Gossiping, Victimisation and Reprisal Attack at Work Policy

PRN-155: Gossiping, Victimisation and Reprisal Attack at Work Policy

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CAREHOPES™

A subsidiary of AI Auto Tech Ltd

Company Number: 15556946

Website: www.carehopes.com

Email: admin@carehopes.com

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1. Policy Statement

CAREHOPES™ is committed to promoting a professional, respectful, inclusive, and psychologically safe workplace.

Employees must be able to:

- Raise concerns.
- Report wrongdoing.
- Challenge unsafe practice.
- Escalate safeguarding concerns.
- Participate in investigations.
- Provide corrective feedback.
- Undertake supervision.
- Conduct appraisals.
- Deliver professional guidance.

Without fear of retaliation, hostility, victimisation, gossip, exclusion, or reprisal.

CAREHOPES™ adopts a zero-tolerance approach to malicious gossiping, workplace victimisation, retaliation, or reprisals arising from lawful and professional actions undertaken in the interests of:

- Service users

- Employees
- Safeguarding
- Quality improvement
- Organisational governance
- Compliance
- Health and safety
- Professional accountability

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2. Purpose

This policy aims to:

- Promote a respectful workplace culture.
- Protect employees who raise concerns.
- Protect whistleblowers.
- Prevent retaliation.
- Prevent workplace bullying.
- Prevent victimisation.
- Promote accountability.
- Encourage professional challenge.
- Support safe service delivery.
- Protect organisational integrity.

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3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees
- Managers
- Supervisors
- Volunteers
- Contractors

- Agency workers
- Consultants
- Third-party providers
- Students and trainees

This policy applies in:

- Client homes
- Community settings
- Offices
- Meetings
- Training events
- Digital environments
- Social media
- WhatsApp groups
- Collaboration channels
- Email communications
- Telephone communications

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4. Definitions

Gossiping

The unnecessary sharing, spreading, discussing, or repeating of information about another individual where:

- The information is unverified.
- The discussion serves no legitimate business purpose.
- The purpose is malicious, harmful, embarrassing, or disruptive.

Victimisation

Subjecting an individual to unfair treatment because they:

- Reported concerns.

- Raised complaints.
- Participated in investigations.
- Supported another individual.
- Acted as a witness.
- Escalated safeguarding concerns.
- Challenged unsafe practice.

Reprisal Attack

Any negative action taken against an individual as revenge or retaliation for:

- Reporting misconduct.
- Challenging wrongdoing.
- Escalating concerns.
- Enforcing policies.
- Providing corrective feedback.
- Participating in disciplinary processes.
- Participating in investigations.
- Undertaking supervisory duties.
- Supporting organisational compliance.

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5. Examples of Reprisal Behaviour

Examples include:

- Spreading rumours.
- Deliberate social exclusion.
- Hostile behaviour.
- Undermining credibility.
- Malicious complaints.
- Threats.
- Intimidation.

- Harassment.
- Bullying.
- Retaliatory allegations.
- Deliberate refusal to cooperate.
- Organised hostility.
- Online attacks.
- Reputation damage campaigns.

This list is not exhaustive.

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6. Professional Challenge is Not Reprisal

CAREHOPES™ recognises that employees must be free to:

- Challenge poor practice.
- Raise concerns.
- Deliver supervision.
- Conduct appraisals.
- Correct mistakes.
- Report incidents.
- Escalate safeguarding concerns.
- Participate in disciplinary investigations.
- Manage performance concerns.
- Provide constructive feedback.

Such actions do not constitute victimisation or reprisal when undertaken:

- Professionally.
- Fairly.
- Lawfully.
- In accordance with organisational procedures.

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7. Individual Case Assessment

CAREHOPES™ recognises that not every disagreement, complaint, challenge, investigation, or performance discussion constitutes a reprisal attack.

Every allegation will therefore be:

- Considered individually.
- Investigated objectively.
- Assessed on available evidence.
- Evaluated within context.

CAREHOPES™ will not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach.

Each case will be assessed based on its own facts and circumstances.

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8. Employee Responsibilities

Employees must:

- Treat colleagues respectfully.
- Maintain professionalism.
- Avoid gossip.
- Avoid retaliation.
- Challenge concerns appropriately.
- Use formal reporting processes.
- Cooperate with investigations.
- Support a positive workplace culture.

Employees must never:

- Engage in malicious gossip.
- Victimise colleagues.
- Seek revenge.
- Undermine colleagues who raise concerns.
- Retaliate against whistleblowers.
- Retaliate against supervisors or managers performing legitimate duties.
- Organise hostility towards another individual.

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9. Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisors must:

- Promote respectful workplace behaviour.
- Address concerns promptly.
- Prevent victimisation.
- Support whistleblowers.
- Support employees who raise concerns.
- Monitor workplace culture.
- Escalate concerns appropriately.

Supervisors must never:

- Use authority to silence concerns.
- Ignore victimisation.
- Encourage retaliation.
- Participate in gossiping.

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10. Protection of Whistleblowers

CAREHOPES™ will support employees who report concerns in good faith.

Individuals who raise concerns regarding:

- Safeguarding
- Abuse
- Neglect
- Fraud
- Misconduct
- Health and safety concerns
- Policy breaches

must not be subjected to:

- Victimisation

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Retaliation
- Social exclusion
- Career disadvantage

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11. Digital and Social Media Conduct

Employees must not use:

- WhatsApp groups
- Social media
- Messaging platforms
- Email systems
- Collaboration tools

to:

- Spread rumours.
- Share confidential concerns.
- Coordinate retaliation.
- Attack colleagues.
- Undermine investigations.

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12. Reporting Concerns

Employees may report concerns through:

- Supervisors
- Line managers
- Senior management
- HR processes
- Safeguarding channels
- Whistleblowing procedures

Concerns will be investigated fairly and confidentially.

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13. Investigation Process

CAREHOPES™ may:

- Conduct fact-finding reviews.
- Interview witnesses.
- Review evidence.
- Review communications.
- Examine workplace interactions.
- Undertake formal investigations.

All investigations will seek to:

- Establish facts.
- Maintain fairness.
- Protect confidentiality.
- Promote natural justice.

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14. Breach of Policy

Where concerns are substantiated, action may include:

- Informal resolution.
- Mediation.
- Additional supervision.
- Reflective practice.
- Retraining.
- Formal warnings.
- Suspension.
- Dismissal.
- Contract termination.
- Referral to professional or regulatory bodies where appropriate.

Serious victimisation, retaliation, or malicious campaigns may constitute gross misconduct.

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15. Related Policies

- Duty of Care Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Sexual Misconduct Policy
- Abuse of Power, Position, Authority and Privilege Policy
- Conflict Resolution Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Dignity and Respect Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Safeguarding Children Policy
- Employee Code of Conduct Policy

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16. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
- Following investigations
- Following significant workplace incidents
- Following legislative changes
- Following organisational reviews