

New Report Looks at the Costs of Workplace Bullying



Bullying isn't just a schoolyard problem. Workplace bullying is a serious problem and one with costly consequences for employees and employers alike.

According to a new report by The Conference Board of Canada, employers need to adopt proactive strategies to recognize and address increasing levels of workplace bullying and its costly impact.

'We're seeing more instances of bullying in the workplace and employers need to recognize that workplace bullying is happening and that there are costs if the issue is ignored or poorly handled,' said Ruth Wright, Director, Leadership and Human Resources at The Conference Board of Canada. 'Bullying in the workplace has an impact on the organization as a whole. It reflects a negative culture as well as performance and reputation.'

The most common type of bullying is top-down bullying, where a superior bullies an employee. However, lateral bullying (peer to peer), and bottom-up bullying (employee bullies superior) can also occur in the workplace.

And the direct victims of bullying aren't the only ones impacted by this conduct—the bystanders who witness it are affected, too.

One of the main means of bullying in the workplace is cyberbullying using email. Email lets people from all levels of an organization place demands on each other to jump the lines of authority and shift the work queue. It may also let those doing the bullying feel 'anonymous.'

Workplace Bullying Primer: What Is It and How to Deal With It examines the issue of bullying in workplaces, its causes and associated organizational and individual costs, including:

- Legal expenses
- Absenteeism
- Reduced productivity
- Reduced job satisfaction and engagement
- Stress and psychological problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder
- Employee turnover

- Increased levels of disability leave.

The report suggests that employers, who could be held legally responsible, need to take greater responsibility and address this detrimental behaviour using proactive strategies, including education, policies and procedures, investigations of bullying incidents and coaching.

Go to the OHS Insider's Workplace Violence Compliance Centre for more information, tools and resources on workplace bullying and other forms of workplace violence and harassment, such as:

- WorkSafeBC's new bullying and harassment policies
- The costs of permitting workplace bullies
- How common workplace bullying is in Canada
- Information on why employers can't tolerate bullying
- A workplace violence infographic.