

**Policy Statement on Harassment and Intimidation
in the Working Environment of
the Professional Association of Residents of Alberta
and
the Council of Academic Health Centres of Alberta**

1.0 Introduction

The Professional Association of Residents of Alberta (PARA) represents physicians in Alberta engaged in a residency training program, primarily for the purpose of negotiating the non-academic terms and conditions of these residency positions. The Council of Academic Health Centres of Alberta (the Council) is a working committee comprised of the Capital Health Authority and Calgary Health Region, the Alberta Cancer Board and the Faculties of Medicine of the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary.

On September 29, 1997, both parties concluded an agreement that led to the development of a joint statement regarding the elimination of harassment and intimidation in the working environment of the respective parties. The practical definition of working environment included anywhere a person was in a work-related context, and that was understood broadly to include training situations and regional, hospital or university social functions.

Both parties agreed to review this statement after three years and make any changes that might be required. After three years experience, it was recognized that changes were in order. Member organizations of Council had developed procedures and processes for handling harassment complaints of various sorts and it was judged appropriate to use these routes for resolving any potential issues and problems of harassment.

2.0 Statement of Values Underlying Policy

Both parties are committed to creating a working environment free of harassment and intimidation, where mutual respect and the ability of staff to work together productively are supported. All parties remain committed to cultivating an atmosphere of trust, respect and dignity in all our relationships.

Both parties believe in the prevention of harassment and intimidation, including any violation of human rights, and the development of processes that support a safe and supportive environment that protects all people from physical and emotional harm.

3.0 What do we mean by the terms Harassment and Intimidation?

Harassment is considered to be unsolicited, gratuitous, unwanted or unwelcome verbal or physical conduct that is known, or reasonably ought to be known, to have the purpose or effect of:

- violating an individual's dignity, respect and self worth; and/or,
- instilling fear or discomfort.

Harassment may include, but is not limited to the following:

- inappropriate physical contact such as striking, pinching, kicking, bumping
- any threatened or attempted acts such as those noted above
- verbal or mental abuse such as inappropriate comments and the use of obscene language, gestures or threats
- sexual harassment which is unwelcome, unsolicited and inappropriate
- behavior or speech that is sexual or gender related in nature, and demeans a person by sex, gender or sexual orientation.

Intimidation, either implied or explicit, includes, but is not limited to:

- behaviors or threats which imply loss of future opportunity, worsening abuse, or compromise of education
- abuses of power through threats or coercion.

For the purposes of this letter, harassment and intimidation does not include the legitimate exercise of an individual's supervisory authority in an appropriate manner. This recognition of the appropriate use of supervisory authority is not meant to deflect attention from the intent of this policy.

Harassment and intimidation in the workplace of residents may reflect a power imbalance in relationships within the workplace. All parties recognize the sensitivity of this situation, and while it may not always appear to be in the best interests of the complaining party to address the issue directly, mature, sensitive and confidential discussions regarding these issues are encouraged.

4.0 What to do if You Feel Harassed or Intimidated

If a resident feels harassed or intimidated, at least two options are available:

1. As a member of PARA, you are encouraged to contact the PARA office (phone: 780-432-1749 or 403-236-4841) in order to obtain advice about how best to approach the particular situation.
2. Alternatively, for advice on how to proceed, you may contact:
 - Associate Dean, Post-Graduate Medical Education
University of Alberta (780) 492-9722
 - Associate Dean, Post-Graduate Medical Education
University of Calgary (403) 220-7448

All concerns will be addressed with appropriate confidentiality under the relevant policies of the member institutions.

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