

## Workplace Anti Bullying Policy

Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services (Djerriwarrh) is committed to ensuring that the working environment at Djerriwarrh is free from bullying and that adequate measures are in place to both prevent bullying from occurring and to effectively manage any complaints of bullying.

Djerriwarrh will:

- Create an environment which is free from bullying and where all employees and volunteers are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect;
- Provide an effective procedure for complaints based on the principles of natural justice; and,
- Promote appropriate and high standards of conduct at all times.

### What is workplace bullying?

Workplace bullying is inappropriate behaviour that can occur at work and/or in the course of employment or volunteering. It may be direct or indirect, verbal or physical, or some form of negative interaction between one or more persons against another or others. Bullying behaviour can be regarded as undermining an individual's right to dignity at work.

An isolated incident of behaviour as described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but as a one-off incident, is not considered to be bullying. Bullying is repeated unreasonable behaviour. Bullying may harm, intimidate, threaten, victimise, undermine, offend, degrade or humiliate another person.

Workplace bullying can take place between staff members or between employees and clients, volunteers, contractors or visitors that they are dealing with.

*Workplace bullying can affect the safety and health of employees and volunteers. For this reason, it should be managed like any other workplace safety and health hazard. Employers have a duty under occupational safety and health laws to find out if bullying happens in their workplaces and to take steps to stop it happening.*

### Bullying may be overt or covert

Overt bullying may include:

- Abusive behaviour towards another employee or volunteer such as threatening gestures or actual violence;
- Aggressive, abusive or offensive language, including threats or shouting;
- Demeaning remarks; or,
- Constant unreasonable and unconstructive criticism.

Covert bullying may include:

- Deliberate exclusion, isolation or alienation of the employee or volunteer from normal work interaction, such as intentionally excluding the employee or volunteer from meetings;
- Placing unreasonably high work demands on one employee or volunteer but not on others;
- Allocation of demeaning jobs or meaningless tasks only;
- Unreasonably ignoring the employee or volunteer;
- Undermining another employee or volunteer, including encouraging others to "gang up" on the employee or volunteer;
- Deliberately withholding information that a person needs to exercise her or his role or entitlements within the organisation; or,
- Repeated refusal of requests for leave or training without adequate explanation and suggestion of alternatives.

**Bullying does not include:**

- Expressing difference of opinion in an appropriate manner;
- Giving lawful instructions to staff about the performance of their duties;
- Workplace counselling;
- Managing under-performance; and,
- Other action taken in accordance with Djerriwarrh policy or procedures.

**Employer Responsibilities**

The following responsibilities apply to Djerriwarrh and to its individual Board Members, CEO, Managers and Coordinators.

1. The employer must not bully:
  - Employees and volunteers or prospective employees and volunteers;
  - Contract workers; and/or
  - A client, customer or any other person in the course of providing services or participating in Djerriwarrh services.
2. The employer must not engage in any act of victimisation and must not cause, instruct, induce, aid or permit another person to bully.
3. The employer must be aware of, identify and prevent bullying in the workplace.
4. The employer will endeavor to eliminate inappropriate behaviour regardless of whether a complaint is received about that behaviour.
5. The employer will encourage all staff and volunteers to behave in accordance with the principles of equal opportunity and anti discrimination.
6. The employer will provide leadership and role modelling in relation to appropriate and professional behaviour in the workplace.

7. The employer will respond promptly, sensitively and confidentially to all situations where inappropriate behaviour is exhibited or alleged to have occurred.
8. The employer will fully investigate complaints of bullying expeditiously, thoroughly and in accordance with the Grievance Policy (PO 048).

### **Employee/Volunteer Responsibilities**

The first responsibility of each employee and volunteer is not to engage in any form of bullying. In addition, all employees and volunteers are required to be responsible for the following actions:

1. be aware of and identify bullying behaviour and where appropriate seek advice and assistance to stop any further instances of bullying behavior;
2. behave in accordance with the principles of equal opportunity and anti discrimination;
3. if bullying behaviour is witnessed or experienced and the employee or volunteer feels able, speak with the alleged bully to object to the bullying behavior, otherwise approach a Contact Officer (see below);
4. offer to act as a witness if the person being bullied decides to report the incident;
5. respect the confidentiality of all parties if involved in the investigation of a complaint; and,
6. do not condone bullying by failing to do anything about it, such as raising the matter with the bully or with a Line Supervisor.

A staff member or volunteer found to have bullied another staff member or volunteer or to have condoned workplace bullying may be subject to disciplinary action.

Employees and volunteers who experience bullying can seek to resolve the situation informally or formally.

### **Informal complaints procedure**

- Employees and volunteers should contact their supervisor, or a Contact Officer to discuss an informal complaint procedure.
- Informal mechanisms may include a local management strategy to raise awareness or education session in relation to appropriate behaviour in the workplace.
- Informal resolution may also include local mediation between parties at the workplace where appropriate. Mediation is usually only appropriate for cases of unwitting bullying, and is not appropriate for serial bullying.
- Alternatively, an employee or volunteer may ask their supervisor to speak to the alleged bully on their behalf. The supervisor will privately convey the employee's or volunteer's concerns and reiterate Djerriwarrh's workplace bullying policy without assessing the merits of the case.
- A supervisor or manager who observes unacceptable conduct occurring must take independent action even though no complaint has been made.

Bullying can result in trauma and stress for the person who is a target of inappropriate behaviour. When an incident has an impact on an employee's or volunteer's emotional wellbeing, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) may be able to assist.

### Contact Officers

Within Djerriwarrh, a complaint of bullying may be lodged with a line supervisor, a Coordinator or Manager. This person will act as the Contact Officer. Where the complaint is against the CEO, the Chair of the Board shall act as the Contact Officer. Where the complaint is against a Manager, the CEO will act as the Contact Officer.

The role of the Contact Officer involves:

- assisting to clarify whether the behaviour could be described as bullying;
- discussing methods for the problem to be resolved either informally or through the formal grievance procedure; and,
- remaining neutral as the focus is on reconciliation of a dispute and not siding with one party against the other.

### Formal complaints

This procedure assumes that informal resolution of the bullying complaint has been unsuccessful or is inappropriate. This procedure will follow the Grievance Policy (PO 048) and Procedure. A formal complaint of bullying will need to be in writing and should be made to the relevant Manager or CEO.

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| <b>Associated Policies</b>                           | PO 048 Grievance<br>PO 050 Unsatisfactory Performance and Disciplinary Action<br>PO 002 Equal Employment Opportunity<br>PO 060 Code of Conduct |
| <b>Associated Procedures</b>                         | PR046a Workplace Anti Bullying<br>PR 048a Grievance  |
| <b>Other associated documents</b><br><b>Internal</b> |  |
| <b>Relevant Legislation</b>                          | Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010<br>The Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)<br>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004                       |
| <b>Other associated documents</b><br><b>External</b> | Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission  |