

# Breaking the Golden Rule

## Creating a Respectful Workplace

**A**sk people what respect is, and more often than not they'll say respect is about treating others the way you want to be treated.

### But is that how respect is perceived in the workplace?

"I had a supervisor who always referred to me as 'young lady,'" shares Sarah, a business professional in her late twenties who works in the Winnipeg Health Region. "It really offended me, especially since I happen to look very young for my age."

After talking to her supervisor, Sarah learned that her supervisor used 'young lady' as a term of endearment and respect. "He was quite embarrassed that he offended me; that wasn't his intent."

Respect in the workplace follows the platinum rule: treat others the way they want to be treated. But how can we know how others want to be treated?

The new Respectful Workplace Procedures Manual helps each of us know our rights and responsibilities, as well as to understand how to deal with disrespectful behaviour when it happens. The Winnipeg Health Region is committed to developing a culture of health and safety for all staff, as well as to developing the procedures that support and encourage a healthy and safe work environment. That's why the Winnipeg

Health Region has a Respectful Workplace Policy.

It's also why a campaign is being launched to raise awareness about how respect is expected amongst everyone. Along with posters in facilities throughout the region, an online component will help educate staff and encourage discussion about what a respectful workplace involves.

For example, what may seem like an inoffensive comment or remark to me may hurt you. The bottom line is that each of us has the right to feel safe and comfortable at work, free of harassment, discrimination, violence, prejudice, bullying, abuse and any other type of behaviour that would make someone feel uncomfortable.

"To have respect in the workplace, there needs to be good communication," says Eric Barnaby, Director of Human Resources for Corporate and Community Services for the Winnipeg Health Region. "When colleagues deal with and address these issues quickly, it generally results in a much better outcome than when they are left to brew and further escalate."

Barnaby, echoing the guidelines in the Manual, encourages staff to approach each other first by initiating a one-on-one discussion when disrespectful behaviour occurs. Quite often, this

first step of addressing an issue solves the problem.

Keep in mind that the informal banter one colleague may welcome and enjoy, may not be welcomed by another. In a respectful workplace, the colleague who cusses like a sailor refrains from doing so in the company of someone who finds that type of language offensive. Being able to read whether your actions are wanted or unwanted, can help you make sure you aren't offending your coworkers.

Whether or not someone intended to offend isn't the issue. How the experience was received is the key factor.

"It's all in how people interpret what was said. It may not have been the intention, but that's what was heard or felt," says Conne Newman, Director of Human Resources for the Victoria Hospital.

A good rule of thumb: "If it doesn't feel right, it's probably not right," says Newman. "You don't have to like everyone you work with. You just have to act professionally and be respectful."

Respect at work makes sure that each of us can focus on doing what we're here to do: our jobs. And at the end of the day, people who feel respected are more likely to stay at their job, which helps us to retain our most valuable asset: our people.

## Examples of Disrespectful Behaviour:

- Any act of violence in the workplace.
- Leering at a co-worker.
- Ignoring a co-worker.
- Rolling your eyes when you're talking to someone.
- Bullying others in the workplace.
- Gossiping about co-workers.
- Making racist, religious or sexist jokes.
- Abuse of authority.
- Any other behaviour or actions that make you or others feel uncomfortable, offended, discriminated against, or harassed.

## Know Your Rights and Responsibilities

Read the Respectful Workplace Policy and download a copy of the Respectful Workplace Procedures Manual: [www.wrha.mb.ca/professionals/respectfulworkplace](http://www.wrha.mb.ca/professionals/respectfulworkplace)

## Have a Question or Concern About Respect in the Workplace?

It's your right to talk to your manager, your site's Workplace Health and Safety Committee, the Regional Occupational and Environmental Safety and Health department, or your site's Human Resources representative.

# R-E-S-P-E-C-T



Find out what it means to ME.

Respect in this place is expected amongst everyone.

**Not just a little bit.**

[www.wrha.mb.ca](http://www.wrha.mb.ca)

 Winnipeg Regional Health Authority  
Office régional de la santé de Winnipeg  
Clinique for Health A l'écoute de votre santé

## Get the Shot, Not the Flu!

Getting immunized is an important personal and patient safety issue. As a healthcare worker, you can spread influenza to patients, possibly leading to influenza-related illness and death. You could also spread it to co-workers, and when health-care workers get sick with influenza, the result is absenteeism and disruption of care. Protect yourself and others by getting your influenza vaccine, and encouraging your co-workers to do the same. This year's staff immunization clinics run in various locations from October 12 -29. A list of the clinics is available at [home.wrha.mb.ca](http://home.wrha.mb.ca) on Insite. If you are unable to attend a scheduled influenza clinic, call Occupational & Environmental Safety & Health (OESH) at 940-8386 to book an appointment.

## Catch the WAVE September/October

In this issue of Wave, find out how two programs in the Winnipeg Health Region are helping Manitoba's elderly maintain their independence for as long as possible. Also, learn more about a valuable resource for children with asthma.

Read Wave online at [www.wrha.mb.ca/wave](http://www.wrha.mb.ca/wave) or pick up a copy at McNally Robinson Booksellers or a health care facility near you.

