



# Respectful Workplace Policy for Legislative Assembly Office Employees

## Policy Statement

The Legislative Assembly Office (LAO) is committed to a work environment where employees feel engaged and safe from disrespectful behaviour.

The demonstration of respect is the responsibility of every person within the LAO. Disrespectful behaviour, including bullying and harassment, will not be tolerated in our workplace.

From a policy perspective, the LAO parallels the Alberta Public Service in the principles and application of the Respectful Workplace Policy.

## Definitions

**Bullying** is a repeated pattern of negative behaviour aimed at a specific person or group.

**Workplace harassment** is unwelcome conduct based on race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation of that person or of any other person.

**Workplace violence**, according to the Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 1, means: “the threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical injury”. Employees must notify their supervisor of all incidents of workplace violence even if there was no physical injury as per the LAO Health and Safety Program.

# Guiding Values

The LAO is committed to a work environment where employees feel engaged and safe from disrespectful behaviour.

## OUR MISSION

To provide nonpartisan parliamentary support to the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly as they carry out their roles as elected representatives.

## OUR VISION

Respect Tradition | Exemplify Service | Promote Innovation

## OUR VALUES

Employees of the Legislative Assembly Office (LAO) are proud to provide services to the Legislative Assembly on behalf of the citizens of Alberta. We are guided in our work and conduct by a core set of principles that motivate us as individuals and reflect the qualities of the Legislative Assembly Office as a whole.

### *Improvement*

Encouraging a commitment to the ongoing development of skills and services that enhance the operations of the LAO while respecting the traditions of the office.

### *Impartiality*

Acting in an impartial and objective manner at all times to support the unique and politically neutral role of the LAO.

### *Integrity*

Providing services in an accountable, responsive, ethical and dedicated manner.

### *Involvement*

Promoting awareness and engagement in the democratic process.

These values provide a common understanding of the behaviours expected of the LAO. They describe how we go about doing our best work and ensure that this is as important as delivering on our targets.

## Responsibilities

1. We are all responsible for ensuring that our actions and words contribute to a respectful work environment.
2. We are all accountable for the results of our actions, regardless of our intent.
3. We all understand that disrespectful behaviours will not be tolerated.
4. Whenever appropriate, we will address issues of disrespectful behaviour with the person or people directly involved.

For more detailed information regarding the application of the LAO Respectful Workplace Policy, please reference the Guide to Understanding the Respectful Workplace Policy for Legislative Assembly Office Employees.



# **Guide to Understanding the Respectful Workplace Policy for Legislative Assembly Office Employees**

**January 2017**

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## Guiding Values

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## Intent

The LAO is an organization that seeks to foster an environment in which each individual is valued and heard. We sometimes hear people attempt to excuse disrespectful behaviours by saying “that’s just the way they are” or “they didn’t mean it”. However, it is important that everyone take into consideration how their actions impact others.

The intent of the behaviour is not as relevant as the impact the behaviour has on the individual. Whether the behaviour was intentional or not may be difficult to determine. Certainly if it is found that someone has willfully done something to harm a co-worker, subordinate or someone they report to, this will be considered a serious aggravating factor in determining whether discipline is appropriate.

## Workplace Bullying

Bullying is a repeated pattern of negative behaviour aimed at a specific person or group.

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## Workplace Harassment

Workplace harassment is unwelcome conduct based on race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation of that person or of any other person.

Workplace harassment may include a single incident or a series of events.

## Workplace Violence

According to the *Occupational Health and Safety Code*, Part 1, workplace violence means: "the threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical injury". Employees must notify their supervisor of all incidents of workplace violence even if there was no physical injury as per the LAO Health and Safety Program. Examples of workplace violence include the following:

- Threatening behaviour such as shaking fists, destroying property or throwing objects
- Verbal or written threats (any expression of intent to cause harm)
- Physical attacks such as hitting, shoving, pushing or kicking



## Continuum of Behaviours

It can be difficult to isolate workplace behaviours into strict categories of acceptable or unacceptable. Oftentimes, real life encounters expose us to behaviours that fall somewhere in the middle of these two categories. To better understand the expectation of working together with respect, it is helpful to imagine a continuum of behaviours where one end demonstrates our ideal state of interaction and the other end demonstrates unacceptable behaviours. For example, being kind would be on one end of this continuum and bullying and harassment would be on the opposite end. This continuum concept shows us that it is less important to evaluate behaviours against a strict definition of harassment, or bullying, and more important to evaluate whether an action or inaction has negatively (or positively) impacted someone else. The following are examples of behaviours that fall at either end of the continuum. An opportunity exists to intervene or self-correct if we find that behaviours are moving away from those identified as contributing to our ideal state. For a visual example of the continuum of behaviours, please refer to Appendix 4.

## Respectful Behaviours

The following behaviours describe our ideal state of interaction. Taking time to ensure we are all exemplifying the following behaviours will move us closer to achieving the respectful workplace we are trying to create:

- Allowing one person to speak at a time
- Expressing appreciation
- Being accountable for your own mistakes
- Seeking input from others
- Being asked for an opinion
- Praising good work
- Giving timely recognition of people's efforts and accomplishments
- Providing positive reinforcement
- Offering assistance when someone needs help
- Saying "please" and "thank you"
- Communicating openly
- Providing opportunities for input and participation
- Giving constructive feedback
- Demonstrating sympathy and a show of support when someone is having a difficult time
- Listening openly to other points of view, even when you disagree
- Seeking consensus
- Providing clear expectations
- Sharing knowledge and information
- Being inclusive
- Mentoring/coaching: Taking the time to develop others
- Acting honestly
- Empowering others
- Sharing laughs
- Social banter





## Disrespectful Behaviours

Understanding the types of behaviours that can be considered disrespectful is the key to identifying these behaviours when we see them being displayed and, in turn, evaluating and adjusting our own actions accordingly. Demonstrating the following behaviours in our workplace can negatively impact individuals' self-worth. Therefore, it is important to note the following behaviours and ensure that we do not demonstrate or tolerate them in our workplace:

- Eye rolling, finger wagging, or other physical gestures that are used to make fun of, express frustration with or isolate another employee
- Workplace violence/assault
- Intimidation, leering or other objectionable and insulting gestures
- Threats, including coercion
- Angry outbursts
- Unwanted physical contact such as touching, patting, pinching or punching
- Display of pornographic, racist or offensive pictures or materials
- Taunting, ridiculing or belittling
- Unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendo or taunting about a person's race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation of that person or of any other person
- Abuse of authority that undermines someone's performance or threatens his or her career
- Spreading false information about an employee
- Practical jokes that result in awkwardness or embarrassment
- Unwelcome enquiries or comments about an individual's personal life
- Unwelcome remarks about a person's physical attributes or appearance
- Humiliation in front of others
- Taking credit for someone else's or a team's work
- False accusations of disrespectful behaviour
- Gossiping
- Purposely and/or regularly interrupting people when they are speaking
- Refusing to converse or work with an employee

## What are NOT Considered Disrespectful Behaviours?

The following are considered legitimate workplace actions so long as they are carried out in good faith, in a professional manner, and in a nonarbitrary fashion:

- Direct supervision, including discussions about performance expectations
- Assignment of work and direction on how it is to be accomplished
- Requests by supervisors for updates or status reports
- One-on-one discussions between managers, supervisors and their staff
- Approval or denial of time off

The above noted actions are encompassed by management's legitimate right to run the business and direct the workforce.



## Support for All Employees

An allegation of disrespectful conduct at work is serious and has the potential to significantly impact one's career and/or personal well-being. All employees are encouraged to speak to a colleague, supervisor or manager for support or advice when needed. In many instances, open and honest dialogue can go a long way in reaching an informal resolution.

More information regarding the informal and formal resolution options available for all employees is provided in the Options for Resolution section of this guidebook as well as in the Resolution Processes provided in Appendix 1 and 2.

## False Allegations

Making a false allegation against another employee is a serious offense and is considered another form of disrespectful behaviour that will not be tolerated. False allegations are particularly egregious because they force the accused individuals to defend their integrity. The allegations and subsequent investigation can be traumatic and costly regardless of the findings.

Where accusations are found to be false, disciplinary action may be taken against the person who made the accusation. Disciplinary action may include termination.

## Frivolous Complaints

Allegations that are frivolous in nature may have a serious impact on individuals within the work area. In such instances, all those involved may be subject to an investigation, which they may find frustrating and traumatic. Investigations are often an emotionally charged exercise, and the amount of time spent fact-finding means time spent away from the valuable work that is being done for the benefit of Albertans. Frivolous complaints may result in disciplinary action against the complainant. Any disciplinary action will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

This does not imply that employees should avoid dealing with workplace conflict or feel dissuaded from making a complaint about disrespectful behaviour. It does, however, draw attention to the fact that filing a complaint is a serious matter. Therefore, employees are asked to think carefully and not act impulsively when considering filing a complaint. All employees are encouraged to explore the Informal Resolution Process outlined in Appendix 1 before considering a formal complaint. The Informal Resolution Process promotes open dialogue between the parties and this may result in a common understanding and resolution.



## Requesting Anonymity or That No Action Be Taken

Approaching your manager with concerns about another employee is not helpful unless you are asking them to address the issue. It is not acceptable for a manager to be asked to listen to someone who they believe has a serious issue but then be asked not to do anything about it. Therefore, if you feel the issue is significant enough to bring to the attention of your manager, you should be aware that your manager may take action to ensure the issue will be addressed. Action taken may involve your manager providing you with advice on next steps.

Anonymity will not be granted when a complaint is filed as the respondent has the right to know and respond to the allegations made. That said, efforts will be made to protect confidentiality and respect the privacy of all those involved.

## The Role of the Bystander

Employees who witness disrespectful behaviour have a responsibility to take action. Bystanders who do not take action may contribute to creating a toxic work environment. If an employee witnesses other employees acting disrespectfully, there is an expectation that this information will be brought forward for resolution.

## Resolution

### Informal Issue Resolution Process (Appendix 1):

- Speak to the individual directly, if possible, or write them a note or send them an e-mail if you are not comfortable speaking to them. These are difficult conversations to have, but employees are expected in most instances to do their best to work things out with each other before escalating to a higher level.
- If speaking to the individual does not resolve the issue or if you are not comfortable in approaching the individual, employees can speak to their supervisor or manager. Employees are encouraged to work with their supervisor or manager to develop a plan for how the situation can be addressed moving forward.
- Employees may also speak to LAO Human Resource Services or the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly for coaching to assist with these conversations.
- Employees may request their supervisor or manager to assist in coaching/mediating an informal resolution.
- If the matter involves an employee's supervisor, an employee may also bring concerns to their supervisor's manager or alternatively to Human Resources in an effort to find a solution prior to filing a formal complaint. For more information, please reference the Informal Issue Resolution Process provided in Appendix 1.
- Failing a successful informal resolution, an employee may consider pursuing the formal complaint process.



### **Formal Issue Resolution Process (Appendix 2):**

- The formal process must be initiated within 30 days from the date of the incident.
- In extenuating circumstances, the Clerk has the authority to extend timelines.
- A formal complaint can be filed in accordance with the Formal Issue Resolution Process provided in Appendix 2.
- After an initial review of the complaint it may proceed to an investigation through the Formal Issue Resolution Process, during which all individuals with relevant information to share will be interviewed.
- Once the investigation is completed and the findings are reviewed by the appropriate party as determined by the LAO, a decision will be made regarding appropriate action.

## **Type of Complaint**

### **a) Complaint against an employee**

The Clerk may bring in external qualified mediators or investigators to assist with the informal and formal resolution processes.

### **b) Complaint by an employee involving a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

When a Member is the respondent in a complaint, the employee has the option to report the matter to the Member's Whip and/or the Director of Human Resource Services and the Clerk, who may appoint an independent investigator if required. If the Member involved is the Whip, then the employee has the option to report the matter to the House Leader of that caucus and/or the Director of Human Resource Services and the Clerk, who may appoint an independent investigator if required. For Independent Members, the employee has the option to report the matter to the Speaker and/or the Director of Human Resource Services, who may appoint an independent investigator if required.

Complaints by an employee involving the Speaker stand referred to the Ethics Commissioner.

## **Looking Forward**

A respectful workplace is the responsibility of every employee within the LAO. It is an ongoing and evolving process that requires conscious action on a daily basis. Through collective efforts we will continue to move towards a workplace environment where every employee feels valued and engaged and thrives in their workplace.



## Questions and Answers

**Q: Are there time limits for making a formal complaint?**

A: The formal process must be initiated within 30 days from the date of the incident. In extenuating circumstances, the Clerk has the authority to extend timelines.

**Q: Perhaps I am making a big deal out of nothing. How do I know when I should deal with the issue?**

A: If someone's actions have made you feel uncomfortable, the processes as outlined in this guidebook can assist you in addressing the issue and reaching a resolution.

**Q: How can joking around be considered inappropriate if I was just having some fun?**

A: Humour is healthy, can help relieve tension and can create a bond between people. However, humour can get out of hand if it offends others and/or hurts feelings. Get to know your colleagues so that you can better understand where that line is drawn. Every person has a different way of dealing with certain subject matters, and every workplace has their own unique cultural norms. Take note of your work environment, and err on the side of caution with humour.

**Q: How do I let someone know that they have done something that offends me?**

A: A good course of action is to ask to speak to the individual in private and to explain to them what they did, how it made you feel and why. Clarify how you propose moving forward or what you need to see change. Communicate that if the behaviours continue, you will escalate.

**Q: What options do I have in dealing with disrespectful behaviour?**

A: The sooner you do something, the better. Not doing anything is condoning the behaviours and the person may not know that what they are doing is impacting you. You can:

- tell the person to stop
- write them a note or send them an e-mail if you are not comfortable speaking to them
- speak to a colleague, supervisor, manager or Human Resource Services
- file a formal complaint if you cannot resolve this matter informally

**Q: Do I have to wait for something serious to happen to do anything?**

A: Disrespectful behaviours, including bullying and harassment, often occurs incrementally in small doses over time. You do not have to wait for a culminating incident to do something. It is best to deal with the situation as it arises.



## Resources

- **Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)**

The EFAP is a confidential service designed to assist employees and their immediate family who experience personal problems and replaces the internal counselling service known as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Enhanced services include increased access to face-to-face counselling; telephone and e-counselling; support services for elder care, child care and parenting; as well as the provision of health and wellness information.

Employees wishing to access the services can contact Shepell•fgi directly by calling 1-800-268-5211 or by requesting an appointment online at Shepell•fgi's website, [workhealthlife.com](http://workhealthlife.com) (user name: government; password: alberta).

- **Human Resource Services**

Legislative Assembly Office  
#4106, 9820 – 107 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1E7  
780.427.1364  
[hr@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:hr@assembly.ab.ca)



# Appendices

**Appendix 1: Informal Issue Resolution Process**

**Appendix 2: Formal Issue Resolution Process**

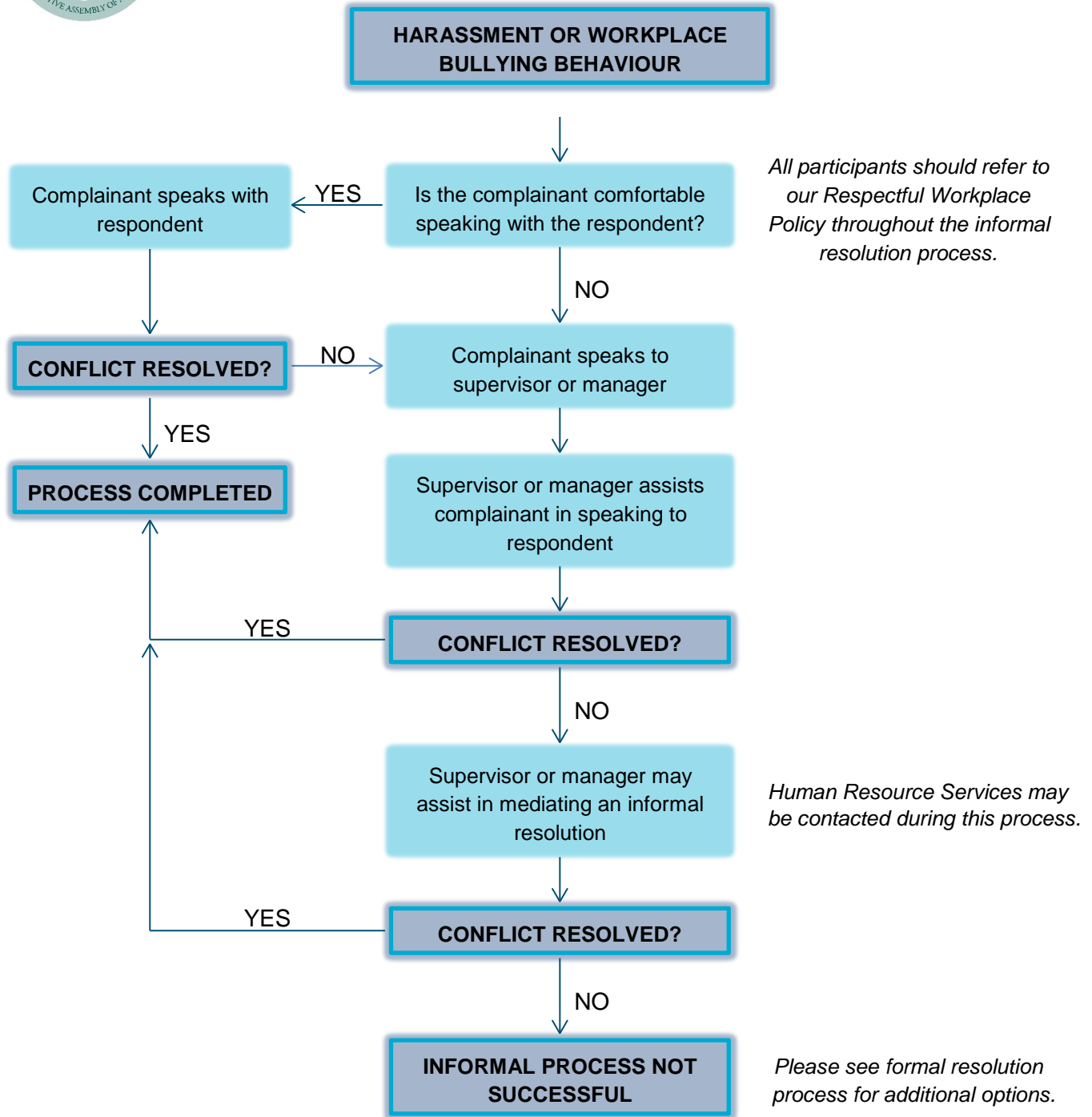
**Appendix 3: Respectful Workplace Information Form**

**Appendix 4: Continuum of Behaviours**





# Informal Issue Resolution Process



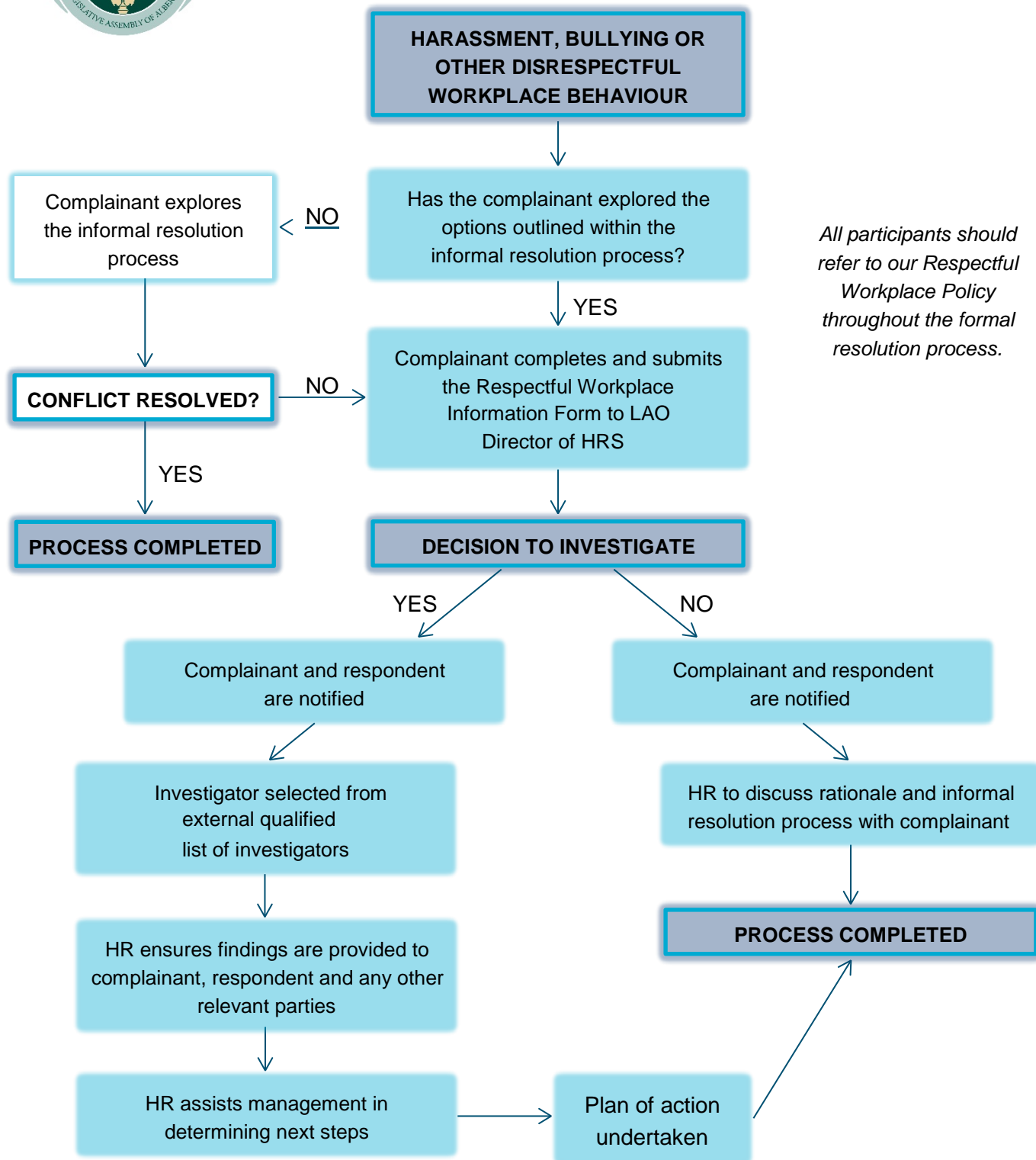
Complainant - An individual who submits a Complaint of harassment or bullying.

Respondent - The individual against whom a Complaint is submitted





# Formal Issue Resolution Process



Complainant - An individual who submits a Complaint of harassment or bullying.

Respondent - The individual against whom a Complaint is submitted



# Respectful Workplace Information Form

This form can be utilized to provide information on situations involving harassment, bullying or other disrespectful workplace behaviour(s) that were not resolved through the Informal Issue Resolution Process.

Prior to completing this form, please consider which of the following informal resolution options you have explored:

- ☐ Have you spoken directly to the individual(s) involved with the situation?
- ☐ Have you spoken to your Supervisor and/or Manager regarding the situation?
- ☐ Have you spoken to your Human Resources consultant regarding the situation?
- ☐ Have you requested your Supervisor and/or Manager, Human Resource Consultant or another appropriate resource to mediate the situation in order to reach an informal resolution?

If you choose to move forward with submitting this form, please note that every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality; however, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. For more information please reference our Respectful Workplace Policy.

## Complainant Contact Information

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>
<i>Branch/Caucus/Constituency Office</i>	
<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Email</i>
<i>Immediate Supervisor/Member</i>	<i>Immediate Supervisor's Position</i>

## Respondent Contact Information

Please complete the following information for any respondent(s) associated with this complaint.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>
<i>Branch/Caucus/Constituency Office</i>	
<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Email</i>
<i>Working relationship to complainant</i>	
<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>
<i>Branch</i>	<i>Department</i>
<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Email</i>
<i>Working relationship to complainant</i>	
<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>
<i>Branch</i>	<i>Department</i>
<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Email</i>
<i>Working relationship to complainant</i>	

## Situation Details

Please use the following space to outline the details of the disrespectful workplace situation that you have encountered. Be sure to include the date, time and location of any incidents that may have occurred as well as information on who was involved or who may have witnessed any related incidents.

Have you discussed this situation and the impact that it has had with the respondent(s)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Have you discussed this situation and the impact that it has had with your direct supervisor/manager?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please use the following space to outline your desired outcome related to the above noted situation.

## Next Steps

Providing information that has no merit or is frivolous may result in disciplinary action. Please reference the Guide to Understanding the Respectful Workplace Policy for Legislative Assembly Office Employees for more information.

Once this form has been completed in its entirety, please print, sign and send a hard copy to the attention of the Director of Human Resource Services or the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. You will be contacted to discuss next steps within five working days of this form being received.

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*Complainant Signature*

---

*Date*

# Toward a respectful workplace

Where are you on  
the continuum of  
behaviours?

## Green zone

Respectful, professional and values-based behaviours contribute to a respectful workplace. You are encouraged to maintain awareness of your behaviours and to continue modelling the LAO values of improvement, impartiality, integrity, and involvement.

### Behaviours include:

- Random acts of kindness
- Timely recognition of people's efforts
- Positive reinforcement
- Constructive feedback
- Listening/being attentive
- Checking In
- Sharing knowledge, information
- Seeking input from others
- Being accountable

## Yellow zone

Unprofessional, careless and disruptive behaviours can harm others, make them uncomfortable and affect the overall well-being of staff in the workplace. You are asked to re-evaluate your behaviour and make changes to support a respectful workplace.

### Behaviours include:

- Interrupting
- Not doing what you say you will do
- Careless humour
- Not permitting input
- Practical jokes that result in embarrassment
- Angry outburst

## Red zone

Intentional, targeted, prohibited and/or illegal behaviours are unacceptable. They harm others and create an unsafe workplace. You must stop this behaviour immediately!

### Behaviours include:

- Gossiping
- False accusations
- Threats, including coercion
- Bullying
- Harassment
- Workplace violence/assault

