



Reduce harmful work stressors.
Improve job quality and health.

Healthy Work **Strategies**

Reducing workplace bullying through a union-sponsored **Respectful Workplace Policy** and collective bargaining

In January 2012, the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE) were informed of employee complaints regarding workplace safety, bullying and intimidation by managerial staff in Ely, MN, which adversely impacted worker morale and overall wellbeing.¹ Following these disclosures, MAPE established a partnership with the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) as well as with management. A series of meetings then took place in order for employees to share their experiences. In February 2013, in St. Peter, MN, MAPE was made aware of additional employee complaints regarding the 'toxic' atmosphere of the workplace as well as management threatening and bullying employees; as a result, some employees experienced psychological distress and other employees quit. Following these complaints, MAPE established another partnership with an EAP.

MAPE also engaged in a series of activities to address the workplace bullying experienced by state employees in Minnesota. Those activities included:¹

- MAPE stewards and delegates attended a seminar conducted by the *Workplace Bullying Institute* to learn about the impact of workplace bullying.
- Videos were created by stewards detailing experiences with workplace bullying as well as insights into addressing this issue.
- In September 2013, MAPE conducted a statewide employee survey, finding that one in four MAPE members had experienced workplace bullying.
- MAPE and the Minnesota Dept. of Management & Budget (MMB) developed the **Respectful Workplace Policy**, which outlined appropriate workplace behavior, and adopted it on April 15, 2015. It was the first policy to require a workplace free of bullying for Minnesota state employees.

Elements of the **Respectful Workplace Policy**:²

- **Behavior:** staff should not engage in disrespectful behavior, such as yelling, threatening other staff, humiliation, sabotaging another staff's work performance, or filing false complaints
- **Retaliation:** is prohibited against individuals that may have filed a complaint or participated in the investigation of a complaint.
- **Procedures to file informal and formal complaints:**
 - *Informal* - state employees are encouraged to speak with supervisors or managers about misconduct. In the event that the complaint is about a manager or supervisor, employees are advised to contact Human Resources
 - *Formal* - state employees are advised to provide a detailed account of the incident(s) in violation of policy and file that complaint with the Human Resource office. Formal complaints are required to be addressed in a "timely, fair, objective" fashion
- **Enforcement:** Managers and supervisors are required to implement policy and inform all staff of expectations, for example, regarding the use of the *Anti-Bullying Toolkit*.

Anti-Bullying Toolkit:³

- Videos of employee experiences and trainings
- Advice to employees on recognizing problematic behavior, how to document the behavior, and how to file a formal complaint
- Guidebook for union stewards about how they can best serve employees
- Collective bargaining contract language

Collective Bargaining Agreement:⁴

Article 4 of the collective bargaining agreement (labor-management contract), was revised in 2019 to include the Respectful Workplace Policy.² While the agreement already includes language regarding the work environment of state employees, the addition of the Respectful Workplace Policy strengthens language around bullying in the workplace.

MAPE's Anti-Bullying Task Force:

A new full-time staff position was created to monitor statewide implementation of policy. MAPE's Anti-Bullying Task Force helps in the training of shop stewards and delegates and monitoring regional implementation of the Respectful Workplace Policy by reviewing formal complaints for policy violations.²

MAPE:

The Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE) is an "independent union" that represents, almost exclusively, Minnesota State employees of the "General

Professional Unit”—that is, “...professionals who are not managerial, supervisory, or academic.”¹ Twenty-one regions of Minnesota are covered by this union with a delegate elected in each region.¹

References:

1. Minnesota Association of Professional Employees. What is MAPE? | Minnesota Association of Professional Employees. <https://mape.org/>.
2. Minnesota Association of Professional Employees. MAPE Guidebook on Bullying of Stewards. <https://www.youtube.com/>.
3. Minnesota Association of Professional Employees. Anti-bullying toolkit. <https://mape.org/>.
4. Minnesota Association of Professional Employees. Anti-bullying toolkit – contract language. <https://mape.org/>.