
Guideline

The South East Alberta Watershed Alliance Society (SEAWA) is committed to providing a healthy, harassment-free work environment supportive of the dignity, self-esteem and productivity of every employee, directors of the board, members, and volunteers.

Bullying or harassment occurs when someone is subjected to unwelcome verbal or physical behaviour. Harassment is a form of discrimination prohibited by law and will not be tolerated within the SEAWA.

Any act of bullying or harassment or inappropriate behaviour committed by an employee, director of the board, member, or volunteer against another employee, director of the board, member, volunteer, or against a client, or a member of the public while engaged in a SEAWA business will be considered misconduct. Retaliation against a complainant or witness(es) in a complaint is an offense and will be considered misconduct. The SEAWA will also take steps to respond to issues of bullying or harassment of employees by outside parties in connection with SEAWA business.

Bullying or harassment does not have to only occur on the SEAWA premises. It can occur anywhere there are work-related implications or consequences. This includes off-site work-related settings such as conferences, meetings, training sessions, or fieldwork. It includes behaviour at client, vendor, other business contact premises, or SEAWA project field or work sites on private or public property. It also includes business-related social events or at home.

It is the SEAWA's policy to impose discipline relative to the seriousness of the offense, up to and including, dismissal in the case of an employee, revocation of membership, removal from the board and committees, ending or disallowing a volunteer's participation, or ending future business dealings.

SEAWA **values** guide interactions in conducting SEAWA business:

- Integrity (honest representation)
- Accountable
- Proactive
- Wisdom
- Practical
- Cooperate/Cooperation
- Balance between economy, social and environment
- Visionary
- Respect: Open to others' ideas, each voice has value
- Unified watershed
- Financially sustainable

- Conduit between all stakeholders that are engaged in the development and management of a sustainable watershed.

Purpose

The purpose of the SEAWA's Respectful Workplace Policy guideline is to ensure:

Employees, directors of the board, members, volunteers, clients or vendors are aware of the seriousness with which the SEAWA views bullying or harassment and the disciplinary action, which may be imposed in the event of such behaviour.

Employees, directors of the board, members, volunteers, clients or vendors are advised of the recourse they may take should they believe they are being subjected to bullying or harassment or if they are aware of situations involving bullying or harassment.

Management is aware of their responsibilities should they be informed of or be aware of incidents of bullying or harassment within the SEAWA.

Definitions

Bullying: Workplace bullying usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behaviour that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people - the bully's **target**. Bullying is usually seen as acts or verbal comments that could 'mentally' hurt or isolate a person in the workplace. Sometimes, bullying can involve negative physical contact as well. Although it can include physical abuse or the threat of abuse, bullying usually causes psychological rather than physical harm. It has also been described as the assertion of power through aggression.

Personal Harassment: Any discriminatory behaviour at or related to the work place which is directed at or is offensive to another individual and is based on personal characteristics. Harassment as defined by the *Alberta Human Rights Act, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act* means being subjected to unwelcome verbal or physical conduct that is related to the following prohibited grounds of discrimination: Age, Ancestry/Place of Origin, Colour, Family/Marital Status, Gender, Mental Disability, Physical Disability, Race, Religious beliefs, Sexual Orientation, Source of Income.

Sexual Harassment: Any offensive conduct, comment, gesture, or contact of a sexual nature likely to cause offense or humiliation to any employee, employment candidate or member of the general public, or which might reasonably be perceived as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or opportunity for promotion, or access to the goods, services or facilities of the SEAWA.

Psychological Harassment: a course of conduct or pattern of degrading, disrespectful, rude and unwelcome conduct that psychologically hurts or isolates a person in the workplace.

Harassment may be verbal, physical, deliberate, unsolicited and unwelcome. It may be one incident or a series of incidents. While the following is not an exhaustive list, harassment may include any of these matters if a reasonable person ought to have known the behaviour would be unwelcome or offensive:

- Verbal abuse or threats
- Derogatory remarks, jokes, innuendoes or taunting
- Insults, put-downs or malicious lies
- Relentless criticism or belittling

- Yelling, screaming, raging
- Displaying of pornographic, racist or other offensive pictures, screensavers, etc.
- Sending inappropriate messages via voice mail, electronic mail or written correspondence
- Practical jokes which cause awkwardness or embarrassment
- Unwelcome invitations, requests or other activities, whether indirect or explicit
- Intimidation, leering or other objectionable gestures
- Condescension that undermines self-respect
- Unnecessary physical contact such as touching, patting, pinching, punching
- Physical assault

Legitimate, constructive and fair feedback on an employee's performance or behaviour is not considered harassment or bullying. An assertive management style is acceptable provided staff are treated with respect and dignity.

Responsibilities

Management of the SEAWA is responsible for:

- Providing a work environment free from bullying and harassment
- Responding to complaints or to situations with potential for complaints
- Investigating the complaint and following the Harassment Complaint Procedure
- Maintaining the confidentiality of the individuals concerned, except where disclosure is necessary for the purposes of investigating the complaint or taking disciplinary measures in relation to the alleged complaint if discipline is being imposed
- Ensuring the known bullying or harassment ceases and that appropriate resolution is in place
- Management will be held responsible and subject to disciplinary measures up to and including termination if they do not stop incidents of harassment.

Bullying or Harassment Complaint Procedure

Any employee, director of the board, member, volunteer, client or vendor who believes they have been subjected to bullying or harassment should:

- Make their objections known to the harasser if they are comfortable in doing so.
- Keep a written record of the date, time, location, nature of the behaviour and names of any witnesses.
- If the bullying or harassment continues, or if the affected person is not comfortable approaching the harasser, the person should speak to SEAWA Management (Executive Director and/or Executive Committee). If the alleged harasser is anyone in the SEAWA Management, or if the affected person is not satisfied with the SEAWA Management's response, the complaint should be advanced to the SEAWA Board of Directors. Employees will not have their careers affected in any way, as a consequence of their complaints. In fact, they will be assisting the SEAWA to provide a healthy work environment.

Management

Management will respond quickly to complaints and follow these steps:

- Interview the complainant and alleged harasser within 48 hours from the receipt of the complaint. Seek legal or professional Human Resources advice immediately if the offense is serious.
- Interview all witness(es) or persons who may have knowledge of the circumstances.
- Document the situation accurately and completely.
- Outline the complaint in writing in preparation for legal or professional Human Resources consultation.
- Ensure all information is kept confidential.
- Do not disclose any relevant information regarding the complaint to anyone outside of those involved.
- If the Executive Committee advises, the board may create an *ad hoc* Complaint Resolution Committee.

Complaint Resolution Committee

Complaint Resolution Committee will:

- Advise both the complainant and the alleged harasser that an investigation has begun. Appropriate interim action may be recommended.
- Investigate the complaint and confirm the facts.
- Present the results of the investigation and a suggested resolution to management and the affected parties.
- Seek further legal or professional Human Resources advice.
- Ensure the confidentiality of information.
- Document a substantiated complaint accordingly, along with the appropriate disciplinary action.
- In case of employees, ensure no documentation is placed on employees' files if the complaint is unsubstantiated.

If the complaint is not resolved to the employee's or affected person's satisfaction, they may advance it to the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission within one year of the date of the incident.

Applicable Alberta legislation supersedes this policy.

Approved by the SEAWA Board on: December 13, 2018

Next review and update on: as needed.