



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

U. S. Department of Agriculture Workplace Bullying Policy Statement

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is committed to a workplace free from any form of bullying. It is incumbent upon all employees to respect their colleagues and customers in the workplace and to refrain from bullying.

Bullying may be a form of harassment and can create a hostile work environment. Bullying conduct includes, but is not limited to, unwarranted or disproportionate criticism of an employee's work performance which is unsupported by the facts; aggressive behavior or shouting; preventing an employee from speaking by using aggressive and/or obscene language; intimidation; manipulation of the employee's reputation through gossip; physical attack; and threatening gestures. Workplace bullying is behavior that harms, intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates an employee, possibly in front of other employees, clients, or customers. Workplace bullying may cause the loss of trained and talented employees and reduce productivity and morale. However, it is important to note that necessary and normal feedback from a supervisor or manager to an employee is not considered bullying.

USDA will not tolerate bullying under any circumstances. Further, it is incumbent on managers and supervisors to ensure employees are not bullied. Management at all levels will be held accountable for upholding and enforcing the provisions of this policy, maintaining a work atmosphere free of bullying, and utilizing every opportunity to achieve USDA's objectives regarding a workplace free of bullying. Any USDA employee who feels that they are a victim of bullying based on their status in a protected group should immediately advise their supervisor and may file a complaint of discrimination alleging harassment.

In addition, retaliation against any employee who reports workplace bullying alleging harassment is also prohibited. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, refusing to promote an employee because he/she filed a complaint of workplace bullying alleging harassment. The law forbids retaliation regarding any aspect of employment. Reports of workplace bullying alleging harassment and/or retaliation will be treated seriously and investigated. Any employee determined to have bullied another based on a protected status, or retaliated against another for reporting workplace bullying alleging harassment, may be subject to disciplinary or adverse personnel action.

Bullying that is based on a non-protected basis is not a form of discrimination. However, as stated in this policy, USDA will not tolerate bullying under any circumstances. Bullying that is not based on a protected status should be addressed pursuant to Departmental Regulation 4070-735-001 "Employee Responsibilities and Conduct."

USDA employees seeking to report workplace bullying that alleges harassment may contact the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights for additional information. More information about workplace bullying based on protected status can be found at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_emp.html.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack".

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

SEP 8 2015

An Equal Opportunity Employer