Work place bullying Committee

February 29, 2012

Present; Carolyn Fallahi, Kate McGrath, Meg Levvis, Kathy Hermis, Susan Gilmore, Eva Vrdojiak

Absent/Excused: Sally Lesik, Jacqueline Cobbina-Boivin

Guests: Rosa Rodrigeuz, Laura Tordenti

Bystander Program: stand up, speak out for all sorts of things. Encouraging students to become engaged.

Students bullying other students. Sometimes the behavior of the student doing it doesn’t realize how offensive, demeaning, and hurting others. In other cases, they’ve been doing it all along. Unprotected class bullying goes to Rosa. General bullying go to Chris Dukes.

What kind of training does Chris get? He is active in the student association for conduct disorders. He goes to an academy every year and he stays up to date with all sorts of student conduct issues. Provides training to those people who serve as hearing officers.

Student code of conduct…. Is bullying there? What is very hard is twitter. The student never mentions the name of the other student. Some things protected from freedom of expression. If there are general statements, e.g. about African americans, cannot address it.

Legally…. What applies. Threatening, intimidation…. That is what is in the code of conduct.

Bullying is not illegal. In k through 12, it’s illegal. After that… nothing that covers it.

Student workers are covered under workplace violence. But, bullying is a form of violence, but most cases they won’t fall under the workplace violence.

Gossip, work sabotage, similar to domestic violence. A battered spouse… one that strikes. Become too much.

With student workers, not clear what to do. Student members do have due process. Not well understood.

When don’t deal with classroom management issues, become a standard of behavior. Then the student hijacks the class.

Kathy Hermes is the workplace violence coordinator for CT. Before the legislature…. To study violence and abusive conduct among state workers. Reports to HR… but very few people who are being bullied. Here and everywhere. Considered useless. Most HR policies…. We have union rules. HR people are taught to mediate. Want you to go to the Ombudsperson. Think about it like Domestic Violence. You would never put a violent spouse together in mediation. That is what is done. Becomes this torture for the target of the bullying.

That is what almost everyone does. Happens on many campuses. People aren’t trained to think of it as violence.

There are 2 issues if a student feels bullied. Ideally, there would be counselors trained in workplace bullying and student bullying, hopefully there would be counselors trained to help them deal with their feelings. If the professor is really bullying, that needs to be investigated. It can be treated as an employee misconduct if words are exchanged. More passive aggressive…. More difficult to deal with.

School bullying. What the student can do…. Can go to grade appeals. Then need students in the class to come forward.

Employee employee bullying. Seems that we are not addressing this.

There are real things of incivility & personality conflicts. In Massachusetts a few years ago, they negotiated a mutual respect clause in the contract. There is no chance to do that until our contract expires. We need to handle that in the bounds of the contract and won’t violate their contract. Need a policy with procedures that can be applied to all members of the university. Could include student employees on work study up to faculty members. Employer employee relationships, may not have fiduciary duties, employee to employee can happen. How can you have a policy to deal with all the different contracts?

Best example…. VP being bullied by a group of employees. She was a person of color. They attacked her at meeting.

Document, document…. Meet it head on. Make it so uncomfortable. Hold somebody accountable. It takes time.

What can we do? What can we do that is structured on campus? HR is key. HR would pull in.

Staff to Staff: the natural place is HR who would then pull in Rosa’s office or the particular dean.

What power does the ombudsperson have? Often he works with them individually. Can’t be completely toothless, knowing that you are being watched?

An Ombudsperson is a first start. They can’t resolve every issue. The target feels addressed and abused. What can help? Maybe the recommendation is to go to counseling or get referrals. If the Ombudsperson thinks that there needs to be an investigation, there should be investigation mechanisms. There is. If there is a protected class, goes through Rosa. Most bullying is not done with protective class.

Can refer to it as abusive conduct. There needs to be something that deals with these channels…. That you can follow. Abusive behavior has to go through HR or supervisor. Take your union rep so there is someone else other than you.

Abusive conduct: there needs to be different places could go. A. Ombudsperson, B. HR., C. Rosa, D. Women’s Center, E. Counseling (EAP) (has the same problem as HR. Those that are targets are also having PTSD….. don’t think they will keep things confidential. F. Sueprvisor/Chair, G. Student Conduct (if a student)

Had a university conduct policy. Had to take it down. Got challenged and had to take it down because was challenged by freedom of speech.

Employment is not guaranteed to you. Some of it is campus culture. A policy is essential. Also we need education. If this is something we don’t accept. When you are including students in the policy, then these right wing groups get involved.

If you have a definition and the definition involves verbal abuse…. A pattern … systematic and recurring. If we do something… short and to the point.

Work place bullying institute – they have a definition on p. 3. Ideally…. Have a policy and keep calling them in. Can’t expect the target to be the one who stands up. Can’t expect the battered to stand up.

Draft a policy. Present it. The institutional structure…education and training around this?

Bystander…. Filter into any policy. See how we can include this.

As we try and draft a structure for complaint and a bullying.