

Healthy Workforce FrameworkTM

TOOLKIT

*Eliminate Bullying and
Incivility in Healthcare*

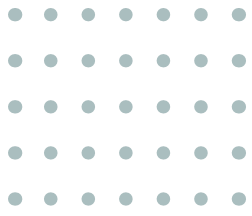


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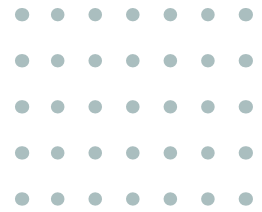
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Executive Summary



Disruptive behaviors, including bullying and incivility, remain significant threats to healthcare team performance, patient safety, and staff retention. Despite increased awareness, many organizations still struggle with inconsistent, unsustainable approaches to fostering a respectful, healthy work culture.

The Healthy Workforce Institute’s **Healthy Workforce Framework™** offers a clear, evidence-based roadmap for building and sustaining healthy work cultures. Centered on three interconnected pillars, **Strengthen Organizations, Equip Leaders, and Empower Teams**, the framework provides a system-wide strategy that embeds civility and professionalism into everyday practice.

By aligning organizational priorities, strengthening leaders’ skills and confidence, and engaging team members as active partners in culture change, organizations shift from reacting to problems to preventing them. This approach creates a workplace where every individual contributes to an environment of respect, collaboration, and excellence, for both the healthcare team and the patients they serve.

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CEO & Founder, Healthy Workforce Institute®

**THE HEALTHY WORKFORCE INSTITUTE® IS
THE TRUSTED AUTHORITY IN ELIMINATING
BULLYING & INCIVILITY IN HEALTHCARE.**



Introduction

Nurse leaders today face complex and compounding challenges, staff recruitment and retention, emotional well-being, financial constraints, and an alarming rise in workplace violence, bullying, and incivility. These behaviors not only undermine psychological safety but also drive turnover, impair teamwork, and threaten patient outcomes.

Recent evidence from AONL, ANA, ANCC, HWI, Press Ganey, and IHI underscores an urgent need for action, with the majority of nurse leaders witnessing incivility, bullying, and workplace violence. Nurse managers in their first few years of leadership remain particularly vulnerable, with each leadership transition contributing to higher staff turnover and team instability.

Problem

Workplace incivility has reached critical levels, posing a significant threat to organizational health, employee retention, and financial performance. According to SHRM, there are an estimated 208 million acts of workplace incivility everyday costing employers approximately **\$2 billion daily** in lost productivity, turnover, absenteeism, and legal expenses¹.

Recent data shows
74% of workers report
experiencing acts
of incivility.

Workplace incivility is not only a moral concern but a strategic threat to sustainability and well-being. Employees **lose an average of 35 minutes of productivity** after experiencing or witnessing incivility, and those who perceive their workplace as uncivil are twice as likely to leave within a year compared to those in respectful cultures². Research shows that **40%** of nurses planning to leave their job within the next year cite dissatisfaction with their work environment as the primary reason, underscoring the powerful link between culture and retention³. The nurse work environment is also directly tied to patient experience: hospitals with the most positive work environments receive patient ratings 7.4% higher and achieve 6.7% higher “Likelihood to Recommend” score than those with the poorest environments³. Together, these findings reinforce the urgent need to address incivility as both an ethical imperative and a business-critical priority.

¹SHRM. (2025). Civility Index. Q3 2025.

<https://www.shrm.org/content/dam/en/shrm/topics-tools/topics/civility/starter-kit/civility-infographic-q3-2025.pdf>

²Crumley, B. (2025). Workplace incivility is skyrocketing. Here's how employers can respond. Inc.

<https://www.inc.com/bruce-crumley/workplace-incivility-is-skyrocketing-heres-how-employers-can-respond/91251303>

³Press Ganey. (2024). The nurse work environment in 2024. PG Forsta Company.

<https://info.pressganey.com/e-books-research/nurse-work-environment-2024>

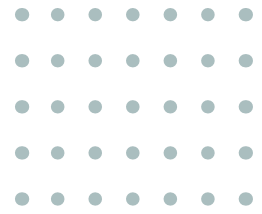


HWI Research Findings: Empowering Leaders to Drive Sustainable Culture Change

The Healthy Workforce Institute research shows powerful, system-wide improvements in workplace culture following participation in programs based on the **Healthy Workforce Framework™**. Respondents reported stronger physician communication, more effective leadership behaviors, and significant gains in respect, accountability, and psychological safety. At the same time, leaders demonstrated measurable growth in defining and confronting disruptive behaviors, setting clear expectations, and holding staff accountable.

These combined improvements reflect a strengthened, empowered leadership workforce, one equipped to model professionalism, foster healthy team dynamics, and sustain a culture where respect, collaboration, and high-quality care thrive.



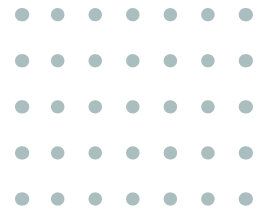


Organizational Culture Transformation: Building a Respectful and Collaborative Workforce

The **Healthy Workforce Institute's** data reflect strong improvements in physician communication, leadership effectiveness, and overall team culture. Respondents report more respectful interactions with physicians and providers, greater comfort raising patient concerns, and clearer responsiveness, indicating stronger interprofessional collaboration. Leadership behaviors also show significant gains, with clearer expectations, more **consistent accountability**, and increased approachability. Team members feel better supported and more confident bringing forward concerns. Team culture demonstrated meaningful progress as well, including increased respect for new and support staff, fairer conflict management, greater encouragement to speak up, and improved confidence in addressing disruptive behaviors. Together, these improvements show organizations moving toward a more **respectful, psychologically safe, and collaborative** work environment, laying a solid foundation for sustained culture transformation.

Across more than 1,500 team members, physicians, and APPs participating in the **Department Culture Change Initiative (DCCI)**, HWI data show significant culture improvements within just six months of implementation. Within six months, both team members and physicians reported meaningful improvements across key relationship and culture measures. Team members indicated a 42% improvement in overall culture, along with strengthened relationships with physicians (44%) and leaders (46%). Physicians and APPs reported similar gains, including a 43% improvement in overall culture, stronger relationships with nurses (45%), and improved relationships with leaders (46%). Collectively, these findings demonstrate measurable progress in interprofessional collaboration, leadership relationships, and respectful engagement across roles.

Perceptions by	Relationships with	Improvement within 6 months
Team Members	Physicians	44%
	Leaders	46%
	Overall Culture	42%
Physicians/APPs	Nurses	45%
	Leaders	46%
	Overall Culture	43%



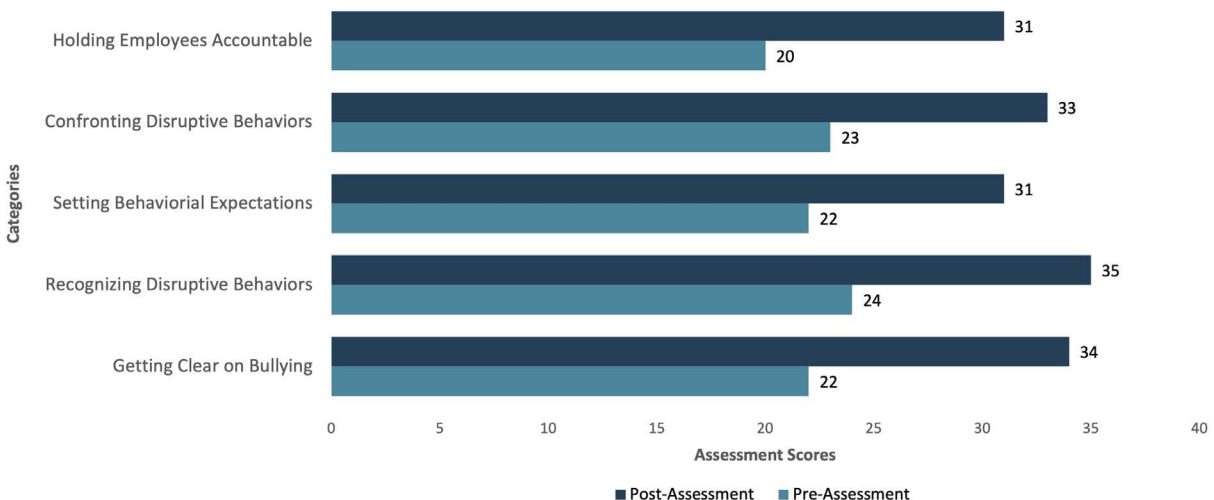
Building Accountability Systems

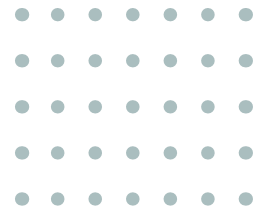
More than 1,600 healthcare leaders have been given access to the **Eradicating Bullying and Incivility** program, an essential foundation of the **Healthy Workforce Framework™**. This evidence-based framework provides leaders with a structured, practical system to build and sustain cultures where bullying and incivility are no longer tolerated. By equipping leaders with knowledge, tools, and measurable strategies for strengthening professional behavior, the framework transforms kindness, respect, and accountability from aspirational goals into consistent, everyday norms that define the organizational culture.

Leaders complete a pre-assessment at the culmination of the **Eradicating Bullying and Incivility** program to reflect on their initial gaps in knowledge and the skills needed to cultivate a healthy work culture. After completing the program, they complete a post-assessment to measure their growth in those same areas. The comparison between the pre- and post-assessment data reveals the strongest improvements in areas tied to accountability and behavioral management. Leaders increased their ability to **set clear expectations and hold employees accountable** highlighting the value of structured systems that support consistent, reliable follow-through.

These systems promote fairness, transparency, and shared responsibility, creating an environment where expectations are not only communicated but upheld. Such accountability frameworks are critical to reducing disruptive behaviors and preventing the normalization of incivility.

Pre and Post Assessment Actual Scores Comparison





Sustaining Culture Through Empowered Leadership & Engaged Teams

Lasting culture change happens when both leaders and team members are empowered. Clear expectations, timely accountability, and respectful role modeling by leaders, reinforced by team member accountability, strengthen the entire organization.

The payoff is powerful:

- Better communication
- Higher engagement
- Workplace rooted in respect and resilience

Sustaining progress takes continued effort. Ongoing coaching, open feedback, and reflection help both leaders and teams stay aligned with organizational values. With shared accountability and consistent reinforcement, a healthy work culture isn't just created, it endures.

The **Healthy Workforce Framework™** provides healthcare leaders with a **structured, evidence-based** system to build and sustain cultures that no longer tolerate bullying or incivility. Grounded in practical strategies and measurable outcomes, the framework guides leaders in creating environments where **kindness, respect, and professionalism** are not aspirational ideals but consistent, **everyday behaviors** that define the organizational culture.

The framework consists of three key pillars:



Strengthen Organizations:

Focuses on system-level strategies that hardwire and sustain a healthy work culture, enabling interprofessional teams to deliver safe, high-quality care while supporting positive financial outcomes.

[\(Click here to go to the Strengthen Organizations Pillar\)](#)

Equip Leaders:

Provides the knowledge, strategies, and confidence leaders need to cultivate a kind, respectful, and professional work environment while consistently holding individuals accountable and promoting collaborative, professional interactions.

[\(Click here to go to the Equip Leaders Pillar\)](#)

Empower Teams:

Engages interprofessional teams in actively contributing to and sustaining a healthy, respectful work culture.

[\(Click here to go to the Empower Teams Pillar\)](#)



Strengthen Organizations

Cultivating a culture of respect, civility, and professionalism requires a system-level approach. While leaders and teams can work diligently to address bullying and incivility, their progress cannot be sustained without clear commitment and prioritization from the organization and executive leadership. A healthy work culture is only achievable when every layer of the system actively supports and reinforces it.



- Add **Healthy Workforce** as a standing agenda in all leadership and department meetings.
- Integrate healthy workforce principles into all professional governance structures.
- Incorporate **healthy workforce** principles into the organization's **strategic plan**.
- Include education related to bullying and incivility into **all onboarding programs**.
- Incorporate behavioral expectations and accountability metrics into **performance reviews**.
- Ensure the **Code of Conduct** explicitly defines and reinforces expectations for **civil, respectful behavior**.
- Align **policies** and **procedures** with clear behavioral standards, definitions, and **actionable steps** for addressing violations.
- Establish an organization wide **Healthy Workforce Committee** to guide, monitor, and sustain culture initiatives.
- Implement **ongoing culture assessments** to evaluate behavioral norms and measure progress over time.
- Provide a **simple, accessible system** for team members to **report bullying and incivility** safely and confidentially.

Case study

University Hospital established an **interprofessional Healthy Workforce Committee** that meets bimonthly to guide and coordinate all culture-related initiatives across the organization. This collaborative structure has closed the gap between leaders and employees, strengthened interprofessional relationships, and aligned the organization's strategic goals with the committee's work. As a result, silos have been removed, and a unified commitment to a healthy, respectful workplace culture has taken root.

Reflective Questions

1. How is our commitment to a healthy workforce culture reflected in our strategic priorities, policies, and daily operations?
2. What structures and processes are in place to ensure accountability for professional and civil behavior across all levels of the organization?
3. How are we measuring and sustaining progress toward a healthy, respectful culture? How do we communicate that progress to our workforce?

Resources

[9 Strategies to Improve Culture and Conduct](#)

[9 Ways to Welcome and Protect New Graduate Nurses](#)

[Why CEOs Should Prioritize Psychological Safety to Drive Team Success](#)

[The Human Centered Workplace](#)

[How to Lead Across a Siloed Organization](#)

[AACN Position Statement: Preventing Violence Against Healthcare Workers](#)

How healthy is your organization?

TAKE THE QUIZ

Strengthening your organization to cultivate a healthy work culture is essential.



Equip Leaders

Leaders shape the culture more than any other group within an organization. Yet many enter their roles without the tools needed to set clear behavioral expectations, address disruptive conduct, and consistently uphold professional standards. For meaningful, sustainable change to take hold, organizations must intentionally develop their leaders, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to model and reinforce a culture of respect and accountability.



- Establish **comprehensive leadership development programs** that deliver initial and ongoing education on addressing disruptive behaviors, managing conflict, and promoting psychological safety.
- Foster **collaborative partnerships** between leaders and Human Resources to ensure consistent, aligned responses to behavioral issues.
- Create **interprofessional leadership development opportunities** that strengthen collaboration, communication, and shared accountability across departments and roles.
- Designate and support **Healthy Workforce Leader Champions** to model desired behaviors and mentor peers.
- Incorporate **coaching and feedback training** to help leaders confidently navigate difficult conversations and reinforce behavioral standards.
- Integrate **healthy workforce metrics** into leadership performance evaluations and development plans.
- Provide **ongoing peer forums or leader roundtables** for sharing challenges, strategies, and successes in addressing incivility and strengthening team culture.

Case study

At Baptist Health Baptist Hospital of Miami, executive leaders recognized the need to equip emerging nurse managers with the skills to build accountability and respect. Through participation in the **Eradicating Bullying & Incivility (EBI): Essential Skills for Healthcare Leaders** program, leaders gained tools to recognize and address incivility, model professionalism, and foster collaboration across shifts. As a result, the 5 Hope oncology unit has seen stronger team cohesion, improved communication, and greater trust demonstrating how empowering leaders with practical skills can transform culture and elevate both staff engagement and patient care.

Reflective Questions

1. How confident am I in addressing incidents of bullying and incivility and holding my team members accountable for professional conduct?
2. How am I partnering with human resources and my physician colleagues to cultivate a healthy work culture?
3. How am I modeling the professional behaviors and cultural values I expect from my team?

Resources

[33 Scripts to Address Disruptive Behavior](#)

[5 Common Mistakes Leaders Make When Addressing Disruptive Behaviors](#)

[Transforming Cultures From Incivility and Bullying to a Positive Practice Environment](#)

[Practice Empathy as a Team](#)

[Eradicate Bullying and Incivility: Essential Skills for Healthcare Leaders](#)

[AONL: Advancing Workforce Stability Through Healthy Work Environments | Compendium 2.0](#)

[McKinsey: Nurse Managers: The backbone of a strong nursing workforce](#)

[AORN Bullying and Incivility Toolkit](#)

[Models of Care Insight Study](#)

[Disruptive Behavior and Factors Associated with Patient Safety Climate: A Cross-Sectional Study of Nurses' and Physicians' Perceptions](#)

[Press Ganey: The nurse work environment in 2024](#)

[IHI: Preventing Verbal and Physical Violence across the Health Care Workforce](#)

How healthy is your department?

TAKE THE QUIZ

Equipping your leaders is not a nice to do - it's essential.

Empower Teams

Creating and sustaining a healthy work culture requires shared ownership. Organizations must move beyond the mindset that leaders alone are responsible for culture and instead empower team members to play an active role. When team members actively contribute to defining the norms, expectations, and behaviors of their workplace, they build a shared sense of ownership and accountability. This collective involvement strengthens commitment to upholding a respectful, professional, and healthy work culture.



- Provide **comprehensive training** on bullying, incivility, and professional behavior during orientation and through **annual refreshers** for all team members.
- Strengthen the **Professional Governance structure** to include culture-focused initiatives and shared accountability for behavioral standards.
- Invite team members to take **active, decision-making roles** on the **Healthy Workforce Committee**, ensuring diverse representation across disciplines and departments.
- Designate **Healthy Workforce Team Champions** who model professional conduct, foster peer accountability, and serve as culture ambassadors within their units.
- Encourage **peer-to-peer recognition** programs that celebrate acts of kindness, collaboration, and professionalism.
- Create **safe, accessible feedback channels** that allow team members to share concerns, offer ideas, and actively engage in ongoing culture improvement.
- Incorporate **team-based reflection and dialogue** into regular team meetings to promote openness, learning, and shared responsibility for maintaining a respectful workplace.

Case study

At Kaiser Permanente Walnut Creek, Team Champions have played a vital role in expanding access to healthy workforce practices across the pediatrics department. After participating in monthly Healthy Workforce Team Champion calls, one Team Champion developed a streamlined process to ensure that all team members, not just the designated champions, received the information and could apply the practical tools, scripts, and strategies shared during the sessions. By reviewing meeting recordings, summarizing key takeaways, and incorporating brief two- to three-slide summaries into required team meetings, she created a consistent way for cascading the education to all team members. This approach increased the visibility of Healthy Workforce principles, strengthened team member engagement, and helped foster a more positive, unified culture—demonstrating how empowered teams can extend the impact well beyond the champion group itself.

Reflective Questions

1. What role do I play in shaping the culture of my workplace?
2. How can I actively contribute to addressing incidents of bullying and incivility?
3. What opportunities exist for me to take an active role in healthy work culture initiatives?

Resources

[Power Scripts to Stop Bullying in the Moment](#)

[What's the Difference Between Bullying and Incivility?](#)

[Coffee and Conversations About Nurse Bullying](#)

[Healthy Work Environment Assessment Tool Team Version \(HWEAT-Team\)](#)

[Cultivating Healthy Teams: Skill Development for Interprofessional Teams](#)

[What if You're the Bully?](#)

[American Nurses Association Position Statement on Workplace Violence](#)

Explore how you support a healthy work culture.

TAKE THE QUIZ

Empowering your teams isn't a "nice to have";
it's a critical leadership imperative.



Conclusion



The **Healthy Workforce Framework™** provides a comprehensive, organization-wide approach for creating and sustaining cultures rooted in respect, civility, and professionalism. It **strengthens organizational systems, equips leaders** with the tools and confidence to set and uphold clear behavioral expectations, and **empowers teams** to share ownership in creating a healthy work environment.

Cultural transformation becomes possible only when every level of the organization, executive leaders, frontline managers, and team members embrace their collective responsibility for shaping the work culture. When all stakeholders actively participate, incivility and bullying lose their influence, making space for a culture defined by trust, collaboration, and a shared commitment to excellence in both care delivery and professional conduct.

Contact us at WeCare@HealthyWorkforceInstitute.com to bring our evidence based framework to eradicate bullying and incivility in your organization.

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