

# What to do if bullying happens to you

**Bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards an employee, or group of employees, that creates a risk to health and safety.**

A broad range of behaviours can be bullying, and it can be direct or indirect. Some examples of bullying include:

- verbal abuse
- spreading rumours or innuendo about someone
- unjustified criticism or complaints
- deliberately denying access to information that is vital for effective work performance
- excessive scrutiny at work.

## What you can do

Your employer has a duty to provide a safe workplace. If you feel you can raise the issue of bullying within your workplace here are some actions you can take:

- If you can, tell the person the behaviour is unreasonable/inappropriate, that you are offended and want it to stop.
- Get advice from your health and safety representative.
- Keep a record of events that includes the names of people involved (eg witnesses). Make sure the records focus on the facts of the situation (what happened, including dates and times, and, if possible, copies of any documents).
- Use your workplace OHS procedure to report the situation.
- Seek professional counselling and/or advice.
- Talk to people you trust at your workplace (a supervisor, manager, health and safety representative, union representative or someone from human resources).

## How can WorkSafe help me?

For information and resources about workplace bullying, visit [worksafe.vic.gov.au/bullying](https://worksafe.vic.gov.au/bullying)

Workers experiencing bullying at work (or who have left a job because of bullying) can contact WorkSafe Victoria's Advisory Service on 1800 136 089. Other people (eg health and safety representatives, union representatives, relatives) can contact the Advisory Service on behalf of a worker experiencing bullying.

The Advisory Service can:

- provide information on bullying and how to prevent it
- advise how to raise the issue of bullying in your workplace
- refer the matter to an inspector (where appropriate).

## What an inspector can do

The action/s taken by an inspector will depend upon the nature of the bullying and the workplace. These actions can include:

- attending the workplace to make enquiries, including reviewing relevant documentation
- talking to/interviewing complainants and witnesses
- talking to/interviewing the employer/management representative
- examining what measures are in place at a workplace to prevent bullying
- providing advice on how to comply with OHS laws
- requiring remedial action to be taken where there are breaches of OHS laws
- recommending a comprehensive investigation to determine whether a breach of OHS laws has occurred and whether it may warrant prosecution (or alternative punitive action).

## Where to go for help

Depending on your circumstances there are several agencies you can contact for help, advice and support if you are experiencing bullying at work. You can also contact these agencies on behalf of someone else.

## For immediate emotional support

### ▪ Lifeline

Lifeline offers a 24 hour confidential phone service providing emotional support in times of crisis or when callers may be feeling down. The service is staffed by trained counsellors who are ready to listen no matter how small a problem may seem. They can also provide information about other available support services.

Phone: 13 11 14

Visit: [lifeline.org.au](https://lifeline.org.au)

### ▪ beyondblue

beyondblue provides people with access to information for depression and anxiety related matters. They can also make referrals to other relevant services.

Phone: 1300 224 636

Visit: [beyondblue.org.au](https://beyondblue.org.au)

### Support for apprentices

- **Skills Victoria**

If you are an apprentice experiencing workplace bullying this office can provide information and support.

Phone: 1300 722 603

Email: [skills@diird.vic.gov.au](mailto:skills@diird.vic.gov.au)

Visit: [skills.vic.gov.au](http://skills.vic.gov.au)

### For advice on your rights at work

- **Job Watch**

Job Watch provides employees with assistance regarding their rights at work. They offer a confidential information line and referral service.

Melbourne residents Phone: 9662 1933

Country Victoria residents Phone: 1800 331 617

Email: [jobwatch@jobwatch.org.au](mailto:jobwatch@jobwatch.org.au)

Visit: [jobwatch.org.au](http://jobwatch.org.au)

- **Fair Work Ombudsman**

The Fair Work Ombudsman provides advice and information on your workplace rights and responsibilities. You can make a complaint to the Ombudsman if you believe you aren't getting the correct:

- pay
- conditions (eg annual leave or sick leave)
- workplace rights (eg someone tried to force you or forced you to sign an agreement)

You can also make a complaint if you think your employer is discriminating against you.

Phone: 13 13 94

Visit: [fwo.gov.au](http://fwo.gov.au)

### If you are experiencing discrimination or harassment at work

State and federal anti-discrimination laws prohibit behaviour that amounts to discrimination and harassment. Some forms of bullying at work may breach these laws. For further information on anti-discrimination laws contact:

- **Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission**

Phone: 1300 891 848

Email: [information@veohc.vic.gov.au](mailto:information@veohc.vic.gov.au)

Visit: [equalopportunitycommission.vic.gov.au](http://equalopportunitycommission.vic.gov.au)

- **Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (Federal)**

Phone: 1300 656 419

Email: [complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au)

Visit: [humanrights.gov.au](http://humanrights.gov.au)

### If you are experiencing violence or threats of violence

- **Victoria Police**

If your allegation of workplace bullying involves assault or threats of assault, we recommend you also contact Victoria Police and inform them of the incident.

- **Centre Against Sexual Assault**

This service helps ensure that people who experience sexual assault have access to support. They offer an after hours crisis line and 15 local offices.

Phone: 1800 806 292

Email: [ahcasa@rwh.org.au](mailto:ahcasa@rwh.org.au)

Visit: [casa.org.au](http://casa.org.au)