



Respectful Workplace Policy

5.5.2P

Policies direct required organizational practice/behaviour

**Purpose:**

- To establish practices and procedures that promote an environment free of Bullying and Harassment, Disrespectful Behaviour, and Discrimination and encourages mutual respect, safety (psychological and physical) and inclusiveness for all Individuals associated with Island Health.
- Consistent with Island Health's [Vision, Purpose and Values](#), every Individual associated with Island Health has the right to be treated, and the responsibility to treat others, with fairness, courtesy and respect.

Cultural Safety and Humility:

Island Health offers programs and services on the unceded and traditional territories of the Coast Salish, Nuuchah-nulth, and Kwakwaka'wakw Peoples.

As a signatory to the 2015 Declaration of Commitment to Cultural Safety and Cultural Humility, Island Health is committed to addressing the ongoing impacts of colonialism and Indigenous-specific Racism in order to provide a culturally safe, inclusive, healthy and respectful environment.

The organization is committed to strengthening diversity, equity and inclusion to enable excellence in health and care for everyone, everywhere, every time. Through these commitments, Island Health strives to deliver the highest possible standard of care and to promote safe workplaces.

Scope:

- **Audience:**
 - Board of Directors
 - [Employees](#)
 - [Medical Staff](#)
 - [Contracted Healthcare Professionals](#)
 - [Contractors](#)
 - [Residents](#)
 - [Students, trainees and educators](#)
 - [Volunteers](#)

Note: This group will hereby be referred to as "Individuals" within this Policy.

Note: Does not replace professional Codes of Ethics or Bylaws.

Individuals covered under a professional Code of Ethics are expected to practice according to their profession's Code of Ethics as well as this Policy.
- **Environment:**
 - Island Health-wide
 - All Island Health workplaces and care environments

Note: For purposes of this Policy, workplace refers to both place of work and place of volunteering.
- **Exceptions:**
 - Does not apply to Individuals associated with [Foundations](#).
 - For concerns of Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination, refer to the Indigenous-specific Anti-Racism and Discrimination Policy.

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1.0 Policy

1.1 General

- Island Health's values provide the foundation for creating a respectful workplace culture. Respect is identified as one of our values and reflects a shared core belief in valuing each Individual and bringing trust to every relationship. [Bullying and Harassment](#), [Racism](#) and [Discrimination](#) are not acceptable or tolerated in this workplace.
- Island Health is committed to:
 - Fostering safe, healthy and inclusive workplaces that promote human rights, personal dignity and support every Individual's right to physical safety, psychological safety, and social well-being.
 - Providing a Respectful Workplace free from Bullying and Harassment and all forms of Racism and Discrimination as listed in Section 13 of the [BC Human Rights Code](#) and the [Workers Compensation Act](#).
 - This includes not only the specific conduct prohibited by the [BC Human Rights Code](#) and the [Workers Compensation Act](#), but any behavior that may reasonably cause intimidation, offence or humiliation to another person or group.
 - Promoting a 'Speak Up' Culture which gives avenues to report and address all types of [Disrespectful Behaviour](#).
 - Supporting Individuals to manage workplace differences.
- Not every unpleasant interaction or Disrespectful Behaviour in the workplace constitutes a violation of this Policy. Individuals are encouraged to resolve interpersonal conflicts or other issues arising in the workplace which do not give rise to a violation of this Policy by directly addressing the Individual with whom they are having difficulty as early and informally as possible, if it is safe to do so.
- Should this approach fail or if an Individual has determined it is unsafe to address the incident directly, such as in cases of power imbalances involving managers or leaders, Individuals should seek intervention and support by Respectful Workplace.
- Investigation results may be appealed in accordance with the Respectful Workplace Procedure.
- Interpersonal conflict that falls short of Disrespectful Behaviour, Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment, Sexual Harassment or Violence will not constitute a violation of this Policy, but may still warrant intervention and support from the Leader.

1.2 Respectful Workplace

- A respectful workplace is characterized by:
 - Polite behaviour – courteous, compassionate and considerate behaviour towards others.
 - Diversity and inclusion – recognition, acceptance, welcoming and valuing the differences that Individuals bring to the organization, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, abilities, religious and political beliefs and other ideologies.
 - Freedom from disrespectful, discriminating, bullying and harassing behaviour.
 - Constructive management of differences – differences are understood to be a fact-of-life and are managed through conflict management and dispute resolution processes.

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1.3 Bullying and Harassment

- Bullying and Harassment is any inappropriate conduct or comment by a person towards another that the person knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause humiliation or intimidation. This would include comments or conduct that occurs away from the workplace during or outside working/volunteering hours if a connection to the employment, contracted, or volunteering relationship exists.
- Workplace Bullying and Harassment can lead to injury, illness or death. All Individuals will be treated in a fair and respectful manner.
- Bullying and Harassment excludes any reasonable action taken by Island Health or a Leader relating to the performance management and work or role direction of Individuals or the workplace.
- Examples of Bullying and Harassment may include, but are not limited to:
 - Verbal aggression or insults
 - Physical gestures which are aggressive or insulting
 - Any unwanted physical contact or threat of unwanted physical contact
 - Refusing to use a person's gender pronouns
 - Spreading rumours which may cause reputational harm
 - Hazing or harmful initiation practices
 - Damaging personal belongings

1.4 Discrimination

- [Discrimination](#) includes comments or behaviour that would constitute a breach of the BC Human Rights Code. This includes mistreatment which serves no legitimate work purpose and which can be intentional or unintentional in nature. This includes comments or conduct that occur away from the workplace during or outside working/volunteering hours if a connection to the employment/volunteering relationship exists.

1.5 Discriminatory Harassment

- [Discriminatory Harassment](#) that occurs in the workplace or related to an Individual's participation in work- or volunteering-related activities that is reported to Respectful Workplace may be investigated.

1.6 Sexual and Gender Harassment

- [Sexual and Gender Harassment](#) that occurs in the workplace or related to an Individual's participation in work- or volunteering-related activities that is reported to Respectful Workplace may be investigated.
- **Note:** Discrimination, Discriminatory Harassment, and Sexual Harassment may also constitute breaches of the [British Columbia Human Rights Code](#) and any other applicable Acts.

1.7 Roles and Responsibilities

- Island Health:
 - Island Health is responsible for developing and implementing policy, procedures and programs that promote safe and respectful work environments. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
 - Training Individuals to recognize the potential for Bullying and Harassment, Discrimination, Discriminatory Harassment, Sexual and Gender Harassment and Indigenous Specific Racism.
 - Taking all reasonable steps to prevent, where possible, or otherwise minimize workplace Bullying and Harassment.

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- Developing, maintaining, and reviewing (annually) internal policies, procedures, training and programming that identify and manage unacceptable conduct (including, but not limited to, Bullying and Harassment).
 - Developing and maintaining procedures for reporting, investigating and resolving respectful workplace concerns.
 - Supporting resolution options which will include both formal and informal avenues, including dispute resolution.
 - Taking appropriate action, including progressive discipline action up to dismissal where behaviour has violated the Policy and other measures as deemed appropriate.
- Leaders:
 - Every Island Health Leader has responsibilities that include (but are not limited to):
 - Taking all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of Individuals under their supervision.
 - Role modelling respectful behaviours in the workplace which includes, not engaging in Bullying and Harassment, Discrimination, Discriminatory Harassment, Sexual and Gender Harassment and Indigenous Specific Racism and Discrimination.
 - Ensuring that this Policy and any associated Respectful Workplace programming is communicated to, and understood by, all Individuals within their scope of leadership and throughout the broad spectrum of personal contacts and relationships generated by Island Health's operations.
 - Attending to the prevention and early informal and/or formal resolution of interpersonal conflicts with attention given to the underlying and contributing issues.
 - Applying and complying with the Respectful Workplace Policy and associated Procedures.
 - Taking appropriate action, such as progressive discipline action up to dismissal where behaviour has violated the Policy or other measures as deemed appropriate.
- Individuals:
 - Conducting themselves in a respectful, non-discriminatory manner in the workplace and while conducting work-related activities.
 - Refraining from engaging in behaviours that would constitute Disrespectful Behaviour, Bullying and Harassment, Discrimination, Discriminatory Harassment and/or Sexual and Gender Harassment or Indigenous Specific Racism and Discrimination.
 - Taking responsibility for their own behaviour and it's impact on others, whether the behaviour was deliberate, unintentional or negligent.
 - Engaging in initiatives meant to improve the level of respect within their work unit(s).
 - Reporting any violations of this Policy according to applicable Respectful Workplace procedures/programming.
 - Applying and complying with the Respectful Workplace Policy and associated Procedures, including by participating in Respectful Workplace processes when reasonably required.
- This Policy is in addition to and not in substitution for any rights an Individual may have to pursue action, whether under Collective Agreements, Policies including [Medical Staff Bylaws](#), or any applicable legislation, including the [BC Human Rights Code](#), the [Workers Compensation Act](#), and any other applicable Acts.
- In cases where an Individual initiates an internal process to resolve concerns related to Bullying and Harassment and/or Discrimination, and simultaneously initiates a second internal or external process to resolve their concerns,

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it may be appropriate to pause or discontinue the Respectful Workplace process. Decisions to do so will be made by the Respectful Workplace case manager in collaboration with appropriate interest holders on a case-by-case basis and taking an Individual's rights under relevant legislation into account.

- Refer to Respectful Workplace Procedures for information on reporting concerns, accessing supports and options for resolution.

2.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

- Regular Policy review including any associated procedures and operational documents will be performed by the People Portfolio in accordance with the Island Health Policy Framework and emerging evidence and best practices.
- Policy review will occur on an annual basis as per Worksafe BC requirements.

3.0 Definitions

- **Bona-Fide Occupational Requirements:** a job requirement that, while potentially discriminatory, is considered necessary for the safe and efficient performance of a job.
- **Bullying and Harassment:** An action that an Individual knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause another person to be humiliated or intimidated. When an employer or supervisor takes reasonable action to manage and direct workers, it is not Bullying and Harassment.
- **Contracted Healthcare Professional (CHCP):** Physicians, dentists, midwives and other Health Care Professionals who contract with Island Health to provide care at a non-Hospital Act Island Health-operated site or service.
- **Contractor(s):** Refers to self-employed people or legal entities with whom Island Health has entered into a contract for the Contractor to perform work or provide goods or services for a specific period or project in exchange for monetary payment, but excludes Employees, Contracted Healthcare Professionals, Medical Staff, and Residents.
- **Discrimination:** Unfair differential treatment of an Individual or group on the basis of a protected Personal Characteristic under the [BC Human Rights Code](#) and the [Health Professions and Occupations Act](#) with the exception of Bona-Fide Occupational Requirements.
- **Discriminatory Harassment:** A form of Discrimination where abusive, unfair, offensive, or demeaning treatment of a person or group of persons under any of the grounds referenced above has taken place, and has the effect of interfering with an Individual's work or participation in work-related activities; or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for work or participation in a work-related activity. This would include comments or conduct that occurs away from the workplace/place of volunteering during or outside working/volunteering hours if a connection to the employment/volunteering relationship exists.
- **Disrespectful Behaviour:** Inappropriate behaviour including a lack of consideration or regard for co-workers, including their privacy, physical space, belongings, viewpoints and philosophies. It includes impolite and uncivil behaviour that does not fit the definition of Bullying and Harassment but that a reasonable person would know or ought to have known would be experienced as disrespectful. Disrespectful Behaviour may also intersect with incidents of Racism, Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, and Violence.
- **Employee:** All individuals with an active employee number (including but not limited to management, leadership, and employed students, etc.) excluding Foundations.
- **Employment Relationship:** The legal connection between employers and employees, typically made via contract or signed offer.

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- **Foundations:** Charitable partners of Island Health that enable and steward donations to support areas of care across associated health care sites.
- **Gender harassment:** A form of discrimination and includes any unwelcome comment or conduct of a non-sexual nature aimed at another person's sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression that may detrimentally affect the work environment or lead to adverse job-related consequences for the victim. The prohibited conduct, as determined by a reasonable person, may be verbal, non-verbal, physical, deliberate or unintended.
- **Health Care Professional:** Refers to both regulated health care professionals and approved non-regulated health care professionals:
 - *Non-regulated Health Care Professional:* Non-regulated professional who has received formal training, and has the knowledge, skills and competence to perform activities defined by Island Health employer controls (e.g. medical imaging technologists, cardiology technologists, respiratory therapists and health care assistants) who is not a Contracted Healthcare Professional.
 - *Regulated Health Care Professional:* Individual who is part of a regulated health discipline, as defined by the [Health Professions Act](#) and [Social Workers Act](#) (e.g. physicians, midwives, pharmacists, nurses, and Allied Health) who is not a Contracted Healthcare Professional.
- **Leader:** An Employee that has direct reports within the organization or oversees the work of others.
 - For Medical Staff and Contracted Healthcare Professionals, **Leader** refers to the medical leader of the portfolio, division, program, section, site or service that you work at.
 - For Volunteers, **Leader** refers to the Volunteer Resources & Engagement staff member who supports the individual Volunteer's placement.
- **Medical Staff:** The Physicians, Dentists, Oral Surgeons, Midwives and Nurse Practitioners who have been appointed to the Medical Staff and who have privileges to provide care or services at an Island Health-operated site.
- **Racism:** The belief that a group of people are inferior based on the colour of their skin or due to the inferiority of their culture or spirituality. It leads to discriminatory behaviours and policies that oppress, ignore, or treat racialized groups as "less than" non-racialized groups.
 - **Epistemic Racism:** The practice of knowledge domination (e.g., favouring Western perspectives on health and wellness) that is rooted in the belief that the knowledge of one racialized group is inferior to their non-racialized counterparts.
 - **Explicit Racism:** Overt and often intentional Racism practiced by individuals and institutions that openly embrace racial Discrimination and hold prejudicial attitudes towards racially defined groups.
 - **Implicit Racism:** An individual's utilization of unconscious biases when making judgements about people from different racial and ethnic groups.
- **Resident:** Post-graduate students completing Health Care Professional practice education, who are enrolled in educational institutions with a current Educational Affiliation Agreement, and a current practice education experience with Island Health.
- **Sexual Harassment:** A form of discrimination and includes any unwelcome comment or conduct of a sexual nature that may detrimentally affect the work environment or lead to adverse job-related consequences for the victim. The prohibited conduct, as determined by a reasonable person, may be verbal, non-verbal, physical, deliberate or unintended.

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- **Student:** Post-secondary students completing Health Care Professional practice education, who are enrolled in educational institutions with a current Educational Affiliation Agreement, and a current practice education experience with Island Health.
- **Volunteer:** A person who has been screened by the Volunteer Resources and Engagement Department or is a member of an affiliated Auxiliary, then assigned a role through which they give their time, energy and skills freely in service, without monetary compensation, and contribute positively to the overall experience of patients, residents, clients, visitors, and/or staff and Medical staff at Island Health.

4.0 Related Island Health Policy Documents

- [Code of Conduct Policy](#)
- [Domestic, Targeted Violence in the Workplace Policy](#)
- [Indigenous Specific Anti Racism Policy](#)
- [Indigenous Specific Anti-Racism and Discrimination Procedure](#)
- [Medical Staff Bylaws](#)
- [Medical Staff Rules](#) (Professional Conduct and Unprofessional behavior)
- [Primary Care Site Contracted Healthcare Professionals Governance](#)
- [Respectful Workplace Procedures for Employees](#)
- [Respectful Workplace Procedures for Medical Staff, Resident Doctors and Medical Students](#)
- [Student Practice Education Guideline for Respectful Practice Education Experience](#)
- [Visitors who Pose a Risk to Health and Safety in Health Care Facilities Policy](#)
- [Workplace Violence Prevention Program](#)

5.0 References

- BNQ/CSA Group/MHCC. (R2022). *Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace – Prevention, promotion, and guidance to staged implementation*. [CSA-Z1003-13/BNQ 9700-803/2013](#)
- Bill 36 – *2022 Health Professions and Occupations Act*. (2022). Retrieved from BC Laws website: <https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/bills/billsprevious/3rd42nd:gov36-3>
- Fostering a Culture of Respect (2025). Retrieved from Provincial Health Services Authority: <https://shop.healthcarebc.ca/phsa/PHSAPOD/Human%20Resources/C-99-11-20204.pdf>
- *Health Professions Act*. (RSBC 1996, c. 183, 2025). Retrieved from BC Laws website: https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96183_01
- *Human Rights Code of British Columbia* (RSBC 1996, c. 210). Retrieved from BC Laws website: https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/00_96210_01
- *Labour Relations Code*. (RSBC 1996, c. 244). Retrieved from BC Laws website: https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96244_01
- *Occupational Health & Safety Regulation* (2025). Retrieved from WorkSafe BC: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/law-policy/occupational-health-safety/searchable-ohs-regulation/ohs-regulation/>

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- *Occupational Health and Safety Policies for the Workers Compensation Act (2025, P2-21-2, P2-22-1, P2-23-2)*. Retrieved from WorkSafe BC: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/law-policy/occupational-health-safety/searchable-ohs-regulation/ohs-policies/policies-for-the-workers-compensation-act>
- *Social Workers Act*. (SBC 2008, c. 31). Retrieved from BC Laws website: https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/08031_01
- *Workers Compensation Act* (RSBC 2019, c. 1). Retrieved from BC Laws website: https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/19001_00

6.0 Resources

- [Cultural Safety](#)
- [HR Access Helpline](#)
- [Our Respectful Workplace](#) Training
- [Medical and Academic Affairs](#)
- [Violence Prevention](#)

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