

HOUSING AND WELLNESS PROGRAM

A Comprehensive Wellness Guide
for **First Nations Housing Staff**

WORKPLACE BULLYING



First Nations Housing
Professionals Association

L'Association des professionnels de
l'habitation des Premières Nations



Housing Staff

Prioritizing the wellness of First Nations housing staff is essential to supporting healthy, resilient communities. Housing staff play a vital role in providing safe, secure, and culturally appropriate housing, directly impacting the well-being of residents.

Supporting the physical, mental, and emotional health of staff helps sustain this important work. Providing practical resources and strategies for self-care, stress management, and balance can help reduce burnout, strengthen capacity, and support effective service delivery.

Investing in staff wellness also contributes to stronger workplaces by improving morale, retention, and creating a more supportive environment. While housing staff may not address all wellness or mental health concerns directly, having the knowledge and resources to recognize challenges and connect individuals with appropriate supports is key.

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Acknowledgment

The **First Nations Housing Professionals Association (FNHPA)** is delighted to introduce the Housing and Wellness Program, aimed at offering crucial information and guidance to First Nations individuals residing on-reserve or engaged in housing-related roles. This initiative delivers educational programs, tools, and resources tailored for First Nations housing staff, residents, and youth. Through the implementation of this program, our aim is to address housing, health, and safety concerns holistically.



WORKPLACE BULLYING

Bullying in the workplace includes actions or words that cause psychological or emotional harm to an individual. In some cases, it may also involve physical aggression. Workplace bullying typically involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behaviour intended to intimidate, offend, degrade, or humiliate a specific person or group. It often reflects the misuse of power. Victims of workplace bullying may face significant challenges in performing their jobs effectively, as harassment and intimidation can harm their mental and emotional well-being.

Workplace bullying can also negatively affect organizations, leading to lower productivity, higher staff turnover, damaged reputations, and increased legal and financial risks. It may also discourage collaboration, limiting creativity and innovation among team members.

Addressing bullying is essential for fostering a respectful workplace culture and supporting long-term organizational success.

Recognizing Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying can take many forms, and recognizing the signs is key to identifying and addressing the issue. Common signs include:

Verbal abuse: Persistent criticism, belittling remarks, or derogatory comments directed at an individual.

Exclusion: Deliberately excluding someone from work-related activities, meetings, or social events, isolating them from the team.

Isolation: Social exclusion from colleagues, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and alienation.

Intimidation: Threatening behaviour, aggressive gestures, or verbal threats intended to create fear or exert control.

Undermining: Sabotaging or interfering with someone's work by withholding information, spreading rumours, or setting unrealistic expectations.

Humiliation: Public embarrassment, ridicule, mocking, or criticism in front of colleagues.

Excessive monitoring: Micromanaging or excessively monitoring work activities, showing a lack of trust in an individual's abilities.

Overwork or unrealistic expectations: Assigning excessive workloads, unrealistic deadlines, or unattainable goals that contribute to stress and burnout.

Discrimination: Bullying may also intersect with discrimination based on factors such as race, gender, age, or disability, increasing the harm experienced by the individual.

Physical aggression: In rare but serious cases, bullying may involve physical assault or threats of violence.

LATERAL VIOLENCE

Lateral violence is a pattern of behaviour that occurs within communities or workplaces where aggression or hostility is directed toward peers or coworkers rather than external sources of oppression. While both lateral violence and workplace bullying involve harmful behaviour among peers, they differ in their roots and context.

Lateral violence often occurs within marginalized communities and is shaped by broader historical and social experiences.

Workplace bullying occurs within professional environments and is typically driven by interpersonal conflict, power struggles, or misuse of authority.

While both can harm individuals and workplace culture, lateral violence is often connected to deeper historical and systemic factors.

Potential Causes of Lateral Violence

Historical trauma

Lateral violence can result from the longstanding impacts of colonialism, systemic oppression, and historical violence. This collective trauma may manifest as internalized anger that is misdirected toward peers. Over time, unresolved trauma can contribute to cycles of violence, mistrust, and resentment within communities and workplaces.

Internalized oppression

Experiences of racism, marginalization, and inequity can lead to internal conflicts that may be directed toward others within the workplace or community.

Power imbalances

Colonial policies and imposed governance systems can create tension and division within communities.

Socioeconomic challenges

Poverty and unemployment can cause frustration that may be directed laterally toward peers.

Personal situations

Personal challenges can sometimes spill over into the workplace. When individuals bring unresolved personal difficulties to work, it can create tension and reactions that may not be directly related to the work itself.

Forms of Lateral Violence

- **Verbal and Emotional Abuse:** Belittling, teasing, embarrassing others, making snide comments, or name-calling.
- **Non-Verbal Intimidation:** Using body language such as eye rolling, glaring, or threatening gestures to create fear or discomfort.
- **Exclusion:** Deliberately excluding or ignoring certain individuals.
- **Gossiping:** Spreading rumours or creating narratives that undermine someone's reputation.
- **Sabotage:** Hindering someone's ideas, work, or progress to prevent their success.

Impacts of Lateral Violence on Communities

Mistrust

Difficulty forming and maintaining positive relationships within the community and workplace.

Mental health challenges

Increased feelings of depression, anxiety, low self-worth, and higher risks of suicide and substance use.

Barriers to healing and reconciliation

Lateral violence can create obstacles to community healing, reconciliation, and cultural revitalization.

Addressing Lateral Violence in the Workplace

By implementing practices, organizations can help foster a respectful workplace culture, improving morale, engagement, and job satisfaction among team members.

Cultural education and awareness

Provide training that explores the cultural, historical, and social contexts of lateral violence. Offer workshops that help staff understand its root causes and impacts. Where appropriate, incorporate healing practices into the workplace, such as traditional teachings, ceremonies, or other culturally meaningful approaches.

Create safe spaces for discussion

Establish regular meetings or forums where individuals can raise concerns in a safe and respectful environment. Encourage peer support groups to promote understanding and solidarity.

Develop clear policies and procedures

Create anti-violence policies that reflect the community's values and traditions. Ensure there are clear, accessible, and culturally appropriate reporting processes for addressing incidents of lateral violence.

Focus on community wellness

Promote initiatives that support overall community well-being, including efforts that address poverty, unemployment, and mental health challenges.

Conflict resolution

Provide staff with conflict resolution training to help address concerns early and prevent issues from escalating.

Empower leadership and community involvement

Encourage leaders to model respectful behaviour and openly support conversations about lateral violence and healing.

If you are experiencing lateral violence, you should:

1. **Keep a detailed record of specific incidents.**
2. **Seek support from peers.**
3. **If appropriate, consider addressing the issue directly with the oppressor.**
4. **Report the behaviour.**



PREVENTING BULLYING

Preventing workplace bullying requires a proactive approach and a commitment to fostering a culture of respect, inclusion, and accountability.

Here are some strategies to help prevent bullying:

Establish clear policies

Develop policies that define bullying, outline unacceptable behaviours, and explain how incidents can be reported and addressed. Ensure all employees are aware of these policies and the consequences of violating them.

Provide training

Offer training to help staff recognize, prevent, and address bullying. Include topics such as respectful communication, conflict resolution, and maintaining a positive workplace.

Foster a respectful culture

Promote a workplace culture that values respect, inclusivity, and collaboration. Encourage open communication and hold everyone accountable for their actions.

Encourage reporting

Provide safe and confidential ways for employees to report bullying without fear of retaliation. Ensure reports are taken seriously and handled fairly.

Respond quickly and effectively

Address reports of bullying quickly and appropriately. Conduct thorough investigations, involve HR if needed, and take appropriate action when necessary.

Support affected employees

Offer support to employees who have experienced bullying, such as counselling services, conflict resolution support, or workplace accommodations.

Promote positive leadership

Encourage managers to model respectful behaviour and maintain open communication. Leaders should be approachable and address issues early.

Regularly review policies

Regularly evaluate bullying prevention efforts by gathering feedback, monitoring incidents, and updating policies, procedures, and training as needed.

Dealing with Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying can be stressful, and it is important to take appropriate steps to address it. Whether you are experiencing bullying yourself or witnessing it happening to someone else, knowing how to respond can help protect your well-being and support a healthier workplace.

Here are some steps you can take:

1. Keep a record

Document each incident of bullying. Include dates, times, and details about what occurred. Save any emails, messages, or other evidence. Keeping a detailed record can support you if you choose to report the behaviour.

2. Tell your manager or HR

If you feel comfortable, speak with your manager or the human resources (HR) team about the situation. They may provide guidance and investigate the issue. Be prepared to share your notes and any supporting evidence.

3. Speak up

If it feels safe to do so, consider addressing the behaviour directly with the person involved. Calmly explain how their actions are affecting you and why the behaviour is unacceptable. Remain respectful and avoid escalating the situation.

4. Check company policies

Review your organization's policies on bullying, which may be found in the employee handbook or code of conduct. Understanding the reporting process can help ensure your concern is addressed properly.

5. Get support

Reach out to trusted coworkers, friends, or family members. Having support and someone to talk to can help you manage the situation.

6. Take care of yourself

Experiencing bullying can affect your mental and emotional well-being. Practice self-care strategies such as exercise, mindfulness, or speaking with a counsellor or therapist.

Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

Psychological health refers to a person's emotional, mental, and social well-being. In the workplace, it also includes an employee's ability to perform their role effectively, manage challenges, and build positive relationships with colleagues.

When workplace conditions, interactions, or experiences negatively affect an employee's mental and emotional well-being, this is known as psychological harm. Factors such as prolonged stress, workplace bullying, or unfair treatment can contribute to this harm, which over time may impair job performance and lead to mental health challenges.

Risk Factors in the Workplace:

- Bullying and harassment
- Racism and discrimination
- Lack of cultural understanding in the workplace
- Historical trauma and its intergenerational effects
- High work demands
- Poor management or lack of support
- Job insecurity
- Lack of respect in the workplace
- Limited access to culturally appropriate mental health resources

Benefits of Psychological Safety

Increased employee engagement

Team members feel more invested in their work, leading to higher productivity.

Enhanced team collaboration

Open communication supports cooperation and collective problem-solving.

Improved decision-making

Employees feel safe sharing perspectives, leading to more informed and diverse decisions.

Culture of continuous learning

Employees feel comfortable taking risks and learning from mistakes, supporting growth and innovation.

Higher job satisfaction

Employees who feel psychologically safe often report greater job satisfaction and lower turnover.

Better mental health and well-being

A supportive workplace helps reduce stress and improve overall well-being.

Ways to Promote Psychological Safety at Work

Encourage open dialogue

Provide opportunities for employees to share concerns, such as regular check-ins and open-door policies.

Promote respect and inclusivity

Support a workplace culture that values diverse perspectives and collaboration.

Provide training

Offer workshops on effective communication and conflict resolution.

Establish clear policies

Develop and communicate policies that support psychological safety, including clear procedures for reporting concerns. Regularly review these policies to ensure they remain effective.

Lead by example

Leaders should model respectful behaviour and open communication.



Conflict Resolution Techniques

Learning how to manage conflict can help people work together more effectively and resolve disagreements. Here are some simple techniques that can help:

Active listening

Focus your attention on what the other person is saying and use body language to indicate engagement. Avoid interrupting and respond in a respectful manner.

Clear communication

Speak clearly and respectfully about your thoughts and feelings. Avoid placing blame on others and try to find common ground.

Problem-solving

Approach the conflict as a shared challenge by considering different perspectives, identifying concerns, and collaborating to find fair, balanced solutions.

Stay calm

Keep your emotions under control. If needed, take a break before continuing the discussion.

Use a mediator

If the conflict cannot be resolved directly, involve a neutral person to help guide the conversation.

Be assertive

Express your needs and boundaries respectfully while remaining open to the other person's perspective.

Seek training

Consider conflict resolution training or workshops to strengthen these skills.

Practice forgiveness

After the conflict is resolved, focus on rebuilding trust and moving forward.

Supporting Colleagues Experiencing Bullying

Supporting a coworker who is experiencing bullying is important for their well-being and helps create a caring workplace.

Here are some ways you can offer support:

Listen

Give your colleague a safe space to talk and listen with empathy.

Acknowledge their experience

Let them know the situation is not their fault and that their concerns are valid.

Offer support

Reassure your colleague that they are not alone and offer encouragement.

Respect their choices

Support how they choose to handle the situation and avoid pressuring them to act.

Speak up when possible

If it is safe, stand up for your colleague or support them when reporting the issue.

Offer practical help

Support them by connecting them with helpful resources, both within and outside the workplace.

Encourage self-care

Remind your colleague to take care of their well-being.

Check in

Stay connected and remind them that support is available.

Encourage documentation

Suggest keeping records of incidents, including dates, times, and details.

MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES

Managers play an important role in preventing and addressing workplace bullying. The following actions can help create a respectful and safe work environment:

Manager Responsibilities in Preventing and Addressing Workplace Bullying

Set clear policies

Work with HR to develop clear policies that define bullying, explain how incidents can be reported, and outline consequences for unacceptable behaviour.

Provide training

Ensure employees receive training on recognizing, preventing, and addressing bullying. Training should include respectful communication, conflict resolution, and promoting a positive workplace culture.

Promote respect

Lead by example and foster a respectful and inclusive work environment. Clearly communicate expectations for behaviour and hold employees accountable for their actions.

Encourage open communication

Create an environment where employees feel comfortable raising concerns about bullying. Listen to feedback and address issues promptly.

Respond promptly to reports

Take all reports of bullying seriously. Investigate concerns thoroughly, involve HR when necessary, and take appropriate action.

Support affected employees

Provide support to employees who have experienced bullying. This may include counselling, conflict resolution support, or workplace adjustments to ensure they feel safe and supported.

Watch for signs

Monitor the workplace for signs of bullying, such as changes in behaviour, ongoing conflicts, or patterns of mistreatment, and address concerns early.

Follow up and review

Check in with employees involved to ensure the situation has been resolved. Regularly review workplace policies to ensure they remain effective.





MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The tips and tools outlined in this guide support the mental health and wellness of First Nations housing staff. By prioritizing wellness, promoting work-life balance, and fostering a positive work environment, organizations can strengthen overall staff well-being.

A holistic approach that supports physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health is key to cultivating a healthy workplace.

It is important for First Nations housing staff to recognize that they are not alone; resources and support systems are available during challenging times. Encouraging open communication and sharing information about available supports can empower staff to seek help when needed.

This guide provides general information and is not a substitute for professional medical or mental health advice.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis or requires immediate assistance, please contact one of the mental health hotlines mentioned in this guide or seek help from a qualified healthcare professional. These hotlines offer confidential support, crisis intervention, and resources for individuals facing mental health challenges.

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line 1-855-242-3310
hopeforwellness.ca

Suicide Crisis Helpline
9-8-8
988.ca

Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line
1-866-925-4419

MMIWG Support Line
844-413-6649

ACTION PLAN

Implementing a wellness guide requires planning and collaboration within the workplace. Below is a proposed implementation plan for any workplace seeking to use this guide:

1. Conduct a Needs Assessment

Perform a comprehensive assessment to gauge the current state of staff well-being using surveys, interviews, or focus groups. Identify stressors, challenges, and areas for improvement.

2. Establish a Wellness Committee

Form a dedicated team committed to implementing the guide and ensuring its successful integration within the department or organization.

3. Customize the Guide

Tailor the wellness guide to align with the specific needs and values of the community and housing staff, ensuring accessibility and relevance to their experiences.

4. Provide Training and Capacity Building

Offer training sessions to staff and managers on effectively utilizing the guide. Equip managers with the necessary knowledge and resources to support their teams.

5. Integration into Policies

Incorporate the guide's practices into existing policies and staff training programs to ensure alignment with organizational goals.

6. Promotion

Use various communication channels (newsletters, meetings, email announcements) to introduce the guide and its benefits, ensuring visibility and awareness among staff.

7. Implement supportive strategies

Roll out supportive strategies outlined in the guide, such as regular check-ins, recognition programs, and opportunities for peer support. Foster a culture of openness and trust to demonstrate commitment to staff well-being.

8. Evaluation

Establish mechanisms for ongoing evaluation and feedback to gauge the guide's effectiveness, allowing for continuous improvement.

9. Continued support

Provide ongoing wellness support for staff, including refresher workshops and access to counseling services.

10. Sustainability

Develop a sustainability plan to ensure the long-term viability of initiatives. Implement processes for regular monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of practices over time.



By following this **action plan**, the organization can effectively utilize the wellness guide to support staff members and cultivate a healthier, more supportive work environment.

Methods for Assessing Impact

To assess the impact of the wellness guide and identify areas of success and improvement, staff can use the following methods.

Surveys

Conduct regular surveys to gather feedback from staff about their experiences with the guide, including questions about perceived improvements in well-being, the effectiveness of strategies, and areas for enhancement.

Focus groups

Organize focus group discussions to explore staff perceptions and experiences with the guide more deeply. Encourage open dialogue and constructive feedback to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Performance metrics

Track relevant performance metrics, such as absenteeism rates, productivity levels, and employee satisfaction scores, before and after implementing the guide. Compare these metrics to assess any changes or improvements over time.

Case studies

Develop case studies highlighting success stories and positive outcomes resulting from the implementation of the guide. Share these stories with staff to illustrate tangible benefits and encourage continued engagement.

Qualitative feedback

Encourage staff to provide qualitative feedback through suggestion boxes, one-on-one discussions with managers, or anonymous feedback channels. This feedback can offer valuable insights into individual experiences and perceptions.

Observations

Managers and supervisors can observe changes in staff behavior, morale, and team dynamics following the implementation of the guide. Look for signs of increased engagement, improved communication, and a more supportive work environment.



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First Nations Housing Professionals Association (FNHPA)

473 Kokomis Inamo Unit #1
Pikwakanagan, ON
K0J 1X0

Phone (613) 480-6330
Toll-free (800) 360-6114