

Definitions of Bullying

Bullying is unwelcome or unreasonable behavior that demeans, intimidates or humiliates people either as individuals or as a group. Bullying behavior is often persistent and part of a pattern, but it can also occur as a single incident. It is usually carried out by an individual but can also be an aspect of group behavior (see “mobbing” below).

Some examples of bullying behavior are:

Verbal communication

Abusive and offensive language

Insults

Teasing

Spreading rumor and innuendo

Unreasonable criticism

Trivializing of work and achievements

Manipulating the work environment

Isolating people from normal work interaction

Excessive demands

Setting impossible deadlines

Psychological manipulation

Unfairly blaming for mistakes

Setting people up for failure

Deliberate exclusion

Excessive supervision

Practical jokes

Belittling or disregarding opinions or suggestions

Criticizing in public

Context is important in understanding bullying, particularly verbal communication. There is a difference between friendly insults exchanged by long-time work colleagues and comments that are meant to be, or are taken as, demeaning.

While care should be exercised, particularly if a person is reporting alleged bullying as a witness, it is better to be genuinely mistaken than to let actual bullying go unreported.

Mobbing

Mobbing is a particular type of bullying behavior carried out by a group rather than by an individual. Mobbing is the bullying or social isolation of a person through collective unjustified accusations, humiliation, general harassment, or emotional abuse. Although it is group behavior, specific incidents such as an insult or a practical joke may be carried out by an individual as part of mobbing behavior.