



australasian society of clinical immunology and allergy

Code of Conduct

This June 2024 version of the ASCIA Code of Conduct is an update of the November 2019 version.

ASCIA relies on the highly valued work from employees, contractors and the voluntary contributions of members (including ASCIA Council, committee and working party members) to achieve its purpose.

In the course of doing this work, ASCIA is committed to providing a positive, professional and safe environment, where ASCIA employees, contractors and members are valued and behave towards each other with respect.

Respectful conduct

ASCIA fosters and promotes respectful behaviour amongst members, staff, contractors and other parties, to provide a positive and collegiate working environment. This extends to all settings, including the ASCIA office, state meetings, online meetings, ASCIA Annual Conferences and all business, educational and other meetings where ASCIA members are present and represented.

Respectful conduct includes being supportive, considerate, willing to listen, and prepared to consider new or different ideas. The aim is to provide an environment without bullying, harassment or discrimination, which is:

- **Motivating**, where people are encouraged to be collegiate and productive.
- **Safe**, where people are treated fairly, with respect, dignity and courtesy.
- **Healthy**, which supports wellbeing, mental and physical health.

How should inappropriate behaviour (including bullying, harassment and discrimination) be reported?

It is the responsibility of all ASCIA employees, contractors and members to respect the rights of others and not get involved in, or encourage disrespectful and inappropriate behaviour.

Inappropriate behaviour that is regarded as bullying, harassment or discrimination (refer to pages 2-3 for definitions) of ASCIA employees, contractors and members involved in ASCIA activities, should be reported to the ASCIA CEO by emailing education@allergy.org.au and/or the ASCIA President.

ASCIA will respond to any report of inappropriate behaviour seriously, sympathetically, quickly, fairly and confidentially. We will encourage local resolution of issues and prevent repercussions for reporting (refer to clause 23 of the ASCIA Constitution www.allergy.org.au/members/constitution)

If an ASCIA member experiences problems with bullying, harassment or discrimination in their own workplace, their employer has primary responsibility, so any inappropriate behaviour should be reported by them. However, in some instances the issue may be referred to ASCIA when it overlaps with voluntary work on ASCIA activities.

How can inappropriate behaviour (including bullying, harassment and discrimination) be prevented?

To prevent **inappropriate behaviour (including bullying, harassment or discrimination)** it is important to follow these ASCIA procedures:

- ASCIA members with any feedback or concerns about ASCIA employees or contractors (working on ASCIA activities) must be sent directly to the ASCIA CEO and/or the ASCIA President, and not directly to the individual.
- Behaviour that is regarded as bullying, harassment or discrimination should be promptly reported to the ASCIA CEO and/or the ASCIA President, to allow ASCIA to address the issue. This includes witnessing this behaviour being inflicted on someone else.

- Do not send emails or make phone calls that are critical and/or abrupt (which may be regarded as bullying, harassment or discrimination) to ASCIA employees, contractors or members without consideration of the consequences. For emails, the content should always be reviewed and edited if required before sending, to prevent being regarded as bullying, harassment or discrimination.

What is bullying?

Bullying is a form of harassment and is unacceptable to ASCIA. Workplace bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed toward an employee, contractor or member, that creates a risk to health and safety. Within this definition:

- “Unreasonable behaviour” means behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to all circumstances, would expect to victimise, humiliate, undermine or threaten.
- “Behaviour” includes actions of individuals or a group and may involve using a system of work as a means of victimising, humiliating, undermining or threatening.
- “Risk to health and safety” includes risk to the mental or physical health of the employee, contractor or member.

The following types of direct and indirect behaviour, where repeated or occurring as part of a pattern of behaviour, could be considered bullying:

- Aggressive and repeated interjections when others are speaking.
- Verbal homophobic or racist remarks.
- Hitting, tripping or damaging property.
- Excessive criticism.
- Publicly insulting other people or their work.
- Ignoring or devaluing another’s point of view or efforts.
- Excluding or isolating employees.
- Psychological harassment.
- Intimidation, including shouting (in public or private settings).
- Assigning meaningless tasks unrelated to the job.
- Giving employees impossible assignments.
- Deliberately changing work rosters to inconvenience particular employees.
- Deliberately withholding information that is vital for effective work performance.
- Encouraging others to professionally or socially exclude someone.
- Damaging someone’s professional or social reputation.
- Spreading rumours or lying.

This list is not exhaustive. Other types of behaviour may also constitute bullying.

What is not bullying?

Genuine and reasonable disciplinary procedures, directions or performance related management are not bullying. Employers have the fundamental right to direct, monitor and control how work is done.

For example, comments which are objective and indicate observable deficiencies in performance or conduct do not constitute workplace bullying.

Constructively delivered feedback or counselling is intended to assist employees to improve their work performance or the standard of their behaviour.

What are other forms of harassment?

Harassment can be verbal, non-verbal and physical behaviour that causes someone to feel harassed, distressed and upset. This can include behaviour such as:

- Sexual or suggestive remarks.
- Making fun of someone because of a personal attribute such as race, disability, age and/or sex.
- Imitating someone's accent or disability (e.g. mimicking someone with a disability).
- Unwanted sexual propositions.
- Offering threats or inducements for certain behaviour.
- Repeated, unwelcome invitations to go out with someone.
- Spreading sexual rumours about someone.
- Offensive and unwelcome jokes.
- Repeated, unwelcome questions about someone else's personal life.
- Sexual, sexist, racist or anti-gay threats or insults.
- Use of language that is not suitable in the workplace (e.g. sexual, sexist, racist, anti-gay, name calling).
- Anything that would be considered an offence under the criminal law (e.g. assault, stalking or obscene communications, indecent exposure.)
- Displaying pornographic, sexual or naked images where employees or visitors can view them.
- Displaying or circulating racist, sexist and so on cartoons or literature.
- Suggestive or offensive behaviour (e.g. leers, hand or body gestures).
- Continually ignoring or dismissing someone's contribution in a work meeting or discussion.
- Touching anyone else's sexual parts of the body or any form of indecent or sexual assault or exposure.
- Unnecessary physical contact (e.g. pinching, patting, brushing up against a person, touching, kissing, hugging against a person's will).
- Pushing, shoving or jostling.
- Initiation rites that involve anything that could be regarded as sexual, sexist or racist.

Whilst ASCIA will not intrude into the personal relations of employees, contractors and members, it does have concern if relationships represent an abuse of power in the employment environment and:

- Implicitly or explicitly becomes a condition of a person's selection, recruitment, assessment, condition of employment, promotion or salary.
- Has the effect of interfering with an individual's employment performance.
- Creates an environment that is offensive, hostile and intimidating.

Note: Behaviour that is based on mutual affection, friendship and respect, and interactions that are consensual, welcome and reciprocated do not amount to sexual harassment.

Sex-based Harassment

Sex-based harassment is any unwelcome behaviour which is demeaning by reason of someone's sex. Such behaviour can overlap with sexual harassment and includes verbal abuse and insults as well as behaviour which aims to put someone down because of their gender.

It is important to recognise that some comments and behaviour that do not offend one person can offend another. Just because someone does not object to inappropriate behaviour in the workplace at the time, it does not mean that the behaviour is not unlawful.

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is the different treatment of an individual or group due to a personal attribute such as gender, marital status, pregnancy, age, disability, sexual preferences, political affiliations or race.

Victimisation

Victimisation is subjecting or threatening to subject someone to a detriment because they have asserted their rights under anti-discrimination laws, made a complaint, helped someone else make a complaint, or refused to do something because it would be discrimination, sexual harassment or victimisation. Victimisation is against the law. It is also victimisation to threaten someone (such as a witness) who may be involved in investigating a concern or complaint.

Victimisation is a very serious breach of this policy and is likely (depending on the severity and circumstances) to result in disciplinary action against the perpetrator.

Hostile Work Environments

It is unlawful to create a work environment or workplace culture which is sexually charged and therefore offensive, intimidating and humiliating for people of one sex. This is known as a “hostile work environment” and can include workplaces where behaviour such as sexual banter, innuendo and sexually offensive jokes is common.

This type of environment is against the law even if the behaviour is not directed at a particular person and no complaint has been made.

It is not just employees who can be affected by sexual harassment or a hostile work environment. It is also unlawful to subject prospective employees or workers, clients, customers, suppliers, contractors and other workers to sexual harassment or an environment that is “hostile” on the grounds of sex.

Psychosocial Hazards

Psychosocial hazards in the workplace are just as threatening as physical hazards. This is because a psychosocial hazard can cause psychological harm (e.g. cause stress, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep disorder, or otherwise harm someone’s mental health).

Psychosocial hazards in the workplace (according to Safe Work Australia) may include, but are not limited to:

- Unachievable job demands
- Low job control
- Poor support
- Lack of role clarity
- Poor organisational change management
- Inadequate reward and recognition
- Poor organisational justice
- Traumatic events or material
- Remote or isolated work
- Poor physical environment
- Violence and aggression
- Bullying
- Harassment, including sexual harassment
- Conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions

Acknowledgement

This June 2024 version of the ASCIA Code of Conduct is an update of the November 2019 version, which was based on the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) "Working Together" policy.

© ASCIA 2024