BUILDING RESPECTFUL WORKPLACES

OVERVIEW OF COLLEGE FRAMEWORK FOR PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION, RACISM AND HARASSMENT

ACRRM is committed to promoting and upholding safe and respectful workplaces and communities with a culture of belonging; where diversity is celebrated, and people can reach their full potential.

Accordingly, the College framework to address issues of Bullying, Discrimination, Harassment and Racism is based on a resilience paradigm, emphasising proactive and preventive approaches to encourage positive behaviours across entire workplace cultures.

While regulatory processes are in place our focus is on creating training and work environments for our members which understand and value respectful behaviours and which enable the individuals within them to learn, improve, and support their peers towards creating a better workplace.

THE APPROACH

The approach of this Framework is to consider Bullying, Discrimination including Racism and Harassment (BHDR) as a public health issue. This entails approaching such behaviour not as a single or series of individual acts, but rather as the interplay of personal, interpersonal, institutional, and environmental factors. Within this perspective, the focus of BHDR behaviour will not be of the "perpetrator", but rather the collective responsibility and actions of bystanders, supervisors and management.

The creation of a disrespectful workplace is not the sole responsibility of one or a few individuals but a structural organisational issue. Therefore, resolving BHDR not only requires a clear process for responding to reports, but a change in workplace culture whereby everyone takes seriously their responsibility to protect the welfare and dignity of every person.

WHY RESPECTFUL WORKPLACES ARE IMPORTANT

BHDR are debilitating experiences that affect the mental, emotional, physical and social health of individuals and a public health issue impacting the whole community. Without intervention, they form a self-perpetuating culture sustained by the belief that they are normal and traditional.

- Impact on individuals: Disrespectful behaviour can negatively impact individuals including their self-esteem, mental and physical well-being, work performance and relationships.

- Impact on bystanders: Witnessing BHDR among colleagues can lead to low morale, engagement and productivity.

- Impact on patients: Disrespect threatens patient safety and quality care as it inhibits effective teamwork, open communication, robust feedback systems for quality improvement and staff morale.

- Impact on the profession: Experiencing or witnessing disrespectful behaviours creates an "unprofessional learning environment, invites conflict and compromise by students that would otherwise tend naturally toward avowed professional virtues."

- Impact on care: BHDR can result in lower productivity, reduced career longevity, burnout, low job satisfaction, reduced organisational commitment, increased intentions to leave, absenteeism and presenteeism.

- Impact on learning environment: BHDR reduces trainees' performance and self-confidence and discourages them from seeking advice or raising concerns.

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DEFINING BULLYING AND DISRESPECTFUL BEHAVIOURS

Building Respectful workplaces requires a common understanding of what constitutes BDHR and other disrespectful behaviours. A commitment to Respectful Workplaces seeks to recognise and prevent all acts of disrespect even where these do not constitute BDHR.

BULLYING

Workplace bullying is defined as repeated, unreasonable and inappropriate behaviour that creates a risk to health and safety. It is behaviour repeated over time or occurs as part of a pattern of behaviour. Such behaviour intimidates, offends, degrades, insults or humiliates. It can include psychological, social, and physical bullying and can be intended or unintended. Bullying covers a spectrum of behaviour including:

- Abusive, insulting or offensive language or comments
- Aggressive and intimidating conduct
- Derogatory remarks about lifestyle choices, physical/mental abilities, or racial/ethnic background
- Belittling or humiliating comments
- Victimisation
- Practical jokes or initiation
- Unjustified criticism or complaints
- Deliberately excluding someone from work-related 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, resources, or supervision to worker's detriment
- Spreading misinformation or malicious rumours; and
- Changing rosters and leave to deliberately inconvenience particular worker or workers.

More subtle patterns of behaviour are also seen as harassment or bullying, for example:

- Ostracism (e.g. physical or social isolation; exclusion from work-related activities)
- Undermining (e.g. persistent and baseless criticism)
- Sabotage (e.g. giving meaningless tasks or confusing and/or contradictory instructions)

Bullying is not: reasonable management action to effectively direct and control the way work is carried out. The allocation of workload, performance appraisal or feedback to workers, even if they may result in some discomfort, are not cases of bullying if they are carried out in a lawful and reasonable way, taking the circumstances into account.

Discrimination (including Racism): occurs when a person, or a group of people, is treated less favourably than another person or group because of their background or certain personal characteristics.   These characteristics might include: age, disability, industrial activity, employment activity, lawful sexual activity, marital status, physical features, political belief or activity, race (including colour, nationality, ethnicity and ethnic origin), pregnancy, religious belief or activity, sex, parental status or status as a carer, breastfeeding, gender identity, sexual orientation, social origin, irrelevant criminal record, personal association (whether as a relative or otherwise) with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is broadly defined as unwelcome sexual conduct that a reasonable person would anticipate would offend, humiliate or intimidate the person harassed. Sexual Harassment can occur between males, between females, female to male, and male to female. It can be physical, verbal or written.

Note: Unlike Workplace Bullying, discrimination or harassment only needs to involve a single incident rather than a repeated pattern of behaviour to be considered unlawful.

DISRESPECTFUL BEHAVIOUR - HOW IT HAPPENS AND HOW TO RESPOND:

ORGANIZATION		
CREATORS	**PRECIPITATORS**	**PERPETUATORS**
• High job demands	• Hierarchy and power imbalance	• Fear of consequences of speaking out
• Limited job control	• Silence	• Lack of trust in systems and protections
• Organisational change	• Ignorance of BHDR as unacceptable behaviours	• Denial
• Role conflict and ambiguity	• Failed leadership	• Legacy of abuse
• Job Insecurity	• Racism or discrimination	• A culture of acceptance
• Unreasonable expectations of patients or clients	• Lack of necessary teaching or interpersonal skills	• Lack of understanding of BDHR expectations
• Lack of resources	• Unhealthy work practice	• Lack of processes to resolve inappropriate behaviour
• Lack of training	• Lack of transparency	
• Inappropriate work scheduling, shift work, and poorly designed rostering	• Conflicting organisational interests and priorities	
• Unreasonable performance measures or timeframes		
• Leadership styles		
• Poor workplace relationships		
• Workforce characteristics - groups of workers that may be more at risk of being exposed to workplace bullying		

ACTIONS & RESPONSES

INDIVIDUAL: Identify the behaviour. Check the policy. Calmly approach the perpetrator. Act as early as possible. Raise concerns informally at first. Be non-confrontational. Seek third party or external advice. Document everything. Discuss with supervisor. Report as early as possible. Seek advice from OHS. If behaviour persists, seek advice from Fair Work Commission, Human Rights Commission, Anti-Discrimination, College, Industrial organisations (e.g. RDAA, AMA)

BYSTANDER: Be an active bystander. Critically evaluate each situation and resist the urge to rationalise or justify inaction or bad behaviour. Transcend anticipating negative consequences. Trust that others will see the rightness of our actions. Be ready to stand near the person being bullied, to support them, to help them to report or report on their behalf.

SUPERVISOR: Set a zero-tolerance approach. Consult with employees. Promote an open-door policy. Be an effective leader. Model respectful behaviours at all time. Identify the signs of bullying, seek the source and intervene early. Watch out for those most at risk. Develop and implement a bullying policy which clearly identifies the expected behaviours and consequences of not complying. Build a positive work culture and respectful relationships.

MANAGEMENT: Recognise bullying, discrimination, harassment and racism are structural organisational issues. Build respectful workplaces. Effective HR departments. Transparent, timely, confidential and impartial processes. Support for complainants and respondents. Commitment to early intervention. Hold senior staff accountable. Train all staff. Processes that identify disrespectful behaviour, its risk factors, and respond quickly. Clear, enforceable, consistent conduct codes. Zero tolerance. Staff-wide awareness of policies and procedures.

BUILDING RESPECTFUL CULTURES – KEY APPROACHES

For everyone:

- **Learn to identify BHDR:** Workplace bullying is repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or group of workers that creates a risk to health and safety. A single incident of unreasonable behaviour is not considered to be workplace bullying however it may escalate and should not be ignored. Sexual harassment and Discrimination may constitute a single act.

- **Demonstrate respectful behaviour and be an active bystander:** Each person displays personal integrity and professionalism, practices fairness and understanding, avoids excusing unfairness, demonstrates respect for individual rights and differences and is accountable for their actions.

For supervisors and managers:

- **Be an effective leader:** A reluctance to address BHDR issues within the workplace can enable negative behaviour to exist and flourish. Ensure all unreasonable behaviour is immediately acted upon. Focus on developing a positive leadership style that communicates effectively with staff.

- **Identify the signs of BHDR:** Even with a sound structure to deal with workplace BHDR, some staff may be reluctant to speak up. Supervisors should be particularly alert to warning indicators:

    - less socially active or confident
    - appear to be scared, stressed, anxious or depressed
    - absent more often or less productive
    - display physical signs of stress such as headaches, backaches and not getting enough sleep.

- **Seek the source:** BHDR in the workplace isn't always immediately visible and may occur through digital means such as email or social media rather than face to face.

- **Watch out for those most at risk and be conscious of power differentials:** Some workers are more susceptible to BHDR. Being mindful of the more vulnerable among an organisation's staff may help to identify and prevent BHDR. Be aware of power differentials within the organisation, and the impact of words, emotions and actions on individuals with lesser 'power'.

For management:

- **Set a zero-tolerance approach:** Have a BHDR policy that establishes guidelines for employees to lodge complaints and have their claims investigated, as well as a clear, transparent process to resolve disputes through conciliation and hold people accountable.

- **Consult with employees:** Consistent dialogue with staff helps identify BHDR behaviour within the workplace, empowering them to have a say about policies and procedures that best suit the organisation. This may include open meetings with all staff, management meetings with health and safety representatives on behalf of staff, or anonymous feedback.

- **Promote an open-door policy:** Encouraging staff to approach managers or HR to discuss BHDR behaviour will help to ease the reluctance of people who have been bullied to come forward. For the College this open door policy applies to all members and trainees.

- **Scale back on stress:** BHDR behaviour is more likely to occur in stressful work environments. Consult with line managers and take steps to ensure staff workloads are monitored and manageable.

- **Review success:** A policy is only as good as its implementation and uptake. Progress should be monitored. The ways BHDR claims are handled, gauging staff morale, and engagement through consultation and surveys are some effective mechanisms to gather information to enable review.

> *ACRRM acknowledges Australian Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islander People as the first inhabitants of the nation. We respect the traditional owners of lands across Australia in which our members and staff work and live and pay respect to their elders past present and future.*

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