



A Position Statement on Respect and Dignity

The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions believes that all Employees are entitled to work in an environment where everyone is treated equal and that is free from harassment. Everyone should be treated with respect and dignity.

Employers have an obligation to ensure that no Employee is subjected to harassment at the place of employment whether it is from the Employer, co-worker or non – Employee.

Definitions: Harassment means any objectionable conduct, comment or display by a person that:

- i) is directed at a worker;
- ii) is made on the basis of race, creed, religion, colour, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability, physical size or weight, age, nationality, ancestry, or place of origin; and
- iii) constitutes a threat to the health or safety of the worker.

This type of harassment is prohibited in Occupational Health and Safety and Human Rights legislation.

It also extends to sexual harassment, which is conduct, comment, gesture or contact of a sexual nature that is offensive, unsolicited or unwelcome.

Sexual harassment may include:

- a threat of reprisal for refusing to comply with a sexually orientated request. The threat could be expressed directly or implied;
- unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes, propositions, or taunting about a person's body, attire, sex or sexual orientation;
- displaying pornographic or sexually explicit pictures or materials;
- unwelcome physical contact;
- unwelcome invitations or requests, direct or indirect, to engage in behaviour of a sexual nature; and
- refusing to work with or have contact with workers on-the-job because of their sex, gender or sexual orientation.

This also extends to personal harassment which is unwelcome comments or actions directed at a worker, which is not necessarily based on race, creed or one of the other prohibited grounds described above, but are abusive and humiliating and interfere with a person's work performance, health, safety or well being.

Personal harassment may include:

- practical jokes which may cause embarrassment, endanger safety or affect work performance negatively;
- vandalism of personal property;
- verbal abuse or threats;
- insulting, derogatory or degrading comments, jokes or gestures;
- refusing to work or cooperate with others; and
- unwelcome physical contact.

Employer Obligation

Employers must take all complaints of harassment seriously. Employers must be committed to implementing policies and ensure they are effective in:

- preventing and stopping harassment; and
- creating a productive and respectful workplace.

This commitment must include:

- Informing all persons in the workplace of their rights and obligations.
- Training all persons in implementing a harassment policy.
- Protecting workers from reprisal or embarrassment for trying to stop or prevent harassment.
- Promptly taking the action necessary to stop and prevent harassment when it occurs or has occurred.
- Regular review of policies in consultation with Occupational Health and Safety Committees.

Employee Obligation

All workers shall:

- refrain from causing or participation in the harassment of another worker;
- cooperate with person(s) investigating harassment complaints; and
- contribute to an environment which promotes the dignity and respect of every employee.