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Citizenship and Immigration Canada



Respectful Workplace Guide

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Respectful Workplace Guide

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Respectful Workplace Guide

1. Introduction

Citizenship and Immigration Canada recognizes its responsibility to build and maintain a diverse and respectful workplace, where all employees enjoy an environment in which the dignity and self-respect of every person is valued and which is free of offensive remarks, material and behaviour.

When people work together, issues may arise. It is important that these issues not be allowed to escalate to conflict. Unresolved conflict and disrespectful behavior can jeopardize an individual's well-being and possibly undermine work relationships and productivity.

A respectful workplace requires the commitment of each and every person in the organization. Everyone has a responsibility to set a positive example and behave in a manner which will not offend, embarrass or humiliate others, whether deliberate or unintentional.

This Guide has been designed as a tool to provide information to all persons in the workplace. It is written as a complement to the Treasury Board Policy on the [Prevention and Resolution of Harassment in the Workplace](#). It provides different tips and approaches but this advice should not be presumed or construed to be complete or exhaustive. For additional information you should seek advice from your Human Resources Specialist or from your union representative.

2. To Whom Does this Guide apply?

This Guide applies to all CIC employees including casual, term, indeterminate, student and contract employees. It applies to the workplace itself as well as to activities connected with the workplace such as travel, conferences, and work-related social gatherings.

3. What is Not Tolerated in the Workplace?

The CIC [Code of Conduct](#) stipulates that all employees are entitled to work in an environment that is free of discrimination and harassment. The Department will not tolerate these in any form.

3.1 Discrimination

The [Canadian Human Rights Act](#), the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), the [Public Service Employment Act](#), and/or collective agreements do not allow any discrimination based on race, creed, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, a conviction for which a



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pardon has been granted, a physical or mental disability, membership in a union, or participating in union activity.

3.2 Harassment

The Treasury Board [Policy on Prevention and Resolution of Harassment in the Workplace](#) defines harassment as any improper conduct by an individual, that is directed at and offensive to another person or persons in the workplace, and that the individual knew or ought reasonably to have known would cause offence or harm. It comprises any objectionable act, comment or display that demeans, belittles, or causes personal humiliation or embarrassment, and any act of intimidation or threat. It includes harassment within the meaning of the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#).

While each case has to be assessed on its own merit and context, the [Appendix](#) in the Treasury Board Policy provides information and examples to help you understand harassment.

The following are key questions that can guide you in determining whether the behaviour (such as an act, comment or display) constitutes harassment:

- Is the behaviour improper and unwelcome or offensive?
- Would a reasonable person have known that the conduct was not welcome or offensive?
- Did it demean, belittle or cause personal humiliation or embarrassment?
- Is it a serious single incident?
- Is it a series of incidents over a period of time?

3.2.1 What Generally Constitutes Harassment?

Disrespectful behavior may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Serious or repeated rude, degrading, or offensive remarks such as teasing about a person's physical characteristics or appearance, put-downs or insults;
- Displaying sexist, racist or other offensive pictures, posters, or sending e-mails related to one of the 11 grounds prohibited under the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#);
- Repeatedly singling out an employee for meaningless tasks that are not part of their duties;

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- Threats, intimidation or retaliation against an employee, including one who has expressed concerns about perceived unethical or illegal workplace behaviours;
- Unwelcome social invitations, with sexual overtones or flirting, with a subordinate;
- Unwelcome sexual advances / unwanted physical contact;
- Aggressive, bullying and/or belittling behaviour;
- Damaging gossip or rumours; and
- Criticizing an employee or colleague in public.

3.2.2 What Does Not Generally Constitute Harassment?

Managerial duties in themselves, such as coaching or counselling an employee, providing a performance review, dealing with labour relations matters and implementing disciplinary measures, are not harassment.

Some Examples of What Does Not Generally Constitute Harassment:

- Normal exercise of management's right to manage such as:
 - The day-to-day management of operations;
 - Allocating work;
 - Following up on work absences;
 - Requiring performance to job standards; and
 - The application of progressive discipline, up to and including termination of employment.
- A single or isolated incident such as an inappropriate remark or abrupt manner.
- Exclusion of individuals from a particular job based on specific occupational requirements necessary to accomplish the safe and efficient performance of the job.
- Measures taken against someone who is careless in his or her work, such as in the handling of secret documents.
- A social relationship welcomed by both individuals.
- Friendly gestures among co-workers such as a pat on the back.
- Workplace conflict in itself does not constitute harassment but could escalate if not addressed.



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- Work-related stress in itself does not constitute harassment.
- Difficult conditions of employment, professional constraints, and organizational changes.

3.3 Violence

Part II of the [Canada Labour Code](#) stipulates that the Employer has a duty to prevent and protect employees from violence in the workplace. It occurs whenever someone inflicts or threatens to inflict harm on others, or damages or threatens to damage property.

Employees have a responsibility to report threats in the workplace to management without delay. Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that the threat is reported and dealt with by the appropriate authorities.

For more information on violence in the workplace, please consult CIC's [Occupational Health and Safety Guide](#).

4. What is a Respectful Workplace?

A respectful workplace is one that values:

- Diversity and respects the fundamental human rights of others;
- The dignity of the person;
- Courteous conduct;
- Mutual respect, fairness and equality;
- Positive communication between people; and
- Collaborative working relationships.

5. Promoting a Respectful Workplace

Everyone has a responsibility to set a positive example and behave in a manner which will not offend, embarrass or humiliate others, whether deliberate or unintentional.

5.1 Managers' Responsibility

- Model respectful behaviour;
- Treat others with respect;

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- Recognize and value diversity in the workplace;
- Create an environment that supports the resolution of respectful workplace issues;
- Inform employees that the work environment is one based on respect;
- Educate and train all supervisors and employees regarding a respectful workplace;
- Monitor the atmosphere in the workplace;
- Do not take part in or ignore behaviour that is inappropriate; and
- Encourage open and respectful communication.

5.2 Employees' Responsibilities

- Treat others with respect;
- Set an example by respecting the dignity and human rights of all employees and members of the public;
- Recognize and refrain from actions that offend, embarrass or humiliate others, whether deliberate or unintentional;
- Raise disrespectful conduct with the employee displaying it or with a person in authority as soon as possible;
- Do not make allegations of disrespectful behaviour that are frivolous or vindictive; and
- Make every effort to resolve respectful workplace issues, wherever possible, in an informal manner.

6. What If an Issue Arises?

If you believe that you have been treated in a disrespectful manner, you are encouraged to make it known to the other person as soon as possible in an attempt to resolve the issue. The earlier the problem is addressed and discussed, the better the chance of it being resolved and the inappropriate behaviour stopped.

If the problem is not resolved, or if you feel you cannot speak directly to the other person, you should notify your supervisor, or the manager at the next level.

Managers and supervisors are responsible to immediately act upon any situation involving disrespectful behaviour.



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Managers and supervisors will:

- Recognize and address actions that offend, embarrass or humiliate others, whether deliberate or unintentional;
- Treat each situation as a serious matter;
- Report threats of violence in the workplace to the appropriate authorities;
- Manage the situation towards a resolution between the parties if possible, with a view to correcting behaviour and preserving long-term working relationships;
- Safeguard against further incidents;
- Ensure there are no reprisals against employees making a complaint or participating in an investigation;
- Provide support to employees who are experiencing the effects of disrespectful behaviour; and
- Work closely with Human Resource specialists so they sufficiently understand the situation and the views of the various parties to be able to provide advice.

6.1 What If You Are Accused of Disrespectful Behaviour?

- Attempt to resolve the situation by listening and trying to understand the concern;
- Be open to the other person's perspective. For example, something which you consider to be humorous might be offensive to someone else;
- Consider the impact of your actions on the other person;
- Be willing to make reasonable changes that could make a difference. Often a sincere apology and a commitment to refrain from disrespectful behaviour is sufficient to resolve the situation in an informal manner; and
- If necessary, seek support or assistance from a manager, supervisor, Human Resources, Union Representative or the Office of Conflict Resolution.

6.2 What Can Employees Do If They Are Treated in a Disrespectful Manner?

- Every situation is unique, but whenever possible, informal resolution of an issue as soon as possible is preferable.
- Be proactive. Try to resolve the problem on your own. Do not wait until a recurrence or assume the problem will go away. Approach the employee who made you feel uncomfortable, explain how it affected you and ask them to



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stop. Do this calmly, respectfully, and in confidence. Often, an employee may not be aware that her or his behaviour is offensive and most will change the behaviour once they are aware of the problem. Consider using the services of CIC's Office of Conflict Resolution to coach you on how to have an effective conversation.

- If you have attempted to resolve the problem without success or if you are not comfortable addressing the problem on your own, discuss the problem and possible solutions with your immediate supervisor or the Office of Conflict Resolution.
- If you have attempted to resolve the problem and it has failed to correct the situation, then assistance through Human Resources or your union may be necessary.

Whether a formal or informal process is used, employees are encouraged to take notes which reflect, as much as possible, the dates, times, nature of the behaviour, any witnesses, and what was done. These notes will be useful for anyone assisting in resolving the problem.

7. When a Complaint is Filed

The Respectful Workplace Guide is not intended to discourage or prevent an employee from exercising any other legal right pursuant to any law, including filing a grievance or a complaint with the Human Rights Commission.

If a formal harassment complaint is filed, reference must be made to the Treasury Board [Policy on the Prevention and Resolution of Harassment in the Workplace](#), as well as CIC's [Guidelines on Managing a Harassment Complaint](#).

8. Resources to Assist You

CIC recognizes the importance of dealing with workplace conflicts and issues informally, at the lowest possible level, in a timely manner, and before the situation escalates. Because different situations require different solutions, employees and managers at CIC have access to a range of services to assist them.

8.1 Human Resources Advisors

The Human Resources Advisor has the following role and responsibilities:

- Consult with and provide advice to management.
- Promote awareness of the [Policy on Prevention and Resolution of Harassment in the Workplace](#) and of all other guides and tools that can be of assistance.

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- Assist management in the consistent application of policies.
- Assist management with complaints and ensure appropriate action is initiated.
- Conduct investigations as required.
- Inform employees, supervisors and managers of the services of CIC's Office of Conflict Resolution.
- Inform employees, supervisors and managers of the services of the Employee Assistance Program.
- Work collaboratively with others involved.

8.2 CIC's Office of Conflict Resolution

CIC's [Office of Conflict Resolution](#) has the following role and responsibilities:

- Provide informal consultation services, advice and education to employees, managers, supervisors on appropriate responses/options to address disrespectful behaviour;
- Assist employees, supervisors and managers in deciding on and pursuing an appropriate course of action in response to disrespectful behaviour;
- Provide coaching, counseling and effective strategies to those who choose to approach the person who made them feel uncomfortable; and
- Provide informal conflict resolution services including facilitation, mediation and group interventions.

8.3 Unions

Employees at CIC have an independent voice through their union. [Union representatives](#) seek to improve the workplace by assisting members.

Unions have the following responsibilities when representing employees of the bargaining unit:

- Help employees understand policies and the collective agreement;
- Help employees understand their rights as workers;
- Raise employee awareness of CIC's Office of Conflict Resolution and Employee Assistance Program services;
- Assist in solving members' problems, including handling complaints which may lead to grievances or appeals; and
- Represent employees.



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8.4 Employee Assistance Program

The [Employee Assistance Program](#) is a voluntary and confidential service to help employees or groups of employees at all levels and, in some instances, their family members, who have personal concerns that affect their well-being or work performance.

The Employee Assistance Program will direct you to professional counsellors who will help you assess your situation and explore possible options. These counsellors can help you deal with the following situations:

- Marital and family problems;
- Difficulties with interpersonal relations;
- Personal and emotional issues;
- Stress and burnout;
- Work-related situations;
- Alcohol, drug and prescription drug problems;
- Legal and financial problems; and
- Grief and suicide.

For more information or to make an appointment, call 1-800-268-7708 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year).

9. Conclusion: Self-reflection

Awareness, communication and early intervention are key to a respectful work environment. Everyone has a personal responsibility in making this happen. In order to help achieve this goal, consider the following questions:

Managers

- Have I communicated these policies to my staff?
- Does my staff know what behaviour I expect of them?
- Do they know what behaviour will not be tolerated?
- Am I available for my staff to come and talk to me?
- Am I intervening as soon as I sense a conflict between employees?



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Everyone

- Do I know our [Code of Conduct](#) and the [Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service](#)?
- Do I know what our policy is on harassment in the workplace?
- Is my behaviour respectful?
- Am I speaking out when I see behaviour that is disrespectful or inappropriate?

10. Helpful Links

[Is it Harassment? A Tool to Guide Employees](#)

[A guide for managers: Dealing with harassment](#)

[Screening Tool for the Delegated Manager and the Harassment Prevention Coordinator](#)

