

# Focus on IAG's work

Edition 11/2010

617.0-IAG:617.1

## Workplace bullying

### Problem

Bullying at the workplace is a situation involving extremely high stress for the staff member concerned and may lead to unfitness for work due to somatic and or mental illness. Sick leave of affected staff members and the tying-up of other labour owing to bullying result in considerable losses to the company and the national economy.

### Activities

The IAG offers seminars lasting several days under the heading of "Bullying – Escalation at the Workplace". The seminars deal with the topic from a psychological and legal point of view. Besides the transfer of knowledge, the seminars' aim is to enhance the participants' competence of action.

Among other topics, publications and presentations by the IAG deal with:

- Principles against which the term "bullying" is defined
- Bullying as a work-related health hazard
- Ways to prevent bullying
- Current legislation

In addition, and in consultation with the responsible social accident insurance institution, the IAG conducts in-company training for management personnel, personnel departments and employee



For more information on "Bullying – Escalation at the Workplace", see [www.dguv.de/iag-seminare](http://www.dguv.de/iag-seminare).

representative councils on the prevention of bullying. The IAG does not however offer advice on individual cases.

The IAG is a member of the "Bullying prevention network" of the Saxon State Ministry for Economic Affairs, Labour and Transport. This network addresses the subject of bullying in a multidisciplinary manner in conjunction with a number of other bodies.

## Results and Application

Bullying represents a work-related health hazard. Its prevention is the responsibility of both the employer and the social accident insurance.

Given the inflationary use of the term “bullying”, including outside the sphere of employment, and the emotional stress caused to the person concerned, effort must be made to objectify the topic at company level. For this purpose, a clear definition of the term “bullying” can be helpful. The IAG favours the following definition:

Bullying is a conflict-laden situation of communication amongst fellow workers/ employees or between superiors and staff members at the workplace, in which one person is attacked

- by one or by several other persons
- systematically
- frequently (at least once a week) and
- over a prolonged period of time (for at least six months)
- with the aim of driving him/her from the job

directly or indirectly.

A suitable instrument for the prevention of bullying is a company or employment agreement signed between the employer and the employee representative council. Such an agreement should include a definition of the term “bullying” and make provision for procedures for conflict settlement in compliance with the framework conditions and particular characteristics of the company concerned.

The definition should not be misunderstood as giving carte blanche to workplace harassment: conflicts which do not constitute full-blown bullying or which do not (yet) meet the definition of it may nevertheless still warrant intervention.

## Area of Application

All companies contributing to the statutory accident insurance.

## Additional Information

- For dates of current seminars, please call +49 351 457-1918 or visit: [www.dguv.de/iag-seminare](http://www.dguv.de/iag-seminare)
- Windemuth, D.; Paridon, C.M.; Kohstall, T.: Grundlagen der Definition von Mobbing (Bases of definition of the term “bullying”). Die BG (2003) No. 2, pp. 59-62
- Paridon, C.M.: Mobbing und Aufgaben der gesetzlichen Unfallversicherung (Bullying and tasks of the statutory accident insurance). Die BG (2003) No. 4, pp. 154-158
- Paridon, C. M.: Betriebliches Konfliktmanagement durch Betriebsvereinbarungen (Conflict management in the company by plant-level agreements). Sicherheitsingenieur (2003) No. 5, pp. 40-45

## Expert Assistance

IAG, Research and Consultancy Department

IAG, Legal Issues

## Literature Requests

IAG, Library