

# Mobbing in the Workplace

## What and Why?

Bullying is a problem that exists in many environments, including workplaces, and inflicts harm on the target through the use of harassment, threats, intimidation, humiliation, or sabotage. It is damaging and often occurs over a long period of time. It is typically one person versus another.

When it is a group targeting a single person, that is referred to as mobbing and has been called “bullying on steroids.”



## Implementing and Enforcing Anti-Bullying Policies

- Lead from the top down
- Lead by example
- Be proactive
- Be clear and consistent
- Say it loud
- Give people the tools to fight

### **Bullying is:**

- One perpetrator
- Any number of toxic and hurtful behaviors, but could include harassment and undue criticism
- More likely to be obvious to outsiders
- Less likely to result in the removal of the victim from the company

### **Mobbing is:**

- More than one perpetrator
- Hidden
- Slowly works its way through different levels of the organization
- Includes “key organizational members” either through their own actions or lack thereof
- Victim may be labelled a troublemaker and their character is attacked
- Co-workers may avoid the victim
- Information could be gathered about the victim through co-workers
- Happens over a period of several months
- Often results in the victim leaving the organization or taking medical leave

## Writing the Policy

Your policy should include five essential elements.

**The rules.** State clearly that mobbing is not acceptable in the workplace and will be dealt with. Then, state what the rules are in the company. Make sure that these rules are in line with the laws in your area.

**Specific behaviors, examples, and circumstances.** The document should spell out what behaviors are and are not acceptable. Providing specific examples that are relevant to the workplace will help guide employees' behavior. (For example, saying that yelling is always a bullying behavior might be an issue if employees work on a loud factory floor.)

**Safe from reprisal.** Make sure the policy clearly states that no one will be acted against for bringing a claim to the employer's attention or attesting to details within that claim.

**The consequences.** Make sure you include the possible solutions and consequences for a mobbing incident, including what disciplinary action may be taken. Also include consequences for false claims.

**A complainant's rights.** Make sure victims know what will happen if they file a complaint and what rights they have, including confidentiality, privacy, and the right to a fair hearing. They should also know their avenues of complaint: the union, internal Human Resources department, appropriate government department, police, or the legal system.

Above all, ensure the policy is clear, up to date, and updated periodically.

## Workplace Health Check

- Check your company's stated values. Do they match what you see in your organization?
- When they make a mistake, do they take responsibility?
- Do the employees feel respected?
- Do employees stay in their jobs for a long time? Is the company frequently hiring to replace workers? How is morale in the office?
- Is the company present in the community? Are they sponsoring events? Are they participating in volunteer activities?
- What kind of programs do they offer their employees that support their health? Their families' health?
- Are they productive and ethical?
- Do employees have any control over their job and when they take vacations?

## Educating Staff

- Have an HR member sit down with a small group and go over every word in the policy
- When new employees are hired, make sure that they receive the same education
- All employees should receive this education again when changes are made to the policy
- Make sure you distribute the policy at least once a year