



MUNASA Bulletin – May 2019

### **Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace**

This month's bulletin will focus on bullying and harassment in the workplace, and what you can do about it if you are in that situation.

The MUNASA Executive members and its legal counsel have seen the incidence of bullying and harassment of competent employees rise significantly. Countless hours go into helping a member who is facing harassment and bullying. Imagine what it does to the employee, it destroys their self-confidence, their morale, their self-esteem, it affects their home life, their physical health, their mental and emotional wellbeing, and much more. They begin to question everything they do, everything they say and everything they think. It often leads to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and stress. We often hear, 'I never thought this would happen to me, I never thought that I would need MUNASA's help for this'.

A study conducted by the *Workplace Bullying Institute*, available on the Canada Safety Council website, states: "37 per cent of workers have been bullied, with 57 per cent of the targets being women. The majority of bullies (72 per cent) are people in positions of authority. Whereas peer bullies are less frequent at 18 per cent. Worse, statistics show these bullies don't pick on the new guy, but long-term, well-established employees. The most common victims are women in their 40s." <https://canadasafetycouncil.org/working-bully/>

Harassment and bullying can take many forms: continual non-constructive criticisms, inequity, verbal abuse, racism, ageism, isolation and exclusion, insults, yelling and intimidation, and unrealistic job expectations. It creates a climate of fear and a toxic work environment not only for the employee involved but also for others in the office. What constitutes psychological harassment? A clear definition is provided on the CNESST website at: <https://www.cnt.gouv.qc.ca/en/in-case-of/psychological-or-sexual-harassment/index.html>.

Examples of what constitutes harassment is found at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/healthy-workplace/prevention-resolution-harassment/harassment-tool-employees.html#c6>.

Is being bullied or harassed at work making you ill? Are you sleep deprived, has your appetite changed, are you continually preoccupied with the events of the day where you felt bullied?

Are you suffering with anxiety, stress, headaches, or have an inability to concentrate or to express yourself? Is your work tension spilling over into your family life?

**What to do:**

- Do not ignore it! Document the specific details, time, date and description (keep copies of emails, notes from conversations and meetings that involved harmful interactions).
- Remember to keep copies of emails from clients and colleagues that praise your work or contradict the exaggerated or false accusations made against you.
- Do your best to stay calm, limit your emotions and stick to the facts. Identify trustworthy witnesses.
- Seek third party mediation from MUNASA and/or legal advice to reduce vulnerability and to help develop a strategy to address the bullying/harassment.
- Get medical attention or use the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) to help you deal with supervisor or colleague-induced stress.
- Do not blame yourself or minimize your skills and contributions, or question whether you are capable of doing your job, because this is often the intention of the harasser or bully.

Is it Harassment? A Tool to Guide Employees is available at:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/healthy-workplace/prevention-resolution-harassment/harassment-tool-employees.html>.

Another source on how to deal with a bully in the workplace can be found at

<https://canadasafetycouncil.org/working-bully/>.

**Do not ignore being harassed or bullied, please contact the MUNASA office at [info@munasa.com](mailto:info@munasa.com) for assistance.**

The MUNASA Executive