What Can You do if You are Experiencing Discrimination or Harassment?

Speak to an ONA representative who is trained to help you, including:

- Your Bargaining Unit Human Rights and Equity Representative.
- Your Bargaining Unit President.
- Your Labour Relations Officer.

Your ONA representative will provide you with advice and support and will review the following actions you can take to address the discrimination or harassment:

- Tell the harasser to stop. Firmly tell the person their behaviour is not acceptable.
- Speak out and get support. Being the target of harassment can be very isolating. Talk to someone you trust and contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider.
- Report the discrimination or harassment. Ask an ONA representative to be present with you when you report the conduct to your employer.
- Make a complaint. An ONA representative can assist you in using the complaint procedures in your employer’s policy on workplace discrimination, harassment and abuse. In appropriate cases, the Union will file a grievance under the collective agreement.
- Keep records. Record detailed notes labeled “made for my lawyer.” Make notes of each incident with the date, time, what happened, the names of witnesses and how it made you feel. Keep copies of any letters, memos, or e-mails received from the person.

What is the Human Rights and Equity Team?

Established in 1997, the Provincial Human Rights and Equity Team is mandated to promote ONA’s continued development as an inclusive and equitable organization.

The team is composed of ONA members representing five equity groups:

- Members of Aboriginal Descent.
- Members with Disabilities.
- Francophone Members.
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Members (LGBTQ+).
- Racialized Members.

The ONA Vice-President who holds the portfolio for Human Rights and Equity chairs the team.

There are also ONA staff who are assigned to assist with the work of the team.

The team organizes and holds an annual Human Rights and Equity Caucus Meeting for all ONA Members at the Biennial Convention/Fall Provincial Coordinators Meeting.

How Can I Contact the Human Rights and Equity Team?

The Human Rights and Equity Team is available to assist you. You can contact the team as follows:

ONA Human Rights and Equity Team
85 Grenville St., Suite 400
Toronto, ON M5S 3A2

To leave a confidential message:
Tel. (416) 964-8833 extension #7768
Toll-free: 1-800-387-5580 extension #7768
Fax: (416) 964-8864
(Attention: Human Rights and Equity Team)

Further information and resources can be found at: www.ona.org/hre

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Working to End Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace

The Ontario Nurses’ Association (ONA) is working with its members to build a culture of human rights in the workplace, where all members are treated with dignity and respect, free from harassment and discrimination.

Discrimination is an action forbidden by law. It imposes special burdens, obligations, or disadvantages on members of protected groups. Discrimination is also any action that withholds or limits access to opportunities, benefits and advantages available to other members of society.

People are not born with an inclination to discriminate against others. The attitudes and beliefs that lead to it are learned. Discrimination can be unlearned. Simply put, learned beliefs determine, in part, how people treat members from different groups.

Harassment means engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.

In most cases, harassment refers to a pattern of objectionable behaviour involving a series of incidents that may be similar or different in nature. In some cases, there may be a single incident of vexatious behaviour that occurs, but is serious enough to amount to harassment.

Bullying is a form of harassment. It may be characterized as persistent and repeated behaviour that is offensive, insulting, intimidating, humiliating or abusive towards a person or group. Bullying is usually intentional in nature and an attempt to exert power or control over the target.

For more information about bullying, visit the Human Rights and Equity section of ONA’s website at www.ona.org/hre and review “Frequently Asked Questions about Bullying in the Workplace.”
Discrimination, Harassment and Accommodation

The Ontario Nurses’ Association believes that every member has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. ONA is committed to working toward the elimination of all forms of discrimination and harassment in the workplace and in the Union. This includes discrimination and harassment based on grounds prohibited in the Ontario Human Rights Code which are race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed (religion), sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, record of offences, marital status, family status and disability. ONA will also work to eliminate personal harassment and workplace bullying.

Accommodation may be required when dealing with members’ needs related to disability, religion, family status, pregnancy or other grounds in the Human Rights Code. ONA is committed to pursuing accommodation in the workplace and providing accommodation at union functions.

To achieve its commitment, ONA will strive to:

- Advocate for effective workplace policies and complaint investigation procedures.
- Provide policies and procedures for the investigation and resolution of membership complaints.
- Provide support mechanisms for members experiencing discrimination, bullying, Code and non-Code harassment.
- Provide a supportive and welcoming environment for members requiring accommodation.
- Provide services, organizational structures, activities and policies concerning human rights and equity issues.

Ongoing Initiatives

Some initiatives that ONA is undertaking to advance human rights in the workplace are:

- A membership Human Rights and Equity Team.
- Activities at Biennial Conventions and Provincial Coordinators Meetings, including Human Rights and Equity Caucuses, education sessions and information booths.
- Teleconnects for ONA HR&E Representatives.
- A membership booklet on human rights and equity.
- A membership bulletin.
- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).
- Celebration of commemorative dates.
- E-mail distribution lists for equity groups.
- Staff training.
- Participation in research projects.

Diversity and Equity

ONA believes that every member has the right to equal opportunity and full participation in the workplace and in the Union. ONA recognizes and values the diversity of its membership and will work to promote equity and diversity in the workplace and in the Union. It is the Union’s responsibility to see that diversity is reflected in its leadership.

Diversity is about acknowledging differences that can impact on the fair and equitable treatment of people. Diversity can include differences in gender, age, race, ethnicity, language, religion and spiritual beliefs, culture, physical or mental ability, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status and education.

To achieve its commitment, ONA will strive to:

- Promote awareness of the diversity of our membership and the needs of diverse groups.
- Integrate diverse perspectives throughout ONA’s educational programs and communications.
- Implement initiatives to develop the leadership skills of members from under-represented groups in ONA’s leadership.
- Identify barriers to equal opportunity and full participation and develop effective policies and procedures to eliminate these barriers.
- Provide an inclusive environment that recognizes members’ differences.
- Ensure that services, organizational structures, activities and policies include and address the needs of diverse members.

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To achieve its commitment, ONA will strive to:

- Provide educational programs and communications addressing discrimination, bullying, Code and non-Code harassment and accommodation issues.
- Conduct strategic collective bargaining on discrimination, bullying, Code and non-Code harassment and accommodation issues.
- Address breaches of members’ rights through the grievance and arbitration procedure.

What is ONA Doing to Build a Culture of Human Rights in the Workplace?

ONA’s Constitution and Statement of Beliefs: ONA has demonstrated its ongoing commitment to protecting and advancing human rights and equity in the workplace by adopting the following statement of beliefs.

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How Does Discrimination Make Your Workplace Unhealthy?

People who are being discriminated against or harassed often feel hurt, demoralized, physically ill and mentally and emotionally stressed. Discrimination and harassment make the workplace atmosphere tense and difficult. This atmosphere is a result of the discrimination itself, not the fault of the person being targeted.

Remember: Discrimination and harassment can take place between co-workers, between nurses and patients/visitors, and between nurses and supervisors, doctors or management. To make health-care work healthy, we need to work to end all forms of workplace discrimination and harassment.