

Bullying policy

Introduction

1. U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. regards the dignity and autonomy of all people as a core value of the organisation. Bullying negates the dignity and autonomy of victims.
2. U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. is fully committed to eliminating, as far as is possible, all forms of bullying through a culture of openness, support, and accountability.

Purpose

3. The purpose of this document is to outline U3A Myrtleford and District Inc.'s policy on bullying and to document the process for responding to a report of bullying.

Definition

The Australian National Centre for Bullying defines bullying as an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships. It can be repeated verbal, physical or psychological behaviour or harm. It can involve misusing power or perceived power over one or more people who feel unable to stop it from happening. Bullying can be overt or covert.

Bullying is not:

- Single episodes of social rejection or dislike,
- Single episodes of nastiness,
- Random acts of aggression or intimidation,
- Mutual disagreements, arguments or intimidation.

Policy

4. This policy deals with behaviour that constitutes bullying as set out in the definition.
5. Bullying might include, but is not limited to: repeated
 - verbal abuse,
 - exclusion or isolation of another person,
 - humiliation through sarcasm, or belittling someone's opinions,
 - criticism or insults,
 - spreading of misinformation or malicious rumours,
 - display of written or pictorial material which may degrade or offend,

6. "Bullying" is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or group of persons. It includes behaviour that could be expected to intimidate, offend, degrade, humiliate, undermine or threaten.

7. Bullying can occur between two or more members and/or volunteers.

8. Behaviour that directly inflicts physical pain or harm amounts to assault and will not be dealt with under this policy but referred to the appropriate authorities.

9. There will be occasional differences of opinion, conflicts and problems. Only when the treatment of another person is repeated, unreasonable, offensive or harmful does bullying exist.

10. Formerly accepted behaviour may be found to be bullying when it continues after a request from the complainant for the behaviour to stop, or at the point it becomes intimidating, offensive or humiliating.

11. U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. has a duty of care to provide a safe environment. Complaints should, wherever possible, be raised and resolved in the first instance with the tutor.

12. Complaints will be treated in confidence, and where confidentiality cannot be guaranteed this will be clearly indicated to the complainant.

13. All parties will be treated with respect.

14. The person against whom an allegation of bullying is made has the right to natural justice, that is, the right to know what is alleged against them, the right to put their case in reply, and the right for any decision to be made by an impartial decision-maker.

Procedures

15. A person who believes that he/she is the subject of bullying should take firm, positive and prompt action. Where appropriate, the perceived bully/bullies should be made aware that their behaviour is offensive, unwelcome and unacceptable, and that it needs to stop immediately.

16. Where the behaviour continues, or the person who feels bullied is unable to speak directly to the perceived bully, or resolve the matter at the local level, he/she should report the matter to the Secretary, U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. who will notify the President.

17. The President or his/her delegate will provide support to the complainant and ascertain the nature of the complaint and the wishes of the complainant. The complainant may opt to have the matter dealt with by formal investigation or by less formal means.

18. The complaint will be handled in accordance with U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. Rules, Part 3 Div.2, Paragraph 21.

19. Potential criminal conduct such as physical attack, stalking, intimidation or obscene phone calls, are not suited to internal resolution and the complainant will be advised to report the matter to Victoria Police. It is not the obligation or duty of U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. to report such matters to Victoria Police on behalf of the complainant.

Responsibility

20. The committee of U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. is responsible for developing, implementing, and publishing this policy, and reviewing it annually.

21. It is the responsibility of the committee of U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. to ensure that:

- the committee understands and is committed to the right of all members and volunteers to attend U3A activities and venues without fear of being bullied,
- all reasonable steps are taken to eliminate bullying,
- all members and volunteers are made aware of their obligations and responsibilities to foster an environment that is free from bullying,
- all members foster an environment that discourages bullying, and set an example by their own conduct,
- all complaints are treated promptly, seriously and confidentially,
- tutors and committee members, as far as is practicable, are supported to understand whether bullying is occurring, by considering indicators such as:
 - complaints of bullying have been received,
 - there are sudden increases in absenteeism,
 - participation is declining,
 - sudden behavioural changes occur in members such as depression.
- Where such indicators are identified, committee members and/or tutors take corrective action.

22. It is the responsibility of all members and volunteers to ensure that:

- they understand and are committed to the rights and entitlements of all members and volunteers to attend U3A premises and activities without fear of bullying,
- they help foster an environment that discourages bullying.

23. The Secretary of U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. is responsible for:

- receiving and responding to enquiries about this policy,
- receiving complaints about bullying and for bringing a complaint to the attention of the President.

24. The President, or his/her delegate, of U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. is responsible for interviewing and supporting a complainant.

25. The President of U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. is responsible for ensuring that a bullying complaint is handled in accordance with U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. Rules, Part 3 Div. 2. Paragraph 21.

Authorisation

26. This policy was adopted by the committee of U3A Myrtleford and District Inc., and minuted as such, on 17 July 2023.

27. This policy will be published on the U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. website within 4 weeks of the date of this authorisation.

Related Policies

Sexual Harassment Policy

Code of Conduct

Anti-Discrimination Policy