Bullying and Harassment in the Dispatch Center

This course explores the types of bullying and harassment that may occur within a 9-1-1 dispatch center and the behaviors bullies may use to exert power or influence over co-workers and trainees. Learners examine workplace harassment, sexual harassment, common methods of bullying, the physical and psychological effects on victims, and the broader impact on staffing, training, morale, productivity, and agency liability. The course also provides practical guidance for victims, witnesses, supervisors, and management to recognize, address, document, report, and prevent bullying and harassment in the workplace.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, learners will be able to:

1. Define workplace harassment and bullying and distinguish among common forms of inappropriate workplace conduct.
2. Identify behaviors and methods commonly associated with bullying and harassment in a 9-1-1 dispatch center.
3. Explain the physical, psychological, professional, and organizational effects of bullying and harassment.
4. Analyze how bullying can affect staffing, training, teamwork, morale, productivity, public safety, and agency liability.
5. Apply appropriate individual, witness, supervisory, and management responses to workplace bullying and harassment.

Module 1: Introduction to Workplace Bullying and Harassment

This module introduces bullying and harassment within the 9-1-1 environment. Learners examine how the stressful nature and culture of dispatch centers, including seniority-based practices, may contribute to inappropriate workplace behavior. The module also establishes foundational definitions of workplace harassment and bullying.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain why 9-1-1 dispatch centers may be vulnerable to workplace bullying and harassment.
2. Define workplace harassment and workplace bullying.
3. Identify examples of conduct that may contribute to an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.
4. Explain how seniority and perceived workplace power may contribute to bullying behavior.
5. Distinguish appropriate workplace demands from behavior intended to intimidate, humiliate, or harm another employee.

Content/Activities

- Introduction to bullying and harassment in the 9-1-1 center
- The meaning of “thick skin” in emergency communications
- Workplace culture and seniority
- Workplace harassment definition
- Workplace bullying/personal harassment definition

Module 2: Types of Workplace Harassment

This module explores several forms of harassment that may occur in the workplace. Learners examine physical, personal, discriminatory, psychological, and sexual harassment and consider how each type may appear in a professional environment.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Identify physical harassment and examples of threatening or abusive physical behavior.
2. Describe personal harassment and recognize unwanted insulting, derogatory, or condescending remarks.
3. Recognize discriminatory harassment directed toward protected characteristics such as race, age, or sex.
4. Explain how repeated negative or belittling behavior may constitute psychological harassment.
5. Identify unwanted romantic or sexual behavior that may constitute sexual harassment.

Content/Activities

- Interactive exploration of workplace harassment types
- Physical harassment
- Personal harassment
- Discriminatory harassment
- Psychological harassment
- Sexual harassment

Module 3: Sexual Harassment in the Dispatch Center

This module examines sexual harassment through a real-world case involving 9-1-1 telecommunicators. Learners consider inappropriate comments, intimidation, monitoring behavior, retaliation, workplace isolation, and the consequences of reporting harassment.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Recognize behaviors that may constitute sexual harassment in a public safety workplace.
2. Identify intimidation and controlling conduct associated with workplace harassment.
3. Explain how retaliation may occur after an employee reports harassment.
4. Describe the potential organizational consequences of failing to appropriately address reported harassment.
5. Explain the importance of supporting employees who report inappropriate workplace conduct.

Content/Activities

- Lake County, Colorado sexual harassment case study
- Review of reported inappropriate comments and intimidating conduct
- Discussion of retaliation and employee isolation
- Required sexual harassment case video
- Case-based reflection

Module 4: Methods of Harassment or Bullying

This module examines common methods used by workplace bullies to exert influence, establish control, embarrass co-workers, or undermine trainees. Learners explore inappropriate humor, humiliation, excessive criticism, ostracism, and malicious gossip.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Recognize when inappropriate comments or workplace humor may cross the line into harassment.
2. Identify personal humiliation and persistent fault-finding as forms of bullying behavior.
3. Explain how overly critical treatment may negatively affect trainees and experienced employees.
4. Describe ostracizing behavior and the role workplace cliques may play in exclusion.
5. Explain how malicious gossip can undermine, isolate, and harm another employee.

Content/Activities

- Inappropriate comments or offensive jokes
- Video: Inappropriate workplace humor and hostile work environment case
- Personal humiliation
- Critical remarks toward employees and trainees
- Ostracizing behavior and workplace cliques
- Gossiping and malicious rumors

Module 5: Additional Methods of Harassment or Bullying

This module expands on bullying behaviors by examining actions that interfere with an employee's ability to succeed. Learners explore withholding assistance, backstabbing, exclusion, stealing credit, work overload, and sabotage, with particular attention to the safety consequences of these behaviors in a 9-1-1 environment.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain how withholding assistance can endanger co-workers, responders, and members of the public.
2. Recognize backstabbing behavior and misuse of a co-worker's trust or confidence.
3. Identify deliberate isolation and exclusion as workplace bullying behaviors.
4. Explain how stealing credit can damage employee trust and discourage innovation.
5. Recognize work overload, unrealistic expectations, and deliberate sabotage intended to cause an employee or trainee to fail.

Content/Activities

- Withholding help
- Video: Internal conflict and the risks of allowing co-workers to fail
- Backstabbers
- Isolation/exclusion
- Workplace cliques
- Stealing credit
- Overloading work/sabotage

Module 6: Effects of Being Bullied

This module examines the effects bullying and harassment may have on victims. Learners explore stress and anxiety, physical symptoms, short-term psychological effects, long-term psychological consequences, decreased work performance, and the cumulative impact of ongoing workplace stress.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Identify physical effects associated with prolonged workplace bullying and harassment.
2. Describe short-term psychological effects such as shame, disrupted sleep, social anxiety, and decreased work performance.
3. Describe potential long-term effects associated with prolonged harassment or bullying.
4. Explain how fear, stress, and feelings of being scrutinized can negatively affect job performance and decision-making.
5. Compare the immediate and cumulative effects of workplace bullying on employee well-being.

Content/Activities

- Stress and anxiety
- Physical effects of bullying and harassment
- Hair loss, high blood pressure, panic attacks, ulcers, hives, weight gain, sleeplessness, and lethargy
- Short-term psychological effects
- Long-term psychological effects
- Effects on concentration, decision-making, and work performance

Module 7: Impact on the 9-1-1 Center

This module examines how workplace bullying affects more than the individual victim. Learners explore agency-wide consequences involving staffing, employee retention, training, morale, legal exposure, productivity, teamwork, and organizational costs.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain how tolerated bullying can contribute to employee turnover and staffing difficulties.
2. Describe how bullying by trainers or co-workers can interfere with trainee development and retention.
3. Explain how harassment and bullying may contribute to a hostile work environment and legal liability.
4. Analyze the relationship between bullying, low morale, damaged teamwork, and reduced productivity.
5. Identify financial and operational costs associated with failing to address workplace bullying.

Content/Activities

- Staffing and employee turnover
- Training challenges and trainee washout
- Hostile work environment and legal liability
- Low morale
- Breakdown of teamwork and trust
- Costs and lack of productivity
- Sick leave, vacancy coverage, hiring, and retraining expenses

Module 8: How to Respond to Bullying

This module provides practical strategies for responding to bullying and harassment from the perspectives of victims, witnesses, supervisors, and management. Learners examine self-assessment, documentation, direct communication, reporting, supporting victims, following the chain of command, and organizational prevention practices.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Conduct an objective self-assessment when determining whether workplace behavior may constitute bullying or harassment.
2. Apply appropriate steps for documenting and reporting incidents of bullying or harassment.
3. Describe appropriate actions witnesses can take to support victims and report inappropriate conduct.
4. Explain management's responsibility to establish complaint procedures, train supervisors, and communicate that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.
5. Identify workplace practices that promote teamwork, cooperation, positive interactions, employee satisfaction, and public safety.

Content/Activities

- Victims of bullying
- Honest self-assessment
- Documenting bullying and harassment incidents
- Directly addressing inappropriate behavior when appropriate and safe
- Reporting concerns to supervisors
- Witnesses of bullying or harassment
- Supporting victims
- Chain-of-command and human resources reporting
- Management responsibilities
- Complaint and grievance processes
- Prevention of bullying and harassment
- Creating a positive workplace culture
- Course Knowledge Check
- Course completion and review

Course Completion Criteria

To successfully complete this course and earn continuing education hours, learners must achieve a minimum score of 75%. The quiz must be completed within 30 minutes.

- CE hours awarded: 1
- Certificate duration: 12 Months

Technical Requirements

- Desktop, laptop, or mobile device
- Speakers or headphones
- High-speed Internet access
- A current web browser