Working Against Violence Meeting Kit



WHAT'S AT STAKE

Awareness and preparation are key factors to address to try to eliminate and at least to minimize workplace violence. The vehicle to undertake this meaningful objective is through a written policy that is developed by a cooperative commitment of management and employees.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

THE DANGERS WORKERS FACE FROM WORKPLACE VIOLENCE – Work factors, and interactions put people at increased risk.

- Dealing with customers or the public.
- Handling money, valuables, or prescription drugs (e.g., cashiers, pharmacists, veterinarians).
- Carrying out inspection or enforcement duties (e.g., government employees).
- Providing service, care, advice, or education (e.g., health care staff, teachers).
- Having a mobile workplace (e.g., taxicab, salesperson, public transit).
- Working with unstable or volatile persons (e.g., social services, or criminal justice system employees).
- Working in premises where alcohol is served (e.g., food and beverage staff).
- Working alone, in small numbers (e.g., store clerks, real estate agents), or in isolated or low traffic areas (e.g., an isolated reception area, washrooms, storage areas, utility rooms).
- Working in community-based settings (e.g., nurses, social workers, and other home visitors).
- Working during periods of intense organizational change (e.g., strikes, downsizing).
- Working with third party workers, such as contractors or sub-contractors.
- Working with unstable or volatile people in health care, social service, or criminal justice settings.
- Working alone or in small numbers.
- Working late at night or during early morning hours.
- Working in high-crime areas.
- Working in community-based settings.

- Working in a location with uncontrolled public access to the workplace.
- Duties that involve the exchange of money.
- Delivery of passengers, goods, or services.
- Duties that involve mobile workplace assignments.
- Duties that involve guarding valuable property or possessions.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Risk of violence may be greater at certain times of the day, night, year, or location.

- late hours of the night or early hours of the morning
- tax return season
- overdue utility bill cut-off dates
- during the holidays
- pay days.
- report cards or parent interviews
- performance appraisals
- near buildings or businesses that are at risk of violent crime (e.g., bars, banks)
- in areas isolated from other buildings or structures

ELEMENTS IN AN EFFECTIVE VIOLENCE PREVENTION POLICY

- Be developed by management and employee representatives, including the health and safety committee or representative, and union, if present.
- Apply to management, employee’s, clients, independent contractors, and anyone who has a relationship with your company.
- Define what you mean by workplace violence, harassment and bullying in precise, concrete language.
- Provide clear examples of unacceptable behaviour and working conditions.
- State in clear terms your organization’s view toward workplace violence and harassment, and its commitment.
- Precisely state the consequences of making threats or committing violent acts.
- Outline the process by which preventive measures will be developed.
- Encourage reporting of all incidents, including reports from witnesses.
- Outline the confidential process by which employees can report incidents and to whom.
- Assure no reprisals will be made against reporting employees.
- Outline the procedures for resolving or investigating incidents or complaints.
- Describe how information about potential risks will be communicated to employees.
- Make a commitment to provide support services to targets of violence.
- Offer a confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to allow employees to seek help.
- Make a commitment to fulfill the prevention training needs of different levels of personnel.
- Make a commitment to monitor and regularly review the policy.
- State applicable regulatory requirements.

TRAINING, TRAINING, TRAINING

Safety and health training should be provided at all levels of the organization upon hire and at least annually thereafter. Suggested topics include an overview of the workplace violence prevention plan, including identified hazards and control measures; risk factors for particular occupations; ways to prevent or diffuse volatile situations; the location and use of safety devices such as alarm systems and panic buttons.

FINAL WORD

Violence in the workplace can take many forms – ranging from physical assault, robberies and verbal abuse to intimidation and low-level threatening behaviour.