

Respectful Workplace & Human Rights Policy

1. Introduction

“A respectful workplace - one in which people work-together collaboratively, efficiently and effectively to meet organizational goals - is a critical ingredient for VCH’s success in delivering excellent care, services and health promotion. A respectful workplace is foundational for a healthy culture that nurtures staff’s physical and psychological well-being, engagement and performance.”
(VCH Senior Executive Team)

Scope

This policy applies to all staff including employees (unionized staff, administrative, and management), Medical Staff Members (including physicians, Division & Department Heads) midwives, dentists, nurse practitioners, residents, fellows and trainees, students, volunteers, contractors and other service providers engaged by VCH.

2. Policy

2.1. Behavioral Expectations

All persons associated with VCH are accountable for their own behavior and must conduct themselves in a civil, respectful, cooperative and non-discriminatory manner in the workplace and at work-related gatherings.

Regardless of position, showing mutual respect is a core “People First” value and work expectation. Think before you speak and do not talk or behave in a way that might intimidate, embarrass, offend or otherwise bother someone.

VCH does not tolerate bullying, harassment or other inappropriate comment or conduct towards a person that reasonably causes humiliation, intimidation or embarrassment. Nor will VCH tolerate any reprisals for persons who report a concern or file a complaint.

A Human Resources Advisor will contact the employee or physician within 3 business days where:

- the employee or physician reports a concern/complaint to their Supervisor, Manager or Department Head regarding the behavior of other(s); or
- the employee or physician contacts the VCH No-Bully line requesting advice for coaching or wishing to file a complaint regarding the behavior of other(s).

The HR Advisor will update the parties every 10 business days until the complaint investigation is completed.

VCH reserves the right to investigate incident(s), with or without the person’s consent, if there are concerns about serious harm.

2.2 Definition

Bullying & harassment is defined as inappropriate comment or conduct targeted towards or about a staff member which the person knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause the staff member to be humiliated or intimidated.

Inappropriate comment or conduct can occur in many different settings, including one to one; group communication, or through electronic means i.e. email, social media, (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/Pinterest etc).

Inappropriate comment and conduct include:

- actions (e.g. touching, pushing), comments (e.g. jokes, name-calling), or displays (e.g. offensive posters, cartoons);
- overloading a particular person an unreasonable share of unpleasant jobs;
- deliberately withholding information or support necessary for a person to be able to perform work;
- humiliating a person through criticism or insults especially in front of colleagues or patients;
- shouting or yelling at individuals;
- gossiping, back-stabbing behavior, cyber-bullying;
- ignoring or excluding a particular person;
- rolling eyes, glaring or other non-verbal behavior intended to intimidate; and
- discriminating or harassing behavior based on a protected ground per the Human Rights Code.

Management initiatives communicated respectfully **are not** considered bullying and harassment, such as:

- expressing a difference of opinion in a calm manner;
- assigning work duties, setting workloads and deadlines;
- work instruction, correction or supervision;
- work performance evaluation; imposition of discipline; and
- transfers, lay-offs and reorganizations.

2.2. *Witnesses Responsibility: Take a Stand – Lend a Hand*

We all have a part to play in creating a safe and healthy work environment. VCH expects anyone who witnesses inappropriate comment or conduct, to support their colleague(s), intervene where appropriate (e.g. speak up and say the other person's behavior is not acceptable) and report the incident to the Supervisor, Managers or Department Head who are accountable to act upon any situation involving inappropriate comment or conduct in accordance with this policy.

2.3. *Options to Reporting and Resolving Inappropriate Conduct and Comment*

2.3.1 Having the Conversation

If someone (including your Supervisor, Manager, Division or Department Head) behaves in a way that you feel is offensive do not assume the problem will go away. Sometimes the person may not be aware their behavior is offensive, and many individuals will change their behavior once they are made aware of the problem.

If you are comfortable, have an informal conversation by approaching the other person(s), explain how the behavior impacts you and ask them to stop. Do this calmly in a private setting.

2.3.2 Reporting the Incident(s) to Your Manager or Department Head

If you are not comfortable having the conversation directly with the person(s), then please contact your Supervisor, Manager or Department Head or call VCH's No-bully telephone line below. If you report your concern/complaint to your Supervisor, Manager or Department Head, they will contact an HR Advisor and the Advisor will follow up with you within 3 business days.

2.3.3 Call VCH No-Bully (1-844-662-8559) Telephone Line

You can phone VCH's No Bully telephone line (1-844-662-8559) regarding any concerns about inappropriate conduct or comment. During the call an Employee Engagement Associate will provide you with the opportunity to confidentially debrief your experience and ask whether you wish to: access counselling through EFAP and/or have an HR Advisor contact you to review your options for coaching or filing a complaint.

Counselling

Confidential EFAP counselling and wellness services will be offered to assist you in dealing with the effects of bullying or other inappropriate behavior and if you are unsure about proceeding, help you to determine how you would like to resolve the conflict.

Coaching

If you choose, an HR Advisor will contact you within 3 business days to discuss options to resolve the conflict/behavior including coaching advice on how to have a difficult conversation with the other person(s) in order to maintain the working relationship,

Verbal Complaint

You will also be given the option for the HR Advisor to speak with your Manager or Department Head and arrange a meeting with the parties involved to resolve the behavior.

Written Complaint

If you wish to file a complaint, an HR Advisor will call you and summarize your concerns on a complaint form which they will send to you for confirmation and signature. You will be updated by an HR Advisor every 10 business days of the progress until the investigation of the complaint is completed.

2.4. Other Resolution Process

This policy does not preclude persons from advancing complaints through the applicable collective agreement, relevant professional bodies, WorkSafe BC, or the BC Human Rights Tribunal. In the event you file a complaint outside of this policy, VCH reserves the right to not proceed if you filed a second complaint under this policy.

Your union representative may participate at any point under this policy.

2.5. Consequences for Violating the Policy and Confidentiality

Any staff member (including physicians) found engaging in inappropriate comment or conduct (such as bullying or discrimination) or who retaliates against the complainant, will be subject to remedial and/or disciplinary action such as: a warning, direction to issue a written apology, a behavior agreement, transfer, counselling, demotion, dismissal, cancellation of contract and/or revocation of privileges pursuant to applicable Health Authority processes. Staff filing complaints in bad faith may be subject to disciplinary action.

No information will be disclosed by any person during an investigation or resolution of a complaint under this policy except as necessary to enable due process.

3. References

“Nurses treat each other, colleagues, students and other health care workers in a respectful manner recognizing the power differentials among those in formal leadership positions, staff and students. They work with others to resolve differences in a constructive way.”

College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia

“Collaborate with other physicians and health professionals in the care of patients and the functioning and improvement of health services. Treat your colleagues with dignity and as persons worthy of respect.”

Canadian Medical Association Code of Ethics

Other health professionals have guidelines for respectful and collaborative work behavior outlined by their colleges and professional associations. Links to colleges and associations are available on the Health Sciences Association website at www.hsabc.org

Related Policies

- [Guidelines for Social Media Use for VCH Employees](#) ; [VCH Partners in Care](#)

Issued by:		
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Signature of issuing official		