WORKPLACE BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT
Bullying is repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or group of workers that creates a risk to health and safety.

Unreasonable behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- abusive, insulting or offensive language or comments;
- unjustified criticism or complaints;
- deliberately excluding someone from workplace activities;
- withholding information that is vital for effective work performance;
- setting unreasonable timelines or constantly changing deadlines;
- setting tasks that are unreasonably below or beyond a person’s skill level;
- denying access to information, supervision, consultation or resources to the detriment of the worker;
- spreading misinformation or malicious rumours; and
- unreasonably changing work arrangements such as rosters and leave to deliberately inconvenience a particular worker or workers.

Harassment occurs when a person engages in conduct towards another person which:

- is unwanted;
- may offend, humiliate or intimidate the other person; and
- is targeted at this person because of a protected ground e.g. race, sexual orientation, disability etc.

Bullying and harassment can be directed downwards (from supervisors/managers to workers), sideways (between workers) or upwards (workers to supervisors/managers).

In assessing whether behaviour is unreasonable, you should consider if an impartial person observing the situation would think it's acceptable to behave that way.

REASONABLE MANAGEMENT ACTION
It is important to differentiate between bullying and harassment and a manager/supervisor’s legitimate authority to direct and control the way work is done. A manager can make decisions about poor performance, take disciplinary action, and direct the way work is carried out.

Reasonable management action conducted in a reasonable way does not constitute bullying and harassment. Examples include:

- performance appraisals;
- meetings to address under performance;
- counselling or disciplining a staff member for misconduct;
- modifying duties including transfer or re-deployment;
- investigating alleged misconduct;
- denying a benefit in relation to employment; and
- refusing permission to return to work due to a medical condition.

CONFLICT AT WORK
People may have differences of opinion occasionally and these are a normal part of working life. Disagreements can leave people feeling upset, but may not constitute bullying or harassment. However, if left unresolved, conflict may develop into a bullying/harassment situation.
SINGLE ACTS
If a person is subject to a single incident of unreasonable behaviour, it’s unlikely to be bullying or harassment. However, the incident should not be ignored as it may have the potential to escalate. Addressing the behaviour before it is repeated is the best way to manage the situation.

EXPECTED WORKPLACE BEHAVIOUR
Under work health and safety laws, workers and other people in our workplace must take reasonable care so that they do not adversely affect the health and safety of others. We are all expected to:

- display responsible and professional behaviour;
- treat each other with courtesy and respect;
- listen to the views and concerns of others and respond appropriately; and
- be fair and honest with each other.

This applies to behaviours that occur:

- in connection with work, even outside normal working hours;
- during work activities;
- at work-related events, e.g. conferences, work-related social functions; and
- on social media - interactions with colleagues or clients and actions that may affect them directly or indirectly.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FEEL YOU ARE BEING BULLIED OR HARASSED
Primary Health Care has a duty to provide a safe and healthy workplace. If you, or someone else, is being bullied or harassed, you should:

- request that the behaviour stop, if you feel able to do so;
- speak to someone you trust;
- raise it with your manager or, if you do not feel able to do so, with another manager;
- follow the process outlined in the Primary Health Care Workplace Discrimination Bullying and Harassment Policy; and
- report the situation via the incident reporting process.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE ACCUSED OF BULLYING OR HARASSMENT
Being accused can be upsetting. Remember that bullying and harassment starts with a person’s feelings and perception. Don’t dismiss the complaint. Remain calm and avoid aggravating an already difficult situation. Listen to the concerns, respect their feelings and stop any behaviour that may be perceived as offensive. Be prepared to change your behaviour and discuss how you might work together more effectively.

If you believe you are being unjustly accused please discuss this with your manager.

CONSEQUENCES
Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against a person who has been found to have breached the Primary Health Care Workplace Discrimination Bullying and Harassment Policy.

FURTHER INFORMATION
The Primary Health Care Workplace Discrimination Bullying and Harassment Policy is located on Prime and applies to all workers, including contractors and visitors to Primary Health Care work sites.