostering a work environment that is based on respect and free of bullying. Employees are required to report any existence of workplace bullying.

## **OPTIONS NORTHWEST**

**It is the responsibility of OPTIONS NORTHWEST to provide a work environment that promotes respect for the dignity and rights of everyone in the organization. It is the responsibility of the Employer to ensure that all employees are informed of this policy and that Supervisors/Managers/Directors are aware of the proper procedures to follow if they receive a complaint of bullying.** They shall ensure that all complaints are investigated promptly and in confidentiality, and that there are no reprisals against either the complainant or witnesses. When a complaint has been substantiated, appropriate disciplinary measures shall be applied, regardless of the seniority or position of the offender. All OPTIONS NORTHWEST management and supervisory staff have an obligation to report any complaint received from staff with respect to all forms of bullying to the Director, Human Resources in a timely manner, to ensure the appropriate investigation is completed, supports are provided and possible further actions of bullying are prevented.

### **Union**

It is the responsibility of unions to support a work environment free from bullying. It is the union's responsibility to reinforce this policy to employees.

### **Designated Persons:**

- Any Supervisor/Manager/Director
- Director, Human Resources/Human Resources Coordinator/Health and Safety Coordinator
- Executive Director

Note – Employees always have the right to report potential bullying directly to the Human Resources department. For example, if concerns continue after reporting to the Supervisor/Manager/Director, or if circumstances are such that reporting the possible workplace bullying activity to Supervisor/Manager/Director is inappropriate, the employee shall report the bullying directly to Human Resources.

### **PURPOSE:**

#### **General:**

To maintain a workplace that provides every person with freedom from behavior that constitutes bullying.

**Specifically:**

1. To foster a work environment of safety and security for everyone in the workplace and where co-workers and management personnel are supportive of employee's psychological concerns and respond appropriately as needed.
2. To establish procedures to prevent bullying in the workplace.
3. To inform all employees of OPTIONS NORTHWEST that they are responsible for helping ensure that no one in our workplace suffers from any form of bullying.
4. To provide all employees with information and guidelines for reporting workplace bullying and to ensure effective, timely action from management.
5. To respond quickly and effectively to investigate and remedy any complaints or actual reported incidences of workplace bullying.

**PROCEDURE:**

**A. Reporting**

1. When an employee believes that he or she is the target of behavior that may satisfy the definition of workplace bullying (as defined herein), the employee must report any and all incidents immediately to a management personnel, or designated person, as appropriate
2. Whenever an employee believes that they are the target of bullying, where possible the employee should firmly tell the alleged bully that his or her behavior is not acceptable and ask them to stop, i.e.: "I do not appreciate your comments, please stop now!". The employee can ask to have a management personnel with them when approaching the person. The employee who is unionized may also contact their union representative for assistance. If the employee does not wish to approach the person, they will not be required to confront the alleged bully, however, reporting to the management personnel for assistance, direction and support will then become the first step.
3. The targeted person should retain copies of any notations they have made regarding the bullying activities and any written documentation, emails or texts received from the person. It is important that the targeted person not retaliate or engage with the alleged bullying behavior, as they may end up looking like the perpetrator. This could cause confusion during the investigation process.

4. When an employee has witnessed or was made aware of any behavior that constitutes bullying, the employee must report any and all incidents immediately to their Supervisor/Manager/Director.
5. When a Supervisor/Manager/Director is notified of possible workplace bullying, the management personnel must immediately notify Human Resources.

**B. Investigation**

1. When a complaint regarding workplace bullying has been received by the Human Resources department, (either directly from an employee or through a Supervisor/Manager/Director) a thorough and impartial investigation of the reported alleged workplace bullying activity will be initiated. This investigation will be led by the Human Resources department. Where a conflict is identified, the Executive Director shall lead the investigation.
2. If necessary, any employees exhibiting emotional stress from the incident in question should be referred to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
3. All employees shall cooperate fully with the investigative process. Any employee who fails to cooperate and/or attempts to undermine or discourage participation in any investigation will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.
4. Once the investigation is completed any necessary corrective action will be made.
5. All information provided in the complaint and investigation process will be treated as confidential. Information may be released if deemed necessary to investigate or take appropriate action.
6. This policy prohibits retaliation of any employee who reports potential workplace bullying or participates in the investigation of the complaint. Anyone who engages in retaliatory action will be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment.
7. Debriefing may also follow, depending on the circumstances.

**POLICY: HR-XI-28**  
**DEPARTMENT:** Human Resources  
**CATEGORY:** Health and Safety - General  
**EFFECTIVE DATE:** July 2023  
**SUPERSEDES VERSION DATED:** August 2022  
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**RECOMMENDED BY:** Manager, Human Resources

**APPENDICES:** 0

**OPERATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY:** Administration, Finance, Human Resources,  
Supportive Living Services (all)

**ORIGINAL POLICY DATE:** June 2015

**AUTHORIZED BY:** Executive Director

**SIGNATURE:**  \_\_\_\_\_

