BULLIES IN THE WORKPLACE

Bullying isn't just limited to children on the playground - it also takes place among adults in the working world.

Up to 13 percent of employees report being victimized by workplace bullies in the previous 12 months, according to a survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice.

In the workplace bullying manifests itself in many types of abuse such as physical, verbal, relational, racial, sexual and physical intrusiveness.

Engaging in gossip, demeaning language, spreading rumors, intimidating and threatening an employee or co-worker are common methods used by bullies.

Adult bullies are frequently those children or teens who were allowed to get away with bullying when they were younger and have continued this aggressive pattern of behavior and beliefs into their adult relationships.

Bullying is a type of harassment that is not only illegal but undermines the dignity of the individual, the work group and the organization. Bullying always causes emotional harm and decreases productivity and commitment to the job.

In order to address the problem, employers must create a climate that values human relationships as integral to their success. Programs should be implemented in the workplace to specifically identify and address bully abuse. Employers must set the standard of conduct and ethics to be followed by management and employees.

While bullying can be related to race, gender or disability, it is not always based on these characteristics nor is it an isolated incidence or a one-time occurrence. Workplace bullying is purposeful and repeated aggressive behavior directed toward another person in order to have power and control over that person. Bully abuse is intentional and does not stop on its own.

A victim of a bully must report and document the abuse. Meet with the individual and a third party to state what occurred and what is needed for a future working relationship. Employers should provide a safe and anonymous way to report abuse and should take action on any reports within two weeks.

When there is not a positive outcome after reporting the abuse, leaving the job may have to become an option because workplace abuse is a stressor that creates significant health and productivity problems.

Everyone has a right to be safe from abuse.

*Ariana Hunt*, *Recorder*, Indianapolis, Ind.: *Feb 22, 2008*. Vol. 113, Iss. 8; pg. C4, 1 pgs