EEO Bullying Prevention Strategies

Strategies for preventing bullying must include both proactive and reactive measures.

- Proactive strategies include creating and enforcing policies, providing rigorous and unique training/ learning opportunities, and reinforcing positive behaviors
- Reactive strategies include providing immediate support to targets of inappropriate behaviors and holding offenders appropriately accountable for their actions

Prevention strategies are divided into three categories: Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary. The overarching goal is to prevent future occurrences.

- **Primary Prevention Strategies** can mitigate behaviors before they become problematic
- **Secondary Prevention Strategies** efforts focus on responding immediately after the occurrence, while supporting the target; holding the perpetrators accountable, and setting the expectation that such behavior is unacceptable
- **Tertiary Prevention Strategies** aim to mitigate the lasting effects of behaviors and prevent future occurrences

Examples of Primary Prevention Strategies

▶ **Comprehensive Training Programs:**
- o Conduct regular and mandatory training sessions for all personnel, focusing on:
    - Defining bullying behaviors and how it is different from other forms of harassment
    - Provide realistic examples of bullying behaviors and consequences of bullying and interactive modules that help participants identify bullying behaviors
    - Emphasize understanding of impacts of bullying on individuals, team/unit cohesion, and the organization and mission
▶ **Bystander Intervention Training:**
- o Clearly outline specific bystander intervention methods for responding to bullying, including:
    - Direct intervention
    - Indirect intervention
    - Rights and protections when reporting as a bystander
- o Include role-playing scenarios that prepare individuals to act decisively and effectively in preventing potential bullying incidents
- o Reinforce the expectation that all personnel have a responsibility to maintain the integrity and safety of their unit
▶ **Visibility of Policies and Support Systems:**
- o Ensure that policies and reporting procedures are prominently displayed with the most up-to-date information for:
    - Anti-bullying policies and expectations for appropriate conduct
    - Clear reporting methods, including all means of reporting options

- Leverage multimedia campaigns using posters, videos, and digital messages that reinforce anti-bullying messages.

Examples of Secondary Prevention Strategies

▶ **Protocols for Rapid Response:**
- Establish a standardized response protocol that includes immediate actions to be taken once a bullying incident is reported, including:
  - The separation of the accused from potential targets
  - A preliminary investigation by trained professionals
  - A temporary measure to ensure the safety of all involved parties, targets and perpetrators
- Ensure that all leaders respond to reports of bullying with appropriate empathy and without bias
- Respond to all complaints of bullying in a timely manner, as outlined in the DoDI 1020.04, section 4, *Harassment Prevention and Responses for DoD Civilian Employees*

▶ **Support and Recovery for Targets:**
- Provide comprehensive support for targets, including referrals to resources for psychological counseling and medical treatment provided by military affiliations or community organizations
- Designate target advocacy personnel who can offer continuous support through the recovery and legal processes, such as:
  - Personnel who are trained in areas of support for trauma and emotional support
  - Senior leaders not affiliated with the bullying complaint who can provide support and mentorship
  - An open-door policy as a leader to respond with sincere empathy and support to individuals who have been the target of bullying and for perpetrators to get help
- Ensure that targets are informed of their rights and protections as a reporter making a complaint or protected communication
- Provide reasonable and appropriate updates on the progress of complaint cases in a timely and sensitive manner

▶ **Accountability Measures:**
- Implement strict accountability measures for perpetrators of bullying including:
  - Disciplinary actions aligned with the severity of the offense, which could range from formal reprimands to dismissal from DoD employment.
  - Publish (anonymous) outcomes of bullying cases to reinforce the seriousness with which they are treated and deter future incidents
- Hold leaders accountable for responding appropriately to bullying complaints or being aware of bullying behavior, including appropriate consequences for inappropriate or inadequate responses

Examples of Tertiary Prevention Strategies

▶ **Organizational Climate Surveys:**
   o Conduct detailed and anonymous climate surveys regularly to assess the prevalence of bullying
   o Gather feedback on the effectiveness of existing prevention strategies
   o Review collective data regularly to identify high-risk areas and tailor prevention efforts accordingly
   o Leverage collected data to identify, plan, and modify opportunities for improvement in all aspects of bullying prevention: training, reporting, response, and tracking

▶ **Cultural Reinforcement Programs:**
   o Develop and implement programs that reinforce a positive organizational culture to include:
      ▪ Leadership development programs that emphasize ethical leadership and the importance of setting a positive example
      ▪ Recognition efforts for units and individuals that demonstrate exceptional teamwork and bullying-free environments
      ▪ Organization of unit activities that build group inclusion, cohesion, trust, and respect through participation in a unified goal or experience.

▶ **Continuous Policy Evaluation and Improvement:**
   o Develop and consistently reinforce strong organizational values
   o Conduct a general and proactive follow-up assessment, as appropriate, after the resolution of formal and informal complaints to ensure the issue is resolved and to monitor for potential retaliation, but not required by EEOC.
   o Regularly review and revise bullying prevention policies and procedures to adapt to new challenges and feedback from DoD civilian personnel by:
      • Engaging a task force that includes members from different backgrounds, including other leaders, to ensure that all perspectives are considered
      • Implementing changes based on reported data and best practices to ensure policies remain effective and relevant