

RESOURCE KIT

WORKPLACE BULLYING Experienced by Social Workers



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WPB Experienced by Social Workers by Linda Crockett, RSW

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For all of you who shared your stories regarding your workplace bullying experiences, attended my workshop, and for those of you who have children experiencing being bullied, thank you for appreciating my work and motivating me to continue. This abuse has become an epidemic and many other provinces are taking a stand. Social Workers in Alberta could be the leaders for our Province. We can create rapid, effective and positive changes. Please become knowledgeable, feel empowered, and stand together.



Introduction

As with every other profession and the clients and communities we serve, some of our fellow colleagues are also suffering from the abuse of Workplace Bullying (WPB). The perpetrators of this abuse may be supervisors, managers, peers (lateral violence or mobbing), or members of multi-disciplinary teams (physicians, doctors, nurses, pastors, police officers, teachers and administrators). Workplace Bullying does not discriminate among professions or ranks within each profession. Social Workers who have high caseloads, frequent crisis interventions, high staff turnover, work with a variety of educational and training backgrounds, frequently changing guidelines and leadership, and lack consistent (mentoring/supportive) supervision, may have heightened risk factors to workplace bullying. In addition to WPB, the added risk factors for social workers can also include high stress, ill-health and burnout, compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and secondary stress trauma. The aim of this Took Kit is to offer support by providing information and resources for our fellow social work practitioners.



For the Employer and the Employee

Whether you are an employer or an employee, this tool kit will offer you numerous resources and empower you to take the steps that will help promote a safe, healthy, and supportive work environment. As with cases of domestic violence or other traumatic events, each and every case is unique. Though there may be similarities, your situation will have its own history and layers of unique factors for each person involved. Please review this booklet: It offers an abundance of resources to help you determine the steps that are most appropriate for you and your workplace.

Eight tips to get you started

- 1) Everyone needs to become knowledgeable in this area and ensure that all staff members, (managers and supervisors included), are reminded of company policies. Attend training and get educated (use this booklet). Host a workshop on Workplace Bullying in your office!
- 2) Develop a safe, simple, and fair process for reporting abuse. Follow through with policy guidelines. Be consistent and diligent about investigations and create supportive, educational, and appropriate corrections. Ensure changes are made and maintained.
- 4) Depending on your office situation, consult with your Supervisor, Manager, Human Resources, or Union Representative. Learn about your organizations complaint process, options, resources and supports.
- 5) If you are suspect you are witnessing someone being bullied, and/or you are being bullied, use your EAP services for support. Talk to you family and friends and gain their added support. Practice good self care and be sure to have your family doctor record your visits. It is important to have clarity on the entire situation.
- 6) Employer, target, and bystanders (witnesses), keep a record of the abuse, including all conversations, emails, phone calls and documents. Bystanders can file complaints too.
- 7) It is important that the people you seek for support are knowledgeable about workplace bullying.
- 8) Advocate for yourself: use your expertise on you! Social Workers have the right to feel safe and supported in the workplace. This is not a myth or a dream, this is your right. Make it so.

Learn, teach, mentor, and role model in your workplace.

Definitions of Bullying

Government of Alberta

“Workplace bullying is a repeated pattern of behaviour intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group—the bully’s **target**. Although it can include physical abuse or the threat of abuse, bullying usually causes psychological rather than physical harm.

Because workplace bullying is often psychological, it can be hard to recognize. The most harmful forms of bullying are usually subtle rather than direct and verbal rather than physical.”

From: [Bullies at Work: What to Know, What You Can Do](#)

Canadian Center 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 behaviour 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.”

From: [CCOHS Website](#)

Workplace Bullying Institute

Workplace Bullying is repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators that takes one or more of the following forms:

- Verbal abuse
- Offensive conduct/behaviours (including nonverbal) which are threatening, humiliating, or intimidating
- Work interference - sabotage - which prevents work from getting done
- Is driven by perpetrators' need to control the targeted individuals(s)
- Is initiated by bullies who choose their targets, timing, location, and methods.
- Escalates to involve others who side with the bully, either voluntarily or through coercion
- Undermines legitimate business interests when bullies' personal agendas take precedence over work itself
- Is akin to domestic violence at work, where the abuser is on the payroll

From: [WBI Website](#)

"Bullying is usually seen as acts or verbal comments that could “mentally” hurt or isolate a person in the workplace. Sometimes, bullying can also involve negative physical contact e.g., pushing, throwing objects". (OSACH 2009)

"There is growing evidence that exposure to bullying in the workplace has serious detrimental outcomes, not only for the victim, but also for the organization, workplace colleagues and family members of the victims". (OSACH 2009)

From: [WPB Fast Facts](#)

Additional examples of workplace bullying behaviours:

- | | |
|---|---|
| Social isolation (silent treatment) | Fist shaking/finger pointing |
| Rumours/Gossip | Withholding information |
| Excessive or unjustified criticism | Withholding job responsibilities |
| Over-monitoring of work | Withholding positives |
| Verbal aggression | Dishonesty |
| Personal attack of a person’s private life and/or personal attributes | Setting unrealistic goals or deadlines/case work size |

Terminology: Bullying may also be known as,

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mobbing | Moral Harassment |
| Horizontal or lateral violence | Psychological Violence |
| Workplace aggression | Harassment/Discrimination |
| Victimization | Moral Harassment |
| Psychological Harassment | Psychological Aggression |
| Social undermining | Violence/Assault |

“At around 10% of over 4000 cases, social workers and social services employees are the third largest group of callers to the UK National Workplace Bullying Advice Line after teachers (20%) and healthcare employees (12%) and before workers from the voluntary sector (6-8%). In each case, the bully is a serial bully with a history of bullying and harassment. At least 50% of bullies in the caring professions are female, demonstrating that bullying is not a gender issue.”

From: [Bullying Within Social Work](#)



Bullying: Experienced by an Alberta Social Worker

For over 2 years I experienced my supervisor's weekly sometimes daily changing moods. One minute she was very nice, laughing and sharing personal stories, and the next minute she looked at me with hatred and rage. She accused me of saying things that had never even entered my mind. She would stand at my doorway stating offensive comments or accusing me of doing something that I didn't do. If someone walked down our hallway she would cover up her anger by immediately turning to this person and making a joke. They would share a laugh (hers being very loud) and as soon as this person was out of sight, she would turn to me with the same glaring look and continue with her negative words towards me. I will never forget how eerie and confusing this was for me. It can be crazy-making, for who would believe me if I could not even believe this experience myself? I became nervous about coming to work, wondering who she was going to be that day. As far as I could see, everyone else saw her as a competent social worker; a friendly and a fun person to be around. She really is excellent with clients. The truth is, her "trained" skill level helps her to be even more skilled at hiding her bullying behaviours! There was one other social worker who experienced this frightening side of our supervisor. She gave me the advice to "stay under the radar". I respected her right to choose this reaction and believed it met with her needs. For me, being told to stay under the radar and just do what it takes until our supervisor returns to herself again, simply confused me even more. This just doesn't sit well with my values or ethics. Confronting my supervisor, making notes, keeping copies of the emails or letters she sent me, and reporting certain behaviours to my manager certainly saved me from any further damages she may have caused. Her mood changes and bullying behaviours did become worse. She stopped responding to my pages even though these were used for urgent cases. She took credit for my ideas and ignored me unless others were around. She slammed her door in my face more than once; in fact, one time in front of a patient and spouse. In time, colleagues advised me of rumours my supervisor spread about me. I became anxious and constantly on guard. I felt her intent was to sabotage me. In her position she had this power. I was painfully alone and isolated. The work I loved to do began to suffer and soon, so did my health. (Author asked to remain anonymous).

Definition of Mobbing

The word *mobbing* is preferred to *bullying* in continental Europe and in those situations where a target is selected and bullied (mobbed) by a group of people rather than by one individual. However, every group has a ringleader. If this ringleader is an extrovert it will be obvious who is coercing group members into mobbing the selected target. If the ringleader is an introvert type, he or she is likely to be in the background coercing and manipulating group members into mobbing the selected target; introvert ringleaders are much more dangerous than extrovert ringleaders.

From: [Bully On Line](#)

Behaviour may include: rumours, gossip, exclusion, ignoring, verbally assault, acts of aggression, or passive aggression e.g.: silence when target enters room, ostracizing. The person may be ganged up on, harmful behaviours may be organized by the perpetrators, and there may be malicious attempts to remove someone or a group from workplace.

See an article by Kenneth Westhues, University of Waterloo: [At the Mercy of the Mob](#)
A [mobbing checklist](#) is also available.



Mobbing: Experienced by an Alberta Social Worker

Even though my experience happened around 10 years ago, I still feel its effects. I accepted a new position in a smaller office outside my city. The unit had five seasoned social workers who had established a clique after working together for many years. This initially made it difficult to form supportive relationships in my unit. My role was unique from the others, which added to my sense of isolation and difficulty establishing connections. Eventually I did connect with two people which motivated the other three to be just a little more friendly. In time they were more consistent about inviting me for coffee and lunches. After a few months I began to relax and enjoy my new place of work. They seemed like very nice people. But something changed overnight. One morning I noticed an unusual silence and many closed office doors. Passing colleagues ignored me and avoided eye contact in the hallway. The group went for coffee and disregarded me as they walked by my desk. I approached the person I felt closest to but she clenched her hands together, placed them on her desk, tightened her lips, and stared straight ahead. Her face was blank. Regardless of how many times I asked what was wrong, she did not say a word. I was shocked, confused, and haunted by this treatment. After approaching another member of this group, I was told the group had met and concluded that I had implicated one of them in a negative way. Though I expressed oblivion to the situation mentioned, this person continued the mobbing behaviour. Seeking resolution, I shared what was happening with my supervisor. Due to the many other issues she needed to address, my problem was not taken forward. I soon learned this group also assumed I was the supervisor's pet. I was ostracized for several months before transferring out of this office. This experience devastated and tormented me. It is hard to recover when you have no idea how such a situation could have occurred and are given no opportunity to defend yourself. I still wonder how five mature, experienced, and skilled social workers could behave in such an unprofessional manner. Even had I been were guilty of the accusation, these behaviours would be considered abusive and should have been addressed by my supervisor. Today I am aware I can contact the Alberta College of Social Workers and file a complaint against another registered social worker. I am happy to say that I can also help my co-workers if they are ever in this situation. Our code of ethics applies to working with our colleagues. Maybe that is forgotten now and then. Many endure mobbing and other forms of bullying in silence. The subject needs to be shared so that changes can be made to ensure those who suffer can start to feel safe and respected in their workplace.

Linda Rae Crockett, RSW

Lateral Violence

Lateral violence is a form of bullying that takes place peer to peer. Lateral Violence includes gossiping, rumours, sabotaging and back-stabbing. Lateral Violence is a destructive force that creates unhappy and unhealthy workplaces. The impacts of Lateral Violence include lack of trust, lack of safety, high absenteeism and turnover - and reduced quality of service, a lack of safety, damaged trust, high absenteeism and job turnover - and reduced quality of services.

There is a growing awareness of lateral violence occurring within the Indigenous Community of Alberta. This form of bullying demonstrates how gossip, name-calling and put-downs negatively affect First Nations adults. This kind of violence has its roots in the hurt stemming from colonialism. Many First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples have experienced Lateral Violence.

“Lateral violence among Native people is about our anti-colonial rage working itself out in an expression of hate for one another”. Copied from: [What is Lateral Violence](#)

"Internalized oppression is this turning upon ourselves upon our families, and upon our own people the distress patterns that result from the racism and oppression of the majority society".

"Oppressive thoughts, attitudes and behaviours are learned".

Copied from [Internalized Racism](#)

For more information on this issue, go to: [Lateral Violence in First Nations Communities](#)



Lateral Violence: Two examples experienced by Alberta Social Workers

Alberta Social Worker (1)

I worked with a lady who was my equal when it came to the number of years we completed in education, training, and work experience. Our differences were about our work ethics and values. She seemed to spend a great deal of time chatting and laughing with one of our male colleagues. Every day I would leave the office feeling exhausted from my high case load, and she would take files home and work on them at night. Apparently she needed very little sleep and could focus better at home. Somehow this was ok with our supervisor. After several months of this I complained about the constant chatting and laughter from down the hallway. As soon as I spoke up her behaviour towards me changed from my being ignored (which was ok for me), to her making negative comments about me, especially when I walked into our meeting room or lunch area. She was close friends with our one male colleague and our male supervisor. When I needed her to assist me on a case she was never available but she always had a good excuse. As time went on her whispers and laughs changed. She began coming to my office speaking quietly making statements like "you think you can win this one, watch me take you down". This would be followed by a loud laugh. She would then walk straight into our male colleague's office and laugh and talk for over an hour - several time a day. This was soon a daily event and her visiting disturbed the entire unit. Problem was the rest of us knew she had a few powerful people in her corner. Then one day her behaviour escalated and I saw just how ill she was. She came in to my office as usual, made some comment that I cannot recall because of my shock about what happened next. She went down the hall and said very loudly, " she just kicked me out of her office and followed me pointing her finger at me!" She pretended to be upset. I could not believe my ears. This was confusing and I panicked. I even doubted my own experience of it all! Complaints were made, of course I defended myself. About 2 weeks later I was transferred out of the office and the rest of my peers buried their heads and tolerated it. About a year later all the facts were out in the open. But the damage to me was done. (Anonymous)



Alberta Social Worker (2)

She constantly ignore me and I suspect it is her who was taking my work from my fax print outs. She refuses to assist me on urgent cases and makes up excuses about not getting my calls. She started a rumour that I was having an affair with my supervisor. She has no idea how much she has hurt me and my husband, and my supervisor's wife. I found out that she went from person to person telling different lies and then stood back to see the outcome. This is just malicious. I hate coming to work but I have children, my husband is recovering from chemo treatments, and we have a mortgage. (Anonymous)



Comparison Definitions

Assault

Under the Criminal Code of Canada, assault is a criminal offence. Employers and employees have the right to call the police to investigate and lay charges when an employee has been assaulted in the workplace. An assault includes physical violence, attempts or threats to use force (including gestures that imply a serious threat), stalking or conduct that causes that other person to fear for their safety or the safety of anyone known to them.

An assault occurs when a person directly or indirectly applies force intentionally to another person without their consent. It can also occur when a person attempts to apply such force, or threatens to do so, without the consent of the other person. An injury need not occur for an assault to be committed, but the force used in the assault must be offensive in nature with the intention to apply force. It can be an assault to "tap", "pinch" or direct another such minor action toward another, but an accidental application of force is not an assault.

[Criminal Code of Canada](#)

Harassment

Harassment occurs when an employee is subjected to unwelcome verbal or physical conduct because of race, religious beliefs, colour, place of origin, gender, physical or mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation. Alberta human rights law prohibits workplace harassment based on these grounds.

[Harassment as a Form of Discrimination](#)

Discrimination

".....treating people differently because of some particular attribute such as race, gender or religion". [Guideline for Human Rights Issues in Professional Practice](#)

also see: [When is Discrimination Not a Contravention of the Law](#)

Similarities between Harassment and Workplace Bullying

Harassment	Workplace bullying
Has a strong physical component, eg contact and touch in all its forms, intrusion into personal space and possessions, damage to possessions including a person's work, etc	Almost exclusively psychological (eg criticism), may become physical later, especially with male bullies, but almost never with female bullies
Tends to focus on the individual because of what they are (eg female, black, disabled, etc)	Anyone will do, especially if they are competent, popular and vulnerable
Harassment is usually linked to sex, race, prejudice, discrimination, etc	Although bullies are deeply prejudiced, sex, race and gender play little part; it's usually discrimination on the basis of competence
Harassment may consist of a single incident or a few incidents or many incidents	Bullying is rarely a single incident and tends to be an accumulation of many small incidents, each of which, when taken in isolation and out of context, seems trivial
The person who is being harassed knows almost straight away they are being harassed	The person being bullied may not realise they are being bullied for weeks or months - until there's a moment of enlightenment
Everyone can recognise harassment, especially if there's an assault, indecent assault or sexual assault	Few people recognise bullying
Harassment often reveals itself through use of recognised offensive vocabulary, eg ("bitch", "coon", etc)	Workplace bullying tends to fixate on trivial criticisms and false allegations of underperformance; offensive words rarely appear, although swear words may be used when there are no witnesses
There's often an element of possession, eg as in stalking	Phase 1 of bullying is control and subjugation; when this fails, phase 2 is elimination of the target
The harassment almost always has a strong clear focus (eg sex, race, disability)	The focus is on competence (envy) and popularity (jealousy)
Often the harassment is for peer approval, bravado, macho image etc	Tends to be secret behind closed doors with no witnesses
Harassment takes place both in and out of work	The bullying takes place mostly at work
The harasser often perceives their target as easy, albeit sometimes a challenge	The target is seen as a threat who must first be controlled and subjugated, and if that doesn't work, eliminated
Harassment is often domination for superiority	Bullying is for control of threat (of exposure of the bully's own inadequacy)
The harasser often lacks self-discipline	The bully is driven by envy (of abilities) and jealousy (of relationships)
The harasser often has specific inadequacies (eg sexual)	The bully is inadequate in all areas of interpersonal and behavioural skills

copied from [Bullying: What is it?](#)

Spectrum of Inappropriate Workplace Behaviour				
	DISRESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR	WORKPLACE BULLYING	HARASSMENT	VIOLENCE
Definition	To violate a behaviour norm, or conduct.	Intentional, disrespectful, repeated actions by one or more people towards another. A form of harassment.	Intentional repetitive behaviour intended to disturb or upset the target. May be verbal or physical.	Physical force or threat that causes or could cause an injury.
Is it Deliberate?	Not usually deliberate, most often motivated by a need for self preservation	Yes. This is deliberate with the intent to oppress and/or harm the target.	Yes. The perpetrator knows, or should have reasonably known, their actions would cause harm.	Yes. The perpetrator knows, or should have known, their actions would cause harm.
Is it Disrespectful?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is it Repeated?	Not the norm. If this is repeated, this would be due to a "style" for self preservation, not with intent to harm.	Yes. This will often include pre-meditated calculation in order to have power over or cause harm.	This may include one single event or a serious of incidences.	This may include one single event or a serious of incidences.
Is it against the law?	No. This is where effective corporate policy and accountability are essential. i.e.: Code of conduct/civility.	No. This is where effective corporate policy and accountability are essential. i.e.: Code of conduct/civility	Yes - For protected status. Yes - for general workplace harassment.	Yes

What makes me a target?

Workplace bullying is not the stereotypical school yard bully that we are all seeing far too often in the news these days. The following are a few suggested reasons taken from [Bully OnLine](#)

You may be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

You are good at your job and often excelling.

You are popular with people, clients and supports, community resources

You have a well-defined set of values which you are unwilling to compromise.

Have a strong sense of integrity (bullies despise integrity, for they have none, and seem compelled to destroy anyone who has integrity)

Having at least one vulnerability that can be exploited

Showing independence of thought or deed

A bully fears exposure of their own inadequacy and incompetence. Your presence may fuel their fear.

You may be seen as the expert and the person to whom others come for advice, either personal or professional (i.e. you get more attention than the bully)

Bullying may start after certain events:

There is reorganization and or a new manager is appointed.

Your performance unwittingly highlights, draws attention to, exposes or invites unfavourable comparison with the bully's lack of performance (the harder you work to address the bully's claims of underperformance, the more insecure and unstable the bully becomes)

Standing up for a colleague who is being bullied.

Blowing the whistle on incompetence, malpractice, fraud, illegality, breaches of procedure, breaches of health & safety regulations etc.

Undertaking trade union duties

Suffering illness or injury, whether work related or not

Go to [Bully OnLine](#) and the enclosed references for more details about targets.

Are you a Bully?



Here are some questions to ponder.

- Do you yell, raise your voice, or swear at your staff or colleagues?
- Do you ignore, dismiss, or exclude a staff or staff members?
- Do you talk negatively about your staff behind their back? Do you talk to specific staff about their colleagues?
- Do you have favourite staff and is it obvious? Have people complained?
- Do your staff 'walk on eggshells' around you? Are you alright with this?
- Does staff respond confidently to you and do they appear to feel free to act like themselves with you? Are they quiet or closed in meetings? Do you prefer it this way?
- Do you 'win' discussions with statements like: "I'm the boss", "I'm the owner", or "I am the expert around here".
- Do staff members make complaints about you? Is there any consistency in complaints or themes? Do you want to make things better for them?
- Do you care about the impact of your behaviour on staff?
- Do you ask or expect your staff to be accountable and then avoid being accountable yourself?
- If someone rubs you the wrong way, questions you or disagrees with you, do you feel resentful and plan to somehow get even?
- Do you abuse your staff with insults - stated or implied?
- Have you been told you behave or communicate in passive aggressive ways?
- Is your most often used management tool to: threaten? Intimidate? Or to use subtle acts of oppression?
- Do you 'feel the need' to control? (Most of the time?)
- Do you enjoy it when someone 'kisses up to you'?
- Are you transparent in your leadership and decisions? If not, why not?
- Do you often feel inadequate? Are you threatened when staff has answers that you don't? Or, if they are more skilled in some areas than you?

- Do you treat your clients differently than you do your staff? i.e.: express empathy, offers of support, and positive feedback to clients and not to staff?
- When your staff member has a good idea, does this somehow become your good idea? Do you give any credit for this idea to your staff?
- When you make a mistake, do you blame your staff?
- Have you stated or inferred to your staff that they are incompetent?
- Do you hold on to information and share it selectively? Do you use information for power over others?
- Have you reprimanded staff in public or with the office door open?
- Do you feel righteous after you discipline staff?
- Do you find it hard to admit you are wrong or apologize?
- Do you use compliments to get something you want from staff?
- Is exposing your inadequacies and feeling vulnerable your worst fear?

If these questions stir up thoughts and/or reactions in you, consider whether your style is working for you and your staff. For added certainty, ask those who know you best for feedback or talk to a therapist for an objective opinion.



True Power is to Empower & Be right with You!

Am I being bullied?

Have you been.....



- Glared at in a hostile manner?
- Excluded from work-related social gatherings?
- Seen others storm out of the room when you enter?
- Been given the silent treatment?
- Deprived of recognition and/or praise for which you are entitled?
- Had colleagues refuse your requests for assistance?
- Experienced a colleague lie to you or deny false rumours?
- Been yelled at or shouted at in a hostile manner?
- Had others fail to return your calls, memos or emails?
- Had someone interfere with your work activities?
- Had needed information withheld.
- Been the target of derogatory name calling, rumours or gossip?
- Shown little empathy or sympathy when you were having a tough time?
- Had co-workers fail to defend your plans or ideas to others?
- Been given unreasonable workloads or deadlines? More than others?
- Been subjected to temper tantrums when disagreeing with someone?
- Constantly interrupted, ignored, or drowned out when speaking?
- Had attempts made to turn other employees against you?
- Had someone flaunt his or her status or treat you in a condescending manner?
- Had someone else take credit for your work or ideas?

From: [New York Times](#)

These are things to think about. For more certainty, see the following web sites and score yourself:

[PsychCentral Workplace Bullying Quiz](#) or

[Centennial College Stop Bullying Now](#)

Need clarification and or support? Refer to the

ACSW Code of Ethics

Ethical Behaviour Requires Due Consideration of Issues and Judgement

Social work is a multifaceted profession. As professionals, social workers are educated to exercise judgement in the face of complex and competing interests and claims. Ethical decision-making in a given situation will involve the informed judgement of the individual social worker. Instances may arise when social workers' ethical obligations conflict with agency policies, or relevant laws or regulations. When such conflicts occur, social workers shall make a responsible effort to resolve the conflicts in a manner that is consistent with the values and principles expressed in this Code of Ethics. If a reasonable resolution of the conflict does not appear possible, social workers shall seek appropriate consultation before making a decision. This may involve consultation with an ethics committee, a regulatory body, a knowledgeable colleague, supervisor or legal counsel.

The social work profession is dedicated to the welfare and self-realization of all people; the development and disciplined use of scientific and professional knowledge; the development of resources and skills to meet individual, group, national and international changing needs and aspirations; and the achievement of social justice for all. The profession has a particular interest in the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and/or living in poverty. Social workers are committed to human rights as enshrined in Canadian law, as well as in international conventions on human rights created or supported by the United Nations. As professionals in a country that upholds respect for diversity and in keeping with democratic rights and freedoms, social workers respect the distinct systems of beliefs and lifestyles of individuals, families, groups, communities and nations without prejudice (United Nations Centre for Human Rights, 1992). Specifically, social workers do not tolerate discrimination based on age, abilities, ethnic background, gender, language, marital status, national ancestry, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.

Core Social Work Values and Principles

Social workers uphold the following core social work values:

Value 1: Respect for Inherent Dignity and Worth of Persons

Value 2: Pursuit of Social Justice

Value 3: Service to Humanity

Value 4: Integrity of Professional Practice

Value 5: Confidentiality in Professional Practice

Value 6: Competence in Professional Practice

Note: go to link below for more details on each core social work value

Principles: Social workers demonstrate and promote the qualities of honesty, reliability, impartiality and diligence in their professional practice.

Social workers demonstrate adherence to the values and ethical principles of the profession and promote respect for the profession's values and principles in organizations where they work or with which they have a professional affiliation.

Social workers establish appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients and ensure that the relationship serves the needs of clients.

Social workers value openness and transparency in professional practice and avoid relationships where their integrity or impartiality may be compromised, ensuring that should a conflict of interest be unavoidable, the nature of the conflict is fully disclosed.

Social Worker is a person who is duly registered to practice social work in a province or territory; or where mandatory registration does not exist, a person with social work education from an institution recognized by the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (CASSW) or an institution from outside of Canada that has been approved by the CASW, who is practising social work and who voluntarily agrees to be subject to this Code of Ethics. Note: Social workers living in Quebec and British Columbia, whose social work education was obtained outside of Canada, follow a separate approval process within their respective provinces.

Standard of Care: The standard of care ordinarily expected of a competent social worker. It means that the public is assured that a social worker has the training, the skill and the diligence to provide them with social work services. Social workers are urged to refer to standards of practice that have been set by their provincial or territorial regulatory body or relevant professional association (see "Conduct Unbecoming").

Copied from [Code of Ethics](#)

ACSW Standards of Practice for Social Workers

Several sections of the Standards of Practice can be applied to matters related to Workplace Bullying. The following excerpts may be helpful:

1. In these Standards,
 - (c) **colleague** refers to any other social worker, any person employed in the same organization as the social worker, or any other professional the social worker has contact with in the provision of professional services.
10. A social worker will make reasonable efforts to prevent and eliminate discrimination and oppression in the workplace.
11. A social worker will be respectful to and cooperate with colleagues of other professions.
14. A social worker will be aware of the circumstances that may lead to a conflict of interest and will make reasonable effort to avoid such conflict. If conflict of interest cannot be avoided the social worker will disclose the conflict and take appropriate measures to minimize the impact of the conflict on clients, coworkers, and employers.
25. A social worker will treat with respect and represent accurately and fairly the qualifications, views and findings of colleagues.
26. When there is a difference of opinion between a social worker and a colleague, the social worker will use appropriate channels to express judgment on these matters, confining such comments to matters of fact and matters of their own knowledge.
107. A social worker will respect the dignity of supervisees, students and research subjects and will comply with all relevant statutes and administrative rules concerning conduct toward supervisees, students and research subjects.
108. A social worker who has the responsibility for employing and evaluating the performance of other staff members will fulfill such responsibility in a fair, considerate and equitable manner, using clearly defined criteria.
109. A social worker who has the responsibility for evaluating the performance of colleagues, employees, supervisees or students will share their evaluations with them.
114. A social worker will not exploit a professional relationship or a relationship with a supervisee, student or research subject in any manner.
115. A social worker will not exploit a dispute between a colleague and employer to obtain a position or otherwise advance the social worker's own interests.
116. A social worker will not condone nor engage in any harassment.
135. A social worker who has a concern with regard to a colleague's ethics, practice, opinions, or behaviour, will make reasonable efforts to address the concern with the colleague. However, if there is a risk of harm to a client or the concern continues, the

social worker will consult with the Complaints Director of the Alberta College of Social Workers.

152. A social worker may take credit only for work she or he has done in connection with scholarly and research endeavours, and must fairly credit contributions to the work made by others.

The complete [Standards of Practice](http://www.acsw.ab.ca) can be obtained from the ACSW web site, www.acsw.ab.ca.



Resources Are At Our Fingertips!

What about Witnesses?

There are valid reasons for witnesses who prefer not report workplace bullying. Consider which of the following examples may apply to you or your colleague.

- People may be unaware or confused about what workplace bullying means.
- People may be unaware of resources, procedures, complaint process, expectations, and what your role is.
- Some people have heightened discomfort with conflict and with "getting involved".
- Some may be a new hire on probation and do not want to risk damaging options with securing a permanent position. Some may feel trapped for various other reasons.
- Fear of becoming the next target or, perhaps having been a previous target prefers to "stay under the radar".
- Some may be feeling overwhelmed with work responsibilities and personal matters. There may be a personal life crisis others are not aware of.
- Some may have witnessed first hand how ineffective some organizations are with their own complaint processes:
 - Employer supports an authoritarian leadership style.
 - Employer does not follow through with their code of conduct/complaint processes.
 - Complaints are dismissed and or minimized.
 - Problem is labelled a "personality conflict".
 - Perhaps there are no policies in place or unions for added protection.

"New research from the Sauder School of Business at UBC reveals that workers who witness bullying can have a stronger urge to quit than those who experience it firsthand".

Copied from [Bystanders and Bullying](#)

[Witnesses consider quitting more often than the victims](#)

We encourage you to read more about the experiences of a witness (bystander). You also need support and validation about your experience of this abuse. See the enclosed resource list for more information about the experiences of a witness.

Two Tips: Offer your colleague validation that "something has happened". Remember that your Employment Assistance Program (EAP) is there for everyone. Use this service for added clarity, support and strength.

Tips for Social Workers Considering Short &/or Long Term Disability

A tool for your own case management

Contact your Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Office, or Health Benefits representative or Union Rep for instructions on your organizations application process. Consider a consultation with one of these sources if you do not wish to speak directly to your supervisor or manager. Once you apply, your insurance company will send you a letter of decision. This letter will include the name, phone number and claim number for your insurance case manager. We suggest that you speak to your insurance company contact directly about the following information regarding your coverage. The insurance company has the expertise on their policies, procedures and guidelines. You want accurate consistent information.

Things to consider:

1. Record the information you receive from all calls or discussions with (e.g., Insurance, HR, Union, OHS).
2. Request that any instructions given to you are followed in writing.
3. How long will my STD/LTD cover me specifically, what is my claim expiry date?
4. What % of my pay will I receive on STD and will this change on LTD?
5. Are my medications covered and is there an expiry date on prescription coverage?
6. Please explain my other deductions i.e.: income tax, pension, life insurance. Do I pay these benefits out of what I receive from the insurance payments?
7. At what point should I complete an application package for LTD?
8. When I change to LTD would questions number 3 and 4 mean further changes in my coverage? What other changes will occur if I move to LTD?
9. If and when I am accepted on LTD, is it a requirement for me to apply for CPP-Disability? And if so at what point is this required?
10. Do you need anything more from me?

MORE TIPS



NEXT PAGE

Be on the safe side and consider the following tips and suggestions:

- Do ask questions! Make a list before calling.
- Keep a folder just for communications related to STD and LTD issues. Add a sleeve for each of your communications with the Union, Occupational Health, HR Dept and your Medical information. There will be plenty and it can become confusing, especially when you are ill.
- Note: you are entitled to a copy of every medical form your physician sends to your Insurance Company.
- Keep a record all names/contact information and the file numbers that each office assigns to your case.
- Record each correspondence you have. Date, time, name, brief details of phone calls, copies of emails, and all documents received.
- Carry a note pad and calendar with you at all times.
- Ask your support people to help you get your paper work organized.
- If you have a Union, do touch base regularly with your Labour Relations Officer. See your Union web site for contact information.
- Your Union may also have a "Disability Expert" that you need to consult with, especially if having difficulties with your claim, or you are denied.
- If your claim is denied and you do not feel ready to return to work, consult with your doctor about medical support for an appeal. You may be able to apply for 17 weeks of medical EI while you appeal.
- There will be instances when leaving the job will be the best option. Turn to your support system and process your options.

Once you are organized, keep this as simple as possible.

You will be glad you did for yourself.

Your Safety, Health and Wellbeing, Always Comes First

Resources for Social Workers



Articles

Armin Preis (2010). **Analyzing Organizational Impact Factors on Workplace Bullying Prevalence Scientific Report**
www.arminpreis.at/files/2010/PREIS_workplace_bullying_organizational_impacts.pdf

Bond, S. A., Tuckey, M. R., & Dollard, M. F. (2010). **Psychosocial Safety Climate, Workplace Bullying, and Symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress**. *Organization Development Journal*, 28(1), 37-56.

Chen, F., & Fast, N. (2009). **When the Boss Feels Inadequate Power, Incompetence, and Aggression**
http://www-cf.usc.edu/~nathanaf/power_incompetence_and_aggression.pdf

Farmer, David (2011). **Workplace Bullying: An increasing epidemic creating traumatic experiences for targets of workplace bullying**
<http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol.1.No.7%5bSpecial%20Issue%20June%202011%5d/25.pdf>

Ferris, P. (2004). **A preliminary typology of organisational response to allegations of workplace bullying: see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil**. *British Journal Of Guidance & Counselling*, 32(3), 389-395.

Ferris, P.A. (2009). **The role of the consulting psychologist in the prevention, detection, and correction of bullying and mobbing in the workplace**. *Consulting Psychology Journal*, 61(3), 169-189.

Namie, G., & Lutgen-Sandvik, P. E. (2010). **Active and Passive Accomplices: The Communal Character of Workplace Bullying**. *International Journal Of Communication*, 4343-373. <http://www.workplacebullying.org/multi/pdf/N-PLS-2010.pdf>

Namie, G & Namie, R., (2009). **U.S. Workplace Bullying: Some Basic Considerations and Consultation Interventions**. *Consulting Psychology Journal Special Issue: Workplace Bullying and Mobbing: Organizational Consultation Strategies* September, 2009 <http://www.workplacebullying.org/multi/pdf/N-N-2009A.pdf>

van Heugten, K. K. (2011). **Theorizing active bystanders as change agents in workplace bullying of social workers**. *Families In Society: The Journal Of Contemporary Social Services*, 92(2), 219-224.
http://www.familiesinsociety.org/ArticleArchive/2011/92-2_vanHeugten.pdf

Websites

[Information for Employers](#)

[They Pick on Me at Work](#)

[Take the Bully By The Horns](#)

[Your Rights and Responsibilities at Work](#)

[A Guide to the Canadian Human Rights Act](#)

[Bullying Statistics](#)

[Canadian Occupation Safety: the safety standard](#)

[In-depth: Bullying Sticks, stones and bullies CBC News Online](#)

[Keeping safe in the workplace: A Guide for Social Work Practitioners](#)

[Mobbing CA](#)

[Bully at Work](#)

[No Bully For Me](#)

[The Mobbing Encyclopaedia: A Selection of English Literature on Mobbing](#)

[The Law Society of Alberta](#)

[The WBI Guide to Selecting a Therapist](#)

[Stop Bullying Canada](#)

[What Every Target Needs to Know](#)

[Who Gets Targeted](#)



Books

Brutal Bosses and Their Prey: *How to Identify and Overcome Abuse in the Workplace*
Harvey A. Hornstein, PhD

Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace: *Developments in Theory, Research, and Practice* 2nd edition, 2011 Stale Einarsen, Helge Hole, Dieter Zapf, Cary Cooper.

Bully Blind: *Inspired by True Stories* Pat Swan

Faculty Incivility *The Rise of the Academic Bully Culture and What to Do About It* Darla J. Twale and Barbara M. De Luca

Mobbing: *Causes, Consequences and Solutions* 2012, Maureen Duffy & Len Sperry

Snakes in Suits: *Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths Go To Work*
Paul Babiak & Robert D. Hare

The Bully at Work, 2nd ed. (2009). *What You Can Do to Stop the Hurt and Reclaim Your Dignity On the Job.* Gary Namie & Ruth Namie

The Bully-Free Workplace (2011) *Stop Jerks, Weasels & Snakes from Killing Your Organization.* Gary Namie & Ruth Namie

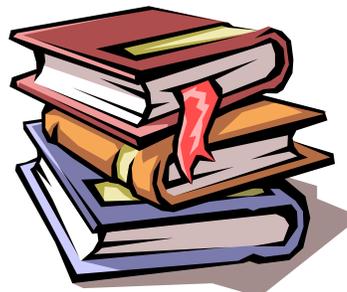
Trauma and Health: *Physical Health Consequences of Exposure to Extreme Stress*
Paula P. Schnurr and Bonnie L. Green

Workplace Bullying: *A survival Guide,* Katherine Williams

What Every Target of Workplace Bullying Needs to Know, Edited by Anton Hout

What Would Machiavelli Do? *The Ends Justify the Meanness,* Stanley Bing

Woman's Inhumanity to Woman, Phyllis Chesler



Social Workers, Informed and Empowered

"Knowledge For Positive Power"

In Alberta, the current Occupational Health and Safety legislation requires employers to address the hazard of workplace harassment and violence. All types of workplaces have a potential for harassment or violent situations, and employers should strive to minimize this risk and ensure a healthy safe work environment.

Legislation – Alberta

Though Alberta does not specifically address bullying in their OHS legislation, a guide published by the safety regulator in Alberta (Worksafe Alberta) addresses the issue of harassment as well violence at work that you may find helpful. See:

Preventing Violence and Harassment at the Workplace

This guide identifies harassment as any verbal threats and abuse, unwelcome remarks and condescension or paternalism which undermines self-respect. The test is whether a reasonable person knows, or ought to know, that the behavior would be considered unwelcome or inappropriate by the recipient. It may be a single event or may involve a continuing series of incidents. You can contact them directly at 1-866-415-8690 if you have any questions i.e.: How do you enforce these guidelines?

[General Workplace Harassment](#). **Alberta Human Rights Commission**

[Harassment as a form of discrimination](#). **Info Sheet. Alberta Human Rights Commission**

Part 27 of the Occupational Health and Safety Code of Alberta requires employers to develop policies, procedures, and workplace arrangements to effectively minimize or eliminate workplace violence, as well as to instruct employees on how to appropriately respond to an incident of violence and obtain assistance.

[Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.A. 2000, c-o-2, Section 2 \(Obligations of Employers and Workers\)](#)

[Occupational Health and Safety Code, 2009, Part 27, Sections 389 – 392 \(Violence\)](#)

[OHS Code – Explanation Guide](#). Alberta Employment and Immigration
- See Part 27

Legislation in Ontario

[Legislative Assembly of Ontario Bill 168](#), Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act (Violence and Harassment in the Workplace) 2009

For more information see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2rboi5Dop8>

Resolving Bullying Issues

Violence, harassment and bullying in the workplace are complex issues that can be challenging to enforce.

It is always a good practice to first try to solve any problems or issues internally. Failing that, you may want to then consult with your employer, Human Resources, Union Representative or joint Health and Safety Committee Representative to see what action they can take to help resolve the issue. You may also contact your colleagues professional regulatory association to discuss their complaint process i.e.:

Alberta College of Social Workers www.acsw.ab.ca

College of Alberta Psychologists www.cap.ab.ca

College of Physicians and Surgeons www.cpsa.ab.ca

College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta www.nurses.ab.ca .

Employees are recommended to document details such as exactly what happened, the date(s) the incident occurred, the names of any possible witnesses. Conversation that takes place regarding the incident should also be well documented. Recorded phone messages, copies of emails, documents, memo's or letters will be helpful. This information serves as

proof that the issue was brought to the attention of the employer and to verify whether the issue was addressed appropriately.

If your employer is not following proper procedures, if you feel that the investigation was conducted in an unfair manner, or if a satisfactory resolution has not been obtained, then you should also speak with your provincial regulatory authority and they will advise you of your rights and options under the relevant legislation. In Alberta, please contact Work Safe Alberta at 1-866-415-8690 / [Work Safe Alberta](#).

Call Alberta Human Rights Commission at 1-800-232-7215 or go to [Alberta Human Rights Commission](#) or to the Canadian Human Rights Commission at 1-800-999-6899 or go to [Canadian Human Rights Commission](#) to find out about their complaint processes and options.

In the case of termination of employment, if you feel that you were let go as a result of the complaint you filed, contact Alberta Employment Standards at 1-877-427-3731 / [Alberta Employment Standards](#) to discuss this with them.

Usually you cannot claim employment insurance (EI) if you quit your job. However, there are circumstances in which you can still qualify for employment insurance.

A number of circumstances for quitting are considered just cause. Go to [Service Canada](#) for more information.

Get information about appealing an Employment Insurance decision at [Serving Employment Insurance Appellants](#).

Legal

If the situation at work becomes unbearable and you have to quit or if you are unjustly terminated, you may seek legal recourse through the courts for unjust or constructive dismissal. You may also consider speaking with a lawyer regarding any legal recourse available to you. For more information see:

[Practices of an Employer that are Contrary to the Law](#)

Promoting Respect and Dignity in the Workplace. **Emond Harnden LLP**

Barks with Bite. OHS Canada.

Statistics - Costs

Knowledge of workplace violence trends relies on reports of incidents. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety CCOHS does not track workplace injuries or incidents. The Association of Worker's Compensation Boards of Canada gathers data from each of the provincial and territorial compensation boards and creates statistical data. The contact information for AWCBS is available here:

http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/information/injury_statistics.html

Workplace Bullying: The Problem and Its Cost

40% of Canadians Bullied at Work.

Employment Standards of Manitoba Dealing with Workplace Harassment and Bullying

Bullying in the Workplace: Handbook for the Workplace. OSACH

Information on Workplace Bullying

Why Workplace Bullying Legislation Makes Good Business Sense

Stop Bullying Canada (provides some nationwide statistics)

Workplace Bullying – Costs. Canadian Occupational Safety Magazine

Harassment Policies – In Other Provinces

[Preventing Workplace Violence and Workplace Harassment](#). Ontario Ministry of Labour

[Policy on the prevention & resolution of harassment in the workplace](#). Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2001

[Psychological Harassment at Work](#). Commission des normes du travail du Québec

[Employers' Guide to Preventing and Stopping Harassment in Saskatchewan Workplaces](#). Worksafe Saskatchewan, June 2008

[Guideline for the Prevention of Harassment & Violence in the Workplace](#). Safe Manitoba

**WORKPLACE BULLYING
CAN'T EXIST
WHERE IT ISN'T TOLERATED**

Workplace Bullying Institute

Inspirational Stories –

Random Acts of Kindness

Feel inspired and inspire others.....



Hi, my name is Mason. I'm a Grade 10 student. Two years ago, when i was in Grade 8, I was in the rough patch. Throughout my life I've never exactly been accepted into the major social groups. I've always kind of floated between, that's due to never really feeling accepted. It is also due to constant verbal assaults and attacks against my self esteem. And they worked, they worked real great. Throughout that year I was a wreck, with every day getting worse and worse. Everyone that has ever been in my situation will understand what I mean by "the last resort" - yes....I thought about killing myself....but that's not the scary part.. The scary part is that I knew EXACTLY how I was going to do it. I had a very detailed plan in my head. One day I was just sitting in the hallway having lunch when this girl, Sam, had maybe spoken 4 words to before since her sister was our volleyball coach, came up, had lunch with me, and gave me a huge hug at the end of lunch. This happened many times after that. I honestly do thank her, for saving my life. And I have accomplished so much with my life since that year - I'm a high honours student, I'm in a band and we go on a three day tours to schools across Alberta in May, and I'm also getting to go to Australia in November for the world competition of an aquatic sport called Lifesaving. I thank her so much for those words that she said to me those days. Because without her, I honestly would not be here - I would be dead. I'm just wishing that more people out there could be a person like Sam and do for someone else what she did for me, reach out to random people, you might save their lives.

There was a new girl in my grade but not in my class. The kids in her class were not making friends or being nice. Some calling her a name because her makeup and clothes were different. I saw her walking home from school the same direction as me, so I walked with her and then we were friends and also friends with some of the kids in my class. After that some kids in her class were talking to her too and not calling her that name. It was nice for me too because it gave me a friend to walk home with and she is awesome. I'm so glad we talked that day!!

After experiencing many bullying situations throughout the years and in memory of others who have passed and are no longer here with us today due to bullying, I started Jelly Beans and Rainbows anti-bullying program. Each colour Jelly Bean represents a person being bullied wherever they may be located and after the rain is finished and gone, the Rainbow appears and the days are beautiful again. By working together, we all can make a better future which everyone can enjoy – one jellybean at a time.

Taken from [Bully Free Alberta](#)



TWO MORE TIPS!

Did you know that by simply walking over to a target and/or standing beside them can stop the bully(s) in 10 seconds! Saying and/or doing nothing else will still offer your colleague powerful support. www.bullyfree.ca

Let's show the world who we are and share some of our own powerful stories about social workers inspiring each other.

Let's put a stop to workplace bullying and start with ourselves.



Together in numbers we stop the enabling, and put an end to bullying!

Linda Rae Crockett, RSW

I have been a social worker since graduating the Grant Mac Ewan Diploma program in 1989, followed by my University of Calgary (Edmonton Extension) BSW in 1998. My background has been with income support, WCB Specialized Unit, Child Protection, AADAC, and the Alberta Health Services Cancer Corridor. I will graduate with my MSW in April of 2013. This practicum project has been exciting, overwhelming, exhilarating, frightening, inspiring, frustrating, healing and a true growing experience. In addition to providing this resource kit for the ACSW website, I have also created a Workplace Bullying workshop specifically for social workers. I believe that those of us who have experienced workplace bullying share in some unique factors in comparison to other professions. My goal is to help increase awareness, supports, resources, and create changes that will support and enhance the safety of our work environments. My intention is to create a safe space for stories to be shared, questions to be asked, and solutions to be created. We are an amazing profession with an abundance of skills, resources, networks, and connections. Positive change is easier and more accessible than you think! My passion for this subject is driven by my strong belief that social workers are incredibly devoted, determined, compassionate, skilled, giving and thoughtful individuals who are far too often unrecognized heroes. No one deserves to be bullied, harassed or intimidated. No one should experience the trauma of constant isolation or anxiety driving to work worried about the abuse they may be facing that day. We work diligently to assist others during their life crisis. We are entitled to feel safe and supported while we manage these dynamic caseloads. My passion is about speaking up, breaking the silence and secrecy, opening doors, and encouraging others to stand up for their rights. The remaining part of my career will be devoted to assisting my fellow colleagues. Just one small change will create another, then another. Since starting this project, amazing changes have already begun. Take a step with me, you deserve it! MSWStudentcrockett@gmail.com