

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



251 Getting a Handle on Workplace Bullying – Part 1

One of the key topics in human resources circles is how to deal with bullying in the workplace. It's a very real issue and frankly, most people don't have a clear understanding of it. I'm Jerry Roberts and let's see if we can add some clarity, next, on The Extra Point.

First of all, to the best of my knowledge there are no federal statutes on bullying. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, in general, prohibits any harassment on the basis of color, national origin, race, religion and sex. There are other federal laws that cover actions based on age, disability and genetic information.

The majority of states have written their own laws and guidelines, or have introduced bills. As for Guam laws I consulted with [Meredith Sayre of the Camacho Calvo Law Group](#), who has many years of experience in workplace issues. Meredith hasn't found a specific Guam anti-bullying law, but there are laws that cover obscenity and related offenses, as well as bullying activities in Guam's schools.

Let's define what we're talking about. I got this from the website of the [Society for Human Resource Management](#), SHRM: "Bullying is generally defined as unwelcome behavior that occurs over a period of time and is meant to harm someone who feels powerless to respond." A substantial number of bullying claims are a worker against his/her manager. Bullying can be psychological or physical. The website [stopbullying.gov](#), managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, indicates that verbal bullying includes teasing, threats to cause harm, public reprimands, and even leaving someone out of a meeting on purpose. It can obviously come in numerous other forms as well.

How widespread is the problem? A survey by Forbes magazine showed that 96 percent of

U.S. workers have been bullied, they've seen it, or are aware of it.

Back to the SHRM site. It read: "So a manager who is mean to everyone — who is sometimes known as the "equal opportunity harasser" — might not be engaging in unlawful conduct." Why? Because he/she isn't singling anybody out for the abuse. SHRM's next point is one I've raised before: if you have a manager who is continually causing trouble in your organization, destroying morale and possibly running off talent you've spent thousands to develop... why are they still there?

And if you're wondering what the impact might be to an organization where bullying and harassment exists, it is regularly cited as a major factor in low retention figures. Bullying impacts morale and productivity, and can cause issues beyond the individual being bullied. Other workers are affected as they see associates victimized, wondering why management allows it to happen, and many worry they could be next.

So what can be done to make a serious dent in workplace bullying and harassment issues? In tomorrow's Extra Point we'll offer suggestions for how to deal with it if you've got the problem.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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