"Bullies—the High Cost of Aggressive Behavior"

We know that bullying happens in schools---about 2 million bullies and 2.7 million victims attend school each day across our country. The result is that about 160,000 children miss school every day because they are afraid of being attacked or intimidated by other students.

Bullies also go to work each day and the damage they do costs employers millions in employee sickness, absenteeism and lost work.

Bullying is the repeated persistent aggressive unreasonable behavior toward another person.

Bullies can be bosses, managers, co-workers, contractors---just about anyone. Over 80% of bullies are bosses or managers; 50% are men and 50% are women; 80% of targets are women.

Bullying behaviors include rudeness, intimidation, criticism, gossip, humiliation, sabotage and social ostracism.

Leaders and managers play a crucial role in the identification of both bullies and targets and have the authority to eliminate and prevent bullying behaviors. Employers must realize that to ignore or discount bullying behaviors, they are risking employee productivity, loss of good workers and opening the door to workplace violence.

Employers must commit to implementing at least these goals for a healthier workplace:

1. Require respect and professional behavior in all areas of the company. Begin by having leaders and managers be the role models of appropriate behaviors.
2. Design and implement a workplace policy that identifies bullying behaviors and offers steps to reporting and resolution.
3. Educate everyone---managers, supervisors, Human Resources personnel, union representatives and employees about what bullying is and appropriate ways to respond.
4. Treat all complaints seriously and deal with them promptly and confidentially.
5. Contract with an Employee Assistance Program to help and support employees who have been bullied.
6. Contract with a neutral 3rd party to help with conflict and resolve issues.

Bullying is costly for employers and their employees. Education and communication is crucial for the development of healthier companies in Tucson.

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