



If you are a manager who hears about a conflict:

Act immediately. If you think there is a problem, or if you hear of one, deal with it right away. Unresolved situations do not go away. Rather, they get worse. Unresolved problems will also affect the work environment throughout your branch/bureau, division or mission. The Advisor on Harassment can give you valuable support.

As a manager, you are obliged to act promptly, appropriately and with discretion to put an end to any inappropriate behaviour, including harassment, that takes place in your area. You are expected to do so even when there has been no actual complaint, but perhaps only an informal one, a rumour, or in cases where an employee asks that nothing be done. You can start by taking the following steps:

Contact the Advisor on Harassment. If you hear rumours about conflicts between staff members in your area, including harassment, take advantage of the resources available to assist you. The Advisor on Harassment can provide advice on and assistance with a range of options to resolve the conflict in your area. He or she can also suggest how to follow up and ensure conflict does not re-emerge.

Hold an awareness session. The Advisor on Harassment can arrange an awareness session to help your staff think afresh and talk openly about appropriate workplace behaviour. Case studies are used to encourage your staff to discuss workplace conflict, harassment and related issues. As standards of behaviour change, some people may not be aware that their behaviour is a problem. Awareness sessions can often help to remedy conflict situations without the need for further action.

Have a frank talk. Some people may not be aware of the effect of their behaviour. In many cases, speaking privately to a person who is said to be behaving inappropriately about that behaviour will be enough to stop the behaviour from continuing.

In more serious cases. . . . If a person will not stop his or her inappropriate behaviour, or if you feel that the harassment was of a very serious nature, you should seek specialized assistance to deal with the situation. Begin by contacting the Advisor on Harassment.

Be fair. Remember that you have a duty to be fair to both employees. Try to find a resolution that satisfies the human need for fair treatment and recognize that there may be some right and some wrong on both sides.

Do not try to conduct an investigation yourself. No matter how good your intentions, you will not be perceived as objective and you may not get the full story from employees. Given your responsibility for the workplace environment, you do have to do some fact finding by talking to the parties involved. In most instances, however, this can be done most effectively with the help of the Advisor on Harassment.

Re-establish positive working relationships. Even after a conflict situation is resolved, it may have lasting effects on the morale and productivity of co-workers. Consider contacting the Advisor on Harassment for ideas or aid in re-establishing good working relationships.

Remember, managers have been held personally liable if they knew or reasonably ought to have known about an incident and did not take reasonable steps to deal with the problem. However, this policy does not restrict the authority of those charged with managerial or supervisory responsibilities in the areas of performance appraisal, staff relations, counselling, implementation of disciplinary action, organization of work or the assignment of duties.