

Workplace Bullying Policy

At a Glance

Five Good Friends is committed to preventing workplace bullying. We consider bullying to be an unacceptable form of behaviour and it will not tolerate it under any circumstances.

Under State health and safety legislation, including the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld), Five Good Friends has a responsibility to do everything possible to eliminate or reduce risks to worker health and safety. All staff have a right to a workplace that is free from bullying.

Workers must also accept responsibility for their actions towards others in the workplace and must not take part in any bullying conduct.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, independent contractors and subcontractors (collectively, workers).

Objective

To provide a clear position and direction on the issue of workplace bullying.

Definition and Examples

- Workplace bullying - repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker, or group of workers, which creates a risk to a worker's mental or physical health and safety. Unreasonable behaviour is that which a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances (i.e. those that the alleged bully would reasonably be expected to know), would expect to victimise, humiliate, undermine or threaten its recipient.

Behaviour includes actions of individuals or a group and may involve using a system of work as a means of victimising, humiliating, undermining or threatening another person. The source of bullying could be workers within the Five Good Friends, its clients or suppliers.

- The following types of behaviour, when repeated or occurring as part of a pattern of behaviour, can constitute bullying:
 - verbal abuse
 - excluding or isolating workers
 - psychological harassment
 - intimidation

- assigning meaningless tasks unrelated to a worker's position
 - giving impossible assignments
 - initiation practices
 - sabotaging another worker's work
 - deliberately withholding information that is vital for effective work, and
 - ridiculing a worker's opinions.
- Legitimate and appropriate actions to manage work performance or discipline a staff member for misconduct do not constitute workplace bullying.
 - Generally, this policy is concerned with behaviour that is persistent and part of an identifiable pattern. The specific form of the behaviour need not be the same – bullying can involve diverse incidents, e.g. - verbal abuse, isolation and deliberate damage to personal property.
 - While a single incident of the behaviour described does not fall within the above definition, Five Good Friends does not condone and will not ignore such incidents. Any concern should be reported and will be considered seriously.

Policy Statement

- Five Good Friends will deal with all reports of workplace bullying seriously, promptly and confidentially.

Approach

- If a worker feels comfortable doing so, they should advise the other person, verbally or in writing, in a direct and firm manner that their behaviour is unacceptable. This may be enough to stop the unwelcome behaviour.
- If the behaviour is serious or recurring, or if a worker is not comfortable raising the matter directly with the alleged perpetrator, a report can be made to the Human Resources Manager.
- Five Good Friends has established confidential procedures for handling reports of serious incidents under this policy. These procedures are based on the principle that the rights and privacy of both parties to the incident should be safeguarded.
- We consider it is important that any report be dealt with promptly, professionally and with sensitivity.
- It is suggested parties keep diary notes of all incidents with names, dates, witnesses and any response made in relation to the incidents.
- We strongly encourage staff to report incidents of workplace bullying. However, reporting is voluntary and not mandatory. Nevertheless, if a worker decides not to report issues, Five Good Friends expects that this will be the end of the matter. In particular, the worker must not seek to progress the issue informally, e.g. - allowing the matter to be the subject of conflict with the alleged bully, or

of innuendo or gossip. Breach of this aspect of the policy may attract disciplinary sanctions.

- All workers must appreciate that raising an allegation of bullying against another person in the workplace is a serious matter. Regardless of whether the complaint is substantiated, the act of raising the complaint will have significant and often permanent consequences both personally and professionally for the other party.
- Five Good Friends will not tolerate abuse of the processes outlined in this policy or the making of vexatious complaints.

Mediation

- At mediation, parties will be given the opportunity to discuss the incident and attempt to reach a mutually agreeable resolution. This could include:
 - an apology
 - an undertaking that the behaviour will not recur
 - physical separation within the workplace of the parties involved, or
 - counselling and monitoring of the perpetrator.
- One outcome of the mediation may be that the matter will be investigated.

Investigations

- Investigations can be conducted internally by external bodies.
- If a complaint is to be investigated, both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator will be afforded natural justice. This means that:
 - complaints will be investigated promptly
 - the allegations will be put to the alleged perpetrator
 - each party will be given a fair opportunity to express their version of events, and
 - the alleged perpetrator will be treated as innocent unless the allegations are proven.

General

- Only staff involved in particular processes under this policy will have access to these files.
- Workers involved in a report of bullying may also be offered professional support services such as counselling or medical advice, as appropriate.
- These guidelines may not be practical for every case, parties may suggest more applicable resolution procedures.
- Any person who has been found to have engaged in bullying conduct may be disciplined.
- Such a finding will only be made after an investigation has been carried out under this policy.

- The discipline will be appropriate to the severity of the offence but may involve a warning or dismissal.
- Any person who has been found to have made a report that is vexatious or based on facts that the person ought reasonably to believe to be false will also be subject to disciplinary sanction.
- Mitigating factors, such as personal circumstances, disciplinary and work history, and work performance, will be taken into account, but will not be decisive in determining the appropriate disciplinary measures to be adopted.

References and Related Documents

Five Good Friends

- Grievance Policy
- Sexual Harassment and Victimisation Policy
- Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment Policy

External

- N/A