

# Stop workplace bullying by training your staff



Starting Jan. 1, a new state law will require large California employers to provide anti-bullying training to employees. It's a good idea regardless of where you do business.

According to surveys conducted by the [Workplace Bullying Institute](#) and the [Employment Law Alliance](#), between 33% and 44% of employees have experienced bullying at work.

Victims can suffer physical or emotional harm that interferes with their professional and personal lives. Employers suffer the costs associated with decreased attendance, increased medical and insurance claims, legal claims and lost productivity and opportunity costs resulting from demoralized and distracted workers.

Stopping workplace bullies isn't just about protecting employees. It's also a sound risk-management strategy because bullying can create harassment liability for employers.

## Anti-bullying training topics

Anti-bullying training should cover the same topics your anti-bullying policy does:

**Definition of bullying:** A sample policy from the American Bar Association defines it as "persistent, malicious, unwelcome, severe and pervasive mistreatment that harms, intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates an employee, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment."

**Zero tolerance:** Make clear that it violates company policy to bully co-workers or subordinates. Employees should understand that bullies will be disciplined.

**Reporting processes:** Ensure employees understand how to report bullying. You can use existing sexual harassment reporting mechanisms to report bullying behavior.

**Give employees more than one way to report it.** According to several studies, supervisor harassment of subordinates accounts for almost half of workplace bullying incidents. It is important for employees to know they can report bullying to HR or other supervisors higher up in the organization.