

Guidelines to Finding a Qualified Workplace Bullying Specialist

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If you are Employer or Employee wishing to learn about prevention, early intervention, or repair options for workplace psychological harassment or bullying, it is important to select qualified and appropriate resources. My objective in creating this document is to ensure your investment is successful, and to prevent secondary harm to vulnerable employees. Workplace psychological harassment and violence is complex. You will require professionals with relevant qualifications, hands on experience, knowledge of research, systems, access to networks with resources, and a well-developed specialization in addressing the variety of needs involved with these cases.

When someone reports that psychological harassment or bullying has occurred, they are known as the **complainants** (targets), or **witnesses** (bystanders). Those who are accused of acting out with disruptive behaviours are called **respondents** (perpetrators). Often the people who are impacted feel vulnerable, unsafe, and experience valid trust issues. For this reason, organizations are seeking knowledge on how best to proceed, whether it be from a proactive or reactive perspective. ABRC offers a variety of resources and supports to leadership and staff. Our intentions are to prevent further harm and to help restore the workplace for all parties involved.

You are within your rights to ask any or all the following questions until you have established a level of comfort with the service provider, where you can talk openly and honestly about the situation that encouraged you to step forward:

- 1) **Ask about the specialist's** educational background, specialized training, and their experience in addressing workplace psychological harassment or violence. Do they have liability insurance? Are they registered with an accredited association who will ensure that they are within their professional scope of practice and accountable? You may wish to verify this information by requesting a copy of the individual's portfolio: including resume or CV, training certificates, license, references, and testimonials.

For example:

With **investigations**, be sure to hire a certified investigator and ensure that they have trauma informed interviewing training and skills. These cases are highly complex, so you want to be sure to build safety, confidence, and trust "for all parties involved". We suggest offering a list of investigators for all parties to select from. This will a) empower all parties involved, b) remove concerns of bias, c) build confidence and safety, and d) promote a successful outcome.

Professional Trainer: learn about the professional's perspective. For example: HR might train from a corporate perspective, a nurse might train from a medical perspective, a police officer or lawyer might train from a legal perspective, social worker from a social justice perspective, and clinical therapist from a wholistic perspective. Whatever the industry, be sure the trainer has a wide range perspective with solutions that have been tested, tried and successful. They will need to be flexible, adaptable, and prepared to handle a variety of emotions from their audience, appropriately. We tend to stay for an hour afterwards and offer support to those who need it.

Mediators and Coaches: there are many excellent workplace mediators and coaches to access. Be sure to learn about their professional training and certification - this varies from a weekend certificate to years of training. Also, learn about their training and hands on practise with regard to workplace psychological harassment and violence. Be sure to gain a good understanding of their scope of practise. Often the employee will need to see a counsellor short term, or a clinical therapist before attending mediation or coaching. Mediators and coaches are not trained to offer services related to psychological injuries.

Therapists: it is important to refer to therapists who have a variety of tools to offer. For example, trauma therapist with EMDR, CBT, or similar modalities. This is a unique area and short-term counselling i.e.: 'solution focused' type of approach is not appropriate for this type of injury. You want to prevent secondary harm.

ABRC Linda Crockett and Pat Ferris of Pat Ferris Consulting have developed the one and only, full day training certification for therapists, specific to treating this injury.

- 2) **Ask about professional boundaries** i.e. how the information you disclose will be used and ensure that you will be involved in any decision making. What are the boundaries of their scope of practice? For example: a police officer or teacher who is coaching in this area, must have clear boundaries when cases require mental health interventions.
- 3) **In some cases, you want to authorize an individual to speak on your behalf;** this is not about transferring responsibility for decision-making, but this may alleviate some of the associated stress knowing that someone else is fielding your mail from the employer and suggesting or drafting a suitable response on your behalf. The authorized individual you select will be transparent and inclusive with you and supporting your return.
- 4) **Inquire whether the professional is prepared to speak to their personal experience (if any) about bullying.** Ask about techniques and coping mechanisms that they found helpful and what steps they personally explored to recover. Appropriate self-disclosure builds trust, validation, safety, and provides an example of openness. This also provides you with an example of how they have moved forward.

- 5) **Consider how and where the specialists promote their practice.** Conduct a google search and or look at their business profiles: LinkedIn, Website, Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook for more information on their services, skills, and perspectives.
- 6) **Ask if the individual is connected to any workplace networks?** Does their network offer current research material, or conferences? Do they share a practice with other professionals or specialists?
- 7) **Do they site their material appropriately?** Do they offer their own research? Are they transparent about their opinions? Do they offer self-developed or team developed approaches? Are their tools and programs, articles, or blogs based solely on their own experience of being bullied? We need to be sure they have more than just personal experience on this topic. Knowledge based on research, best practises, and training is most ethical and allows for a wide breath of knowledge. Though personal experiences are very valuable, there is a risk of bias and/or limited perspectives and resources.
- 8) **Individuals dealing with workplace bullying will often find it difficult to access resources due to limited financial resources.** Will the service provider offer flexibility i.e. temporary sliding scale, non-profit budget, or monthly installments?

**ABRC.ca offers Employers, Employees or Individuals,
a variety of qualified resources,
customized to meet the needs of each unique case.**

✓ **Education**

✓ **Prevention**

✓ **Intervention**

✓ **Repair/Recovery Options.**

Call ABRC for more information!