

When an Employee Reports Bullying or Harassment

A first-response checklist for BC employers

This free resource is for provincially regulated, non-union BC employers covered by WorkSafeBC.

An employee tells you their supervisor has been humiliating them in front of colleagues. They don't want a fuss, but they want you to know.

How you respond matters. These steps will help you handle that initial conversation.

☐ **Listen without deciding who is right.**

Give the employee time to explain. Avoid dismissing the concern, defending the other person or promising a particular outcome.

☐ **Check for immediate safety concerns.**

Ask whether there are threats, ongoing behaviour or concerns about their next shift that need prompt attention.

If there are threats or physical force, treat it as urgent. Your violence and incident procedures apply, and police may need to be involved.

☐ **Get the basic details.**

What happened? When and where? Who was involved or present? Ask about relevant emails, messages or other records that should be preserved.

☐ **Make an accurate note.**

Record what the employee reported and what you said you would do. Keep their account separate from your own observations. Store the notes securely.

☐ **Be clear about confidentiality.**

Explain that information will be shared only as needed to address the concern. Don't promise to keep it entirely between the two of you.

☐ **Follow your workplace reporting and investigation procedures.**

A request to “keep it informal” does not remove the employer’s responsibility to respond. If the complaint concerns the person who normally receives reports, use the alternative reporting route. Someone accused of misconduct should not investigate their own conduct.

No procedures yet? WorkSafeBC expects every employer, whatever its size, to have a bullying and harassment policy statement and procedures for reporting and dealing with complaints. Senterra HR can help you put them in place.

☐ **Explain the next step and follow up.**

Tell the employee who will handle the concern and when they can expect an update. Ask them to report any further incidents or negative treatment connected with raising it.

If the behaviour is linked to a protected ground under the BC Human Rights Code, such as sex, race, gender identity or expression, or disability, it can also lead to a human rights complaint.

Receiving the report is the beginning of the response. This checklist does not replace your workplace procedures or an appropriate investigation.

Not sure how to respond to a complaint?

Senterra HR helps BC employers set up procedures to handle complaints properly.

Book a free consultation

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