

## EMS Safety Bulletin: Stop the Bullying in EMS

Do you know your agencies policies on bullying? Do you recognize bullying or ignore it as “hazing” or “initiation”? You are probably familiar with the terms quid pro quo (silence or submission in exchange for a benefit of some sort) and hostile work environment. But the internet and social media opens the door to other types of harassment harder to prevent or identify.

According to the Oxford Dictionary “Bullying” is the act of using superior strength or influence to intimidate (someone), typically to force him or her to do what one wants. Power is at the root of all bullying, whether it is real or perceived. Bullying can take many forms, physical, verbal or even on-line targeting. None of these are acceptable.

### What Does Bullying Look Like?

- Visual harassment; risqué posters, magazines, calendars, objects etc.
- Verbal harassment or abuse: repeated requests for dates, lewd or threatening comments sexually explicit jokes, voicemails, etc.
- Written Harassment: notes, letters, graffiti, emails, social media posts
- Offensive gestures, unwelcome leering, Unnecessary touching, patting, pinching or kissing.
- Promise of promotions, favorable performance evaluations or grades, etc. in return for sexual or other inappropriate favors
- Demanding sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt threats to a person's job, promotion, performance evaluation, grade, etc.
- Physical assault

*Everyone is responsible for helping to create a bullying-free environment!*

### What Can You Do to Help Stop Bullying?

- Individuals:
  - Be professional and ethical
  - Know your policies and follow them
  - Use statements like, "That's not funny," "Stop. You're making me uncomfortable," or "That's not ok with me" can help clue co-workers or supervisors in to what you are feeling.
  - Document incidents and make your leadership aware of your concerns
- Agencies:
  - Have a written zero tolerance policy prohibiting harassment and defining consequences of such actions, that is consistently enforced
  - Educate your members/employees on the policy
  - Top down commitment: Officers have a duty to lead by example and to correct and end inappropriate behavior as they become aware of it
  - Remind your staff retaliation is not legal

Sources: [www.naemt.org](http://www.naemt.org); [www.EMS1.com](http://www.EMS1.com); [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov); [www.thefireofficer.com](http://www.thefireofficer.com); [www.JEMS.com](http://www.JEMS.com); [www.Proems.com](http://www.Proems.com); [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)

