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I. Introduction



The purpose of this guide is to provide information and tools that will support ministries in implementing the WCB regulation “Protection of Workers from Violence in the Workplace.” Use the information to develop a program to meet your specific needs. Examples of risk assessment tools, including a checklist and worker survey are included in the Appendices.



The increasing incidence of violence in the workplace, particularly in the health care, social services and hospitality services sectors resulted in the Workers’ Compensation Board (WCB) initiating a comprehensive review of the problem. This review included consultations with employers, worker representatives and the general public. In November 1993, the Workers’ Compensation Board implemented new regulation concerning *Violence in the Workplace* (Regulation 4.27–4.31 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation). In April 1998 this regulation was updated to reflect numbering changes for all regulations and some minor word change. The intent of the regulation was unchanged.

The regulation (see **Appendix 1**) defines ‘violence’ and requires employers to:

- undertake a risk assessment at any place of employment in which a risk of injury to workers from violence arising out of their employment may be present;
- establish policies, procedures and work environment arrangements to eliminate or minimize the risks that are identified through a risk assessment;
- establish procedures for reporting, investigating and documenting incidents of violence;
- inform workers who may be exposed to a risk of violence of the nature and extent of the risk;
- instruct workers who may be exposed to violence, on the means of recognizing the potential for violence; and of the policies, procedures and work environment arrangements that have been developed to eliminate or minimize the risk, including how to obtain assistance;
- ensure incidents of violence are reported and investigated and that corrective measures are taken; and,
- ensure that any worker who reports an injury or adverse symptom as a result of such an incident is advised to consult a physician for treatment or referral.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This Guide contains basic information which will assist ministries and local workplaces to undertake a violence risk assessment. It includes an example of a risk assessment worksheet.

Once a risk assessment has been completed, typically by a work group or task group at the local workplace, the Guide contains information that will assist in developing a Violence Prevention Plan. The main elements of a Violence Prevention Plan are identified, including an example of a Violence Prevention Policy.

An important component of any effective occupational health and safety program is incident reporting and investigation. Information is included in the Guide to assist managers, local Occupational Health and Safety committees and workers in reporting relevant information to assist in the incident investigation process.

Sources for additional information concerning workplace violence prevention are also included, as are some relevant sections of the Canadian Criminal Code.

Training and orientation of workers is vital. This Guide can be an effective tool to develop a Violence Prevention Plan. Detailed prevention procedures and a training program can also be developed by following the steps described in this Guide. The Guide, however, is not intended to replace the training component of a Prevention Program.

Should you have any questions or require further advice or assistance contact your Occupational Health and Safety manager/designate or Ministry Human Resource Advisor/Personnel Officer. Ministries can also obtain information or assistance from Public Service Employee Relations Commission's (PSERC) Occupational Health and Safety at 356-7938 or from the Workers' Compensation Board Toll free: 1-800-663-7593. Employees may also obtain further information from their Union or Association representative.

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES

The BC Public Service

- does not tolerate violence or threats of violence of any kind;
- promotes a violence-free workplace for all workers and for our clients;
- respects and protects the health, safety and dignity of all workers;
- complies, at a minimum, with WCB regulation and applicable provisions of collective agreements or terms and conditions of employment;
- will conduct risk assessments, which include worker involvement, to identify the nature and extent of risks for each worksite where risks may be present;
- undertakes to eliminate or, where elimination is not possible, establish procedures, policies and work environment arrangements to minimize the risk of violence to workers; and
- empowers workers to act immediately if faced with a potential or actual violent situation.

Definition of Violence

WCB Regulation (4.27) . . .

“Violence means the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker, and includes any threatening statement or behavior which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that he or she is at risk of injury.”

See WCB regulation 4.27–4.31 (Violence in the Workplace), in Appendix 1.



A threat against a worker’s family may be considered a threat against the worker where the threat arises from the work of the worker.

What about violence from a co-worker?

The Workers’ Compensation Board Occupational Health and Safety Regulation also prohibit improper activity or behavior between co-workers. Regulation 4.24 “Workplace Conduct” defines *“improper activity or behaviour”* as follows:

- (a) the attempted or actual exercise by a worker towards another worker of any physical force so as to cause injury, and includes any threatening statement or behaviour which gives the worker reasonable cause to believe he or she is at risk of injury, and

(b) horseplay, practical jokes, unnecessary running or jumping or similar conduct.

Note: Worker means a worker as defined under the *Workers Compensation Act*, and includes a supervisor or other representative of the employer.

What about workplace harassment?

The Government of British Columbia in consultation with the unions/associations has developed policy and procedures for preventing and addressing harassment and discrimination in the workplace. Workers subject to workplace harassment from a co-worker should seek a remedy through the established procedures. (see Personnel Management Policy 1.6; BCGEU Master Article 1.8/1.9; 1.03/1.04 Nurses Master; 1.09/1.10 PEA Master). In addition the Standards of Conduct Policy contains a section concerning “Workplace Behavior.”

The Collective Agreements

Article 22.13 of the BCGEU Master Agreement contains provisions which ensure workers are trained in the recognition and management of potentially violent incidents and in the development of measures to protect workers. The local Occupational Health and Safety Committee is to be consulted when developing a violence prevention program. Article 22.13 of the Nurses Master Agreement also contains provisions regarding violence in the workplace.

Some additional terminology used in this Guide . . .

Worker means any person performing the work of the ministry whether full-time, part-time, regular, auxiliary or seconded. A co-op student, contracted worker or volunteer under the direction of a ministry worker may also be a worker. (Reference *Workers’ Compensation Act*, Section 1).

Client means any person other than a worker of the same employer (i.e. the Province of BC). A worker of a different employer can be a client.

Co-worker means a worker of the same employer (i.e. the Province of BC).

Threat generally occurs when someone communicates an intent to injure an individual or damage an individual’s or the ministry’s property. (Reference Section 264.1 Criminal Code).

Assault occurs when a person, by an act or gesture, attempts to apply force to another person, whether or not an injury occurs. (Reference Section 264.1 Criminal Code).

II. Roles and Responsibilities

PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COMMISSION (PSERC)

The Occupational Health and Safety section of PSERC is responsible for:

- providing general guidelines regarding the WCB's workplace violence regulation;
- advising and assisting ministries to support compliance with the WCB regulation and provision of the collective agreements;
- advising ministries as to available training or education resources; and
- monitoring the overall incidence of violence or threats of violence in the public service, as reported by ministries, and identifying any broad prevention measures that can reduce those risks.

MINISTRY

The Deputy Minister or delegated authority is responsible for ensuring that a workplace violence prevention program is established and maintained including:

- ensuring the ministry executive, managers and local supervisors are aware of the requirements for compliance with WCB regulation and collective agreements concerning violence in the workplace;
- depending on need, ensuring an appropriate workplace violence prevention program is in place, either ministry wide or at the local workplace;
- involving workers at the worksite in the development and implementation of a prevention program, including the local Occupational Safety and Health Committee/safety designate;
- ensuring the program is communicated to all workers; and
- ensuring the program is reviewed regularly and when there is a significant change in the nature of the operations of the workplace, including the workplace location.

MANAGERS AND/OR SUPERVISORS

Managers or supervisors at each worksite location are responsible for:

- determining if a risk of injury to workers, due to violence arising from work, is present;
- if a risk is present, ensuring a risk assessment is undertaken and documented;
- informing workers of the nature and extent of the risk of violence at the worksite;
- ensuring appropriate policies and procedures are established to eliminate or minimize violence at ministry workplaces;
- ensuring that appropriate training and education is provided to workers consistent with the risk assessments which have been undertaken;
- ensuring effective response, reporting and monitoring procedures are in place; and
- regularly reviewing the workplace violence prevention program.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH COMMITTEES

A key element of an effective Violence Prevention Program is the involvement of the local safety committee, as required by WCB regulation [sections 3.6, 3.9 and 3.18]. The local Occupational Safety and Health Committee can:

- provide valuable input to the risk assessment process at the local workplace and provide input into the local Violence Prevention Program, including measures to protect workers;
- advise regarding training needs;
- determine if investigations of violent incidents or threats, as required by Section 3.6 (2) (a) of the WCB regulation, have taken place and participate as required; and
- participate in regular evaluations of the Violence Prevention Program.

ALL WORKERS

- provide input into the risk assessment process, as required;
- take all necessary steps to avoid violent situations or potentially violent acts;
- follow ministry or local policy and work procedures relating to violence in the workplace;
- participate in identified training and education activities that will increase awareness and understanding of the threat of violence and how to avoid or respond to a violent act; and
- report to a supervisor any work–related violent act or threat or potentially violent actions against themselves, co–workers or member of their family.

BC BUILDINGS CORPORATION (BCBC)

Services available from BCBC include:

- on request, provide security evaluations (site assessments, security surveys, etc.); and
- upon request provide advice and assistance to ministries regarding building and equipment design to enhance safety or security of workers.

III. Developing a Workplace Violence Prevention Program

Developing a violence prevention program is not as complex as it sounds. Essentially there are four main stages:

- A. Conducting a risk assessment.
- B. Developing a prevention plan to address the risks identified.
- C. Undertaking Incident Response and Follow-up.
- D. Regularly reviewing the prevention plan to ensure it reflects current workplace needs.

A. Conducting a Risk Assessment

Who is involved in undertaking a risk assessment?

It is important that both management and workers are involved in the risk assessment review. Typically, a work group or task group is established that represents the range of occupational groups and the diversity of workers at the workplace. Include a management representative and involve the local Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

One way to get things started is to discuss at a staff meeting the purpose of the work group and the goals of a violence prevention program. Ask for participation on the work group from interested workers. An important consideration is to ensure that the commitment of local management to the purpose and goals of the work group is made clear to all workers.

What should the work group consider when reviewing the risk of violence at the workplace?

The nature of the interactions between workers and clients or the public

Some issues to consider include:

- is the workplace involved with financial transactions or licenses and permits?
- is the workplace concerned with enforcement, regulation and compliance, dispute resolution or the courts?
- is the workplace involved with persons who themselves are at risk or who may be emotionally unstable or distraught?



An example of a risk assessment worksheet is included in Appendix 3 and 3a.

An example of a prevention measures worksheet is included in Appendix 4 and 4a.

An example of a worker survey is included in Appendix 5.

- what about the types of clients (history of violence or mental illness, hostile or ambivalent clients, history of substance abuse)?

The nature of the work environment

Some issues to consider include:

- is the work location in a high crime area?
- is it a high traffic workplace with a large number of clients?
- is the worksite secure during the day and night?
- are there times of the day, week, month or year when the risk from clients may be higher?
- how easy is it for clients or others to gain access to the worksite without authorization?
- are public access areas and private workspaces clearly marked or delineated?
- is the worker regularly outside an office and subject to working alone or in non-secure or high crime areas?
- are there equipment, tools or utensils easily at hand that could be used by a client in a violent act?

Past history and experience at your and similar worksites

Some issues to consider include:

- what is the record of violent acts or threats at the worksite over the past one, two or more years? Depending on the number and type of incidents, a one year period may be a sufficient review period.
- what about similar worksites in other locations or employers with similar experiences?
- are there two or more shifts? The risks may be different from one shift to another.
- is there a history of angry clients or protest groups where the ministry's programs or philosophy are not compatible with the client's or public's perceived needs?

The attributes of the workers

Some issues to consider include:

- what is the risk to workers who are new or not yet fully trained?
- is there an increased risk to women or to persons with disabilities, or minority groups, who may be especially vulnerable to violence? Unfortunately women are more apt to be targets of violence.
- are certain occupational groups or individual workers more at risk than others, either in terms of frequency or severity?
- are workers, working alone or in locations not readily accessible by other workers, able to obtain assistance should it be required?

Where can we obtain information on the above?

- past injury or incident reports (this may give only a partial picture since many threats may not have been reported in the past);
- questionnaires/surveys completed by workers and through direct interviews;
- reports and statistics, including those from the WCB;
- First Aid reports;
- visual inspections or a “walk about” of the workplace (use a floor plan as a guide);
- industry or professional association reports/statistics (e.g.: related businesses/services or occupations);
- safety committee minutes/reports;
- local police force.

Excerpts from the Canadian Criminal Code as they relate to workplace violence are also included in Appendix 9 to assist in understanding how the law treats various acts related to workplace violence.

Once the committee or task group has gathered the information it should be organized and analyzed . . .

- Organize the information into individual risk elements. That is, a specific risk related to a particular activity, job duty, location, time period or worker attribute.



Risk Assessment Survey See Appendix 5, page 33. Copies of this survey suitable for distribution can be obtained from your ministry OHS manager or designate or from PSERC at 356-7938



Suggestion: Assign one or more risk categories to a work group member(s). At the next meeting of the work group review the results of each person(s) research and then organize and analyze the findings.



Workplace risk assessments, once completed, must be kept at the local worksite for future review and for inspection by an officer of the WCB, upon request.

- For each risk determine the degree of risk, e.g.: frequency, severity. Use the Risk Assessment Worksheet (**Appendix 3**) as a guide.
- Determine methods to eliminate or minimize each risk. There may be more than one option for some risks or, some short term solutions and ones achievable over a longer time frame. Use the Prevention Measures Worksheet (**Appendix 4**) as a guide.
- Identify any training, education or information requirements.
- Identify any future review needs; for example, due to an upcoming office relocation or change to program responsibilities or job functions.

The ministry or local workplace may already have policies, procedures and training in place to minimize some or all of the identified risks. Together with any additional risks identified and new practices that will be put in place, they all are part of the Violence Prevention Plan.

B. Developing a Violence Prevention Plan

The risk assessment will indicate the degree of risk at the workplace. The degree of risk may apply generally to the worksite, to specific occupational groups and/or to certain times of the day or night. As well, the risk to female workers or persons with disabilities may be higher than for other workers. It is important that the degree of risk is accurately assessed for the specific circumstance as this will determine the prevention methods to be established.

Eliminating or Minimizing the Risks

If a risk can be eliminated then no further action may be required. If the risk cannot be eliminated then policies, procedures and work environment adjustments will be required to control or minimize the risk. The risk assessment undertaken at the worksite will determine the control actions that will be required.

When determining whether a risk can be eliminated two factors must be considered:

1. the **state of knowledge** of ways to eliminate the risk and,
2. the **availability and possibility** of ways to eliminate the risk.

The variety of worksites and occupations throughout the public service make it difficult to establish government-wide prevention plans. However, each ministry may be able to identify general risk levels for occupational groups and then apply this general assessment to a specific worksite or job/individual to obtain a more accurate assessment and develop a local prevention plan.

The following are the main requirements of a Violence Prevention Plan:

1. Policy
2. Written Procedures and Work Environment Measures
3. Training
4. Incident Reporting and Investigation
5. Incident Response and Follow-up
6. Reviewing the Plan

1. Policy

A ministry and/or local Violence Prevention Policy should identify the risks that workers face and describe programs and procedures that have been developed to control those risks. The policy should indicate who is accountable for developing, implementing and regular review of those programs and procedures. It should also indicate the responsibilities of managers, supervisors and workers.

The policy should also be communicated to all workers and should be posted or made available to workers.

An example of a Workplace Violence Prevention Policy and a local Violence Prevention Plan is included in Appendix 6 and 7.



Communicate violence prevention policy and procedures to all workers.

2. Written Procedures and Work Environment Measures

Once the risk factors have been identified the next step is to develop local policies and procedures that will eliminate or minimize those risks. In all cases the procedures or control measures should directly relate to the risk assessment.

In general, preventive measures will include:

- ensuring employees recognize when violent incidents are occurring or are likely to occur;
- identifying procedures and practices which will reduce the likelihood of an incident occurring;

- office design and security;
- conducting periodic practice drills for response to violent incidents.

Work Procedures

Are the current written work procedures sufficient to minimize the risk to workers? If not, how can they be updated or changed to reduce the likelihood of a violent incident occurring?

Some issues to consider:

- procedures for interacting with problem clients (e.g.: recognizing potential violent acts such as emotional outbursts, abusive language, shouting, destruction of property);
- “flags” for clients who have a history of violence or threats of violence;
- policy or procedures regarding client or public access to private workplace;
- check in or alarm procedures for workers who are working alone or not in close proximity to other workers (e.g.: reception, inspectors, workers who visit clients’ homes, etc.);
- scheduling or other deployment arrangements, including provision of backup assistance.

When there have been changes to the workplace environment, work functions or services, written work procedures will require review to ensure any required changes are incorporated into the Violence Prevention Plan.

Response Procedures

If a threat or violent act occurs do workers know how to respond? Do they know how to recognize when an incident is occurring or is likely to occur?

Some issues to consider:

- establish procedures for worker response to emotional outbursts, abusive language, aggressive behavior;
- train workers to recognize potential aggressive clients and the appropriate prevention strategy to deal with the situation (emotionally distraught clients, clients dependent on or under the influence of alcohol or drugs, clients with a grudge against the “system” or levels of service, persons who resent the position of the ministry/government on a controversial subject, etc.);

- establish backup or alarm procedures or protocols for calling for assistance (from the manager, other trained workers, building security, police, etc.);
- establish communication procedures and assistance protocols with the local police and ensure workers are familiar with them;
- ensure workers know what to do if they observe another worker involved in a potential threatening situation;
- establish procedures for making the office/work location secure during or following a violent incident (e.g.: locking offices, removing workers from the worksite, etc.);
- ensure first aid, hazard reduction, clean-up and repair procedures are in place;
- provide immediate critical stress debriefing and post traumatic counselling to workers who have been affected by workplace violence.

Work Environment Measures

Sometimes adjustments to worksite layouts, security, lighting and so on can reduce the risks from violence. Ideally, this should be considered whenever new or renovated space is being considered and whenever a risk assessment indicates layout, building design or security is a problem.

When considering work environment measures it is often useful to have a floor plan or blueprint of the building or a map of the work location. With a floor plan a walk-about or safety audit of the workplace will be much more effective.

It is also important to involve a diversity of workers in the work environment review. Often women and men, for example, will experience the workplace differently.

When doing an on-site review use the floor plan to mark areas which may pose a potential risk and then assess them in a work group meeting.

In most cases undertaking an assessment of the work environment is no different than conducting any other inspection of the worksite for health and safety reasons.

In most cases necessary changes to work practices can be accomplished quite easily and at low cost. Regardless, it is important to involve both the ministry occupational safety and health designate, local OSH committee and the ministry facility manager. In addition BCBC client services can provide some very helpful advice and assistance to the ministry.

Some issues to consider:

- does the workplace have public access? Are there multiple access points when a single public access is sufficient?
- are public and private areas clearly delineated and separated by physical barriers (e.g.: counters) or psychological barriers (e.g.: colors or signs)?
- are there clearly marked exit signs?
- are client access meeting rooms or offices visible to other workers?
- are reception areas isolated from the rest of the office?
- are lighting or security measures adequate (e.g.: door locks, warning buzzers, etc.)?
- do adjacent activities or buildings put workers at risk?
- is the workplace isolated?
- are tools, equipment or utensils easily accessible to potentially violent clients?

3. Training

It is important, wherever a risk from violence at the worksite exists, for workers to be made aware of the nature and extent of those risks, what policies and procedures are in place to control the risks and how to respond should an incident occur.

Depending on the degree of risk, communication and training activities can include:

Low or Minimal Risk: workers should have a general understanding of situations that could lead to violence or aggression and the types of precautions that can be taken to minimize the threat. This may include basic security procedures (e.g.: locking non-public access doors), precautions when entering or leaving the workplace after normal daytime work hours, reporting procedures and emergency numbers to be called.

Moderate Risk: in these worksites, specific acts of violence or threats have occurred or, have occurred in similar offices or occupations, either within the public service or with similar employers and workplaces. While threats are not occurring on a regular basis, specific policies, procedures and training to prevent or recognize a potential threat is required.

Activities to consider include:

- review with all workers procedures related to minimizing each type of risk;
- provide workers with training on how to recognize threats *before* they become real and how to diffuse the situation if possible (e.g.: defusing hostile clients, anger management, conflict resolution, etc.);
- provide training and information on specific policies and procedures;
- ensure workers know the appropriate response for different types of situations including how to obtain assistance;
- provide training on procedures for reporting, documenting and investigating incidents;
- ensure response services are available including critical incident stress debriefings;
- incorporate violence prevention, response information and training programs into the ministry's orientation program (also in Low or Minimal).

High Risk: the workplace regularly deals with potentially violent clients, or clients who may be emotionally unstable, using alcohol or drugs or may be very upset with ministry or government policy or procedures (enforcement, controversial issues, etc.).

Activities to consider include:

- training as in Moderate above, plus;
- training in crisis intervention techniques, dealing with violent behavior, diffusing techniques, conflict resolution training, self defense training, etc.;
- specific instructions, tips and techniques for those who work or travel alone, including home visits, working late at night, traveling to and from parking lots in higher crime areas or outside of regular work hours;



Risk degree categories are a general guide only. The most important action is to provide information and training to workers that address the risks identified.

- regular briefings for employees who interact with clients that have a history of violent behavior.

4. Incident Reporting and Investigation

All incidents of violence or threats of violence must be reported without delay to:

- the local supervisor or manager; and
- any other persons established by ministry policy.

WCB Regulation 3.7 requires the WCB Prevention Division to be notified of any incident which resulted in death or a critical condition with a serious risk of death.

What type of information is important when reporting a threat or incident of violence?

Appendix 8 provides a guide to information that would be helpful to documenting violent incidents or threats. While a threat report is not specifically required by WCB regulation, the employer recognizes the importance of receiving complete information on threatening or potentially threatening incidents. With complete information concerning the threat, management can look at ways of eliminating or minimizing the threat in the future. The information also assists in conducting accident investigations required by Part 3 of the WCB regulation (Rights and Responsibilities).

Management relies on incident reports and on accident/incident investigations to determine the need for further prevention measures that will minimize threats and to monitor the overall effectiveness of the occupational health and safety program.

Remember:

- Involve the local occupational safety and health committee.
- Ensure accountability for investigation and follow-up are clearly defined.
- Ensure the factors that contributed to the violent incident or threats are understood and that actions are identified that will eliminate or reduce the threat in the future.
- Involve additional technical experts as necessary (e.g.: security personnel, facility manager, occupational health and safety officer, etc.).
- Ensure necessary information is entered into First Aid records.



Under WCB Regulation 3.8 accident investigations are required where an injury required medical treatment, the incident had a potential for causing serious injury or, the accident/incident is required to be reported under Regulation 3.7.



See also BCGEU Master Agreement Article 22.5—Investigation of Accidents.

Establish, maintain and evaluate incident records:

- complete and maintain incident reports, investigation reports (Form PSC 38), First Aid treatment records and, for a WCB claim the WCB Form 7 (Employer's Report of Injury or Industrial Disease); and
- review and analyze, on at least an annual basis, the incidents that have occurred. These records will identify trends, determine the effectiveness of the Violence Prevention Plan and identify any improvements that may be needed.



First Aid and/or medical assistance is the first priority.

5. Incident Response and Follow-up

In addition to the reporting, investigation and recording procedures described above it is important that the ministry establish procedures for ensuring appropriate first aid and medical assistance is provided to affected workers. This includes first aid response, transportation of injured workers to a medical facility (if required) and ensuring the worker sees a physician if treatment is required or requested.

Based on the investigation and/or analysis of the records of the incident, appropriate follow up is important. This may include:

- a review of current policy or written work procedures for possible amendments;
- identification of further training requirements;
- identification of work environment changes.

In some cases, unlike other work related injuries or illnesses, a worker's response to a violent incident may require additional response by the ministry. In many cases worker reaction to a violent incident may occur much later than the incident itself.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) and Post Traumatic Counselling

Any violent incident, particularly those that result in a worker's death or serious injury or in a traumatic threatening situation, can cause workers to experience strong emotional, cognitive (memory, problem solving or decision making abilities), behavioral and physical reactions. These reactions can be experienced both by the worker(s) directly involved in the incident and by co-workers close to those involved and who are also at the worksite.

Some of the incidents which can precipitate post traumatic stress are:

- assault causing harm;
- a death threat;
- a fire, causing injury or severe damage;
- a bomb threat;
- witnessing a worker injury or death;
- a hostage incident;
- firing of a weapon, or threat with a weapon.



Post trauma response is important to the prevention of longer term employee problems.

The purpose of a CISD is to mitigate the harmful effects of the incident and to try to prevent the emergence of post-traumatic stress disorder, an often debilitating psychiatric condition.

CIS debriefings are provided by qualified professional counselors. Typically, they last from one to three hours and include workers present at the scene of the incident. Usually a CISD is conducted within 72 hours after the incident.

The objectives of a CISD are:

1. To lessen the impact of violent incidents on the workers who have been exposed to them.
2. To accelerate and support recovery from the violent incident before more harmful stress reactions occur that may damage work performance, careers, health and family/personal relationships.
3. To identify follow up actions or interventions for a worker, as required.

Who do I contact?

It is important to note that time is of the essence in providing a CISD response and the local manager or supervisor should have established procedures to follow.

If the ministry does not have a Critical Incident Stress Management Program and you wish to establish one or if there is a need to provide a CISD to a specific situation you can contact:

1. The local manager or other designated ministry official.
2. Ministry Occupational Health and Safety manager or designate.
3. PSERC, Occupational Health and Safety.
4. PSERC, Government Employee Health Services.

6. Reviewing the Plan

Regular review of the Violence Prevention Plan is important. If incidents of violence are not reduced (over an appropriate review period) then it is important to identify why.

Some issues to consider include:

- was the initial risk assessment accurate and based on the best available information? Perhaps an element not considered should be assessed or additional information sought?
- have there been changes at the workplace that may be contributing to the risk? Has the office been relocated or additional services added? Have staff levels changed?
- have there been changes to the surrounding geographic location and therefore the nature of client/public interaction?
- are all incidents being reported? If not, why not? Ensure the methods used to document incidents are adequate.



Regular review of violence risks and your violence prevention plan is important.

Finally, establish who will conduct the review. It may be the same committee or task group that established the original plan or the local occupational health and safety committee. Perhaps an outside review is also required especially where an independent view or perspective is desired.



Copy the local Occupational Health and Safety Committee on the results of program reviews.

As with the development of the initial Violence Prevention Plan, a report of the program review findings should be submitted to management for review, comment and approval. Any revisions to the Violence Prevention Plan can then be implemented.

IV. Summary

A Violence Prevention Plan is an important element of an occupational health and safety program. The ultimate goal is to protect the health of all workers. It will not be possible to eliminate all threats of violence but they can be minimized. A Workplace Violence Prevention Plan will support a safe workplace, which will have the positive benefit of improved worker morale, more efficient and effective work procedures and a safe environment for ministry clients. Reductions in violent incidents will also contribute directly to reduced WCB claims costs and other benefit costs.

We hope the information contained in this Guide will assist ministries and local workplaces in developing a Violence Prevention Plan to meet your particular needs. Remember, it is a Guide only and may require changes to address specific workplace situations, such as those experienced in health care institutions, corrections, or local social services offices.

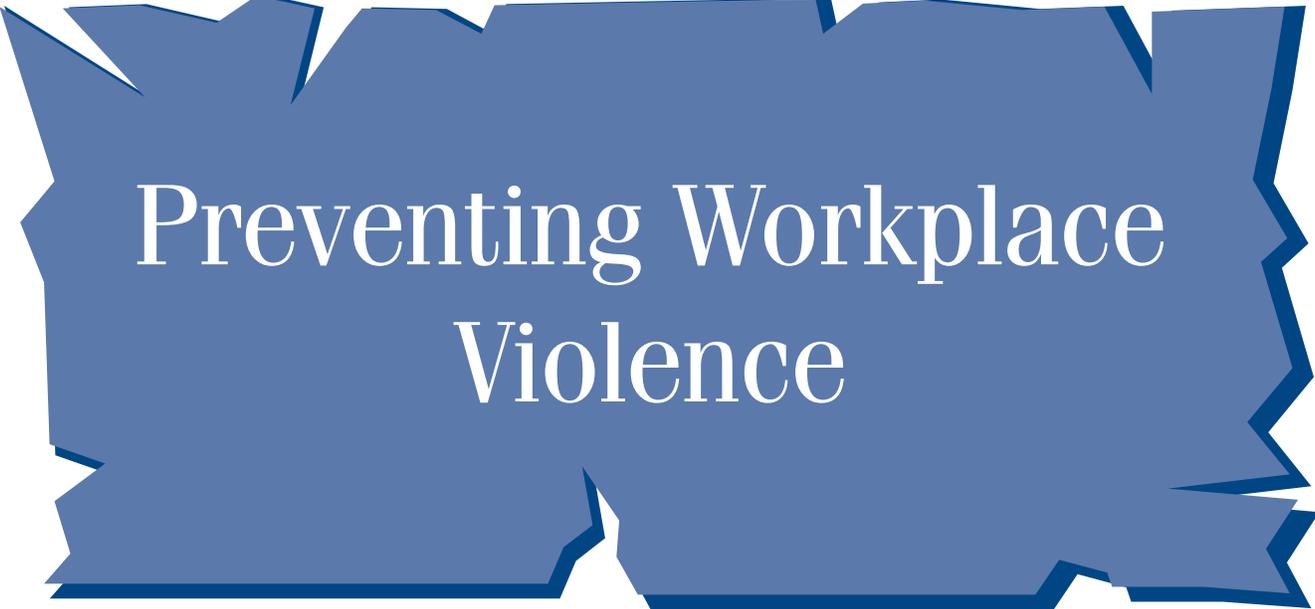
For Additional Information . . .

CONTACT	ADDRESS OR PHONE
1. Workers' Compensation Board offices	contact the regional office closest to you
2. Ministry Occupational Health and Safety manager or designate	refer to your ministry phone/contacts list or Human Resources Branch
3. Local Occupational Health and Safety Committees	contact the local employer or union co-chairs
4. Occupational Health and Safety, Public Service Employee Relations Commission	548 Michigan Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 1S3 Phone: 356-7938; Fax: 356-7946
5. Union/Association Staff Representative	refer to your Union/Association
6. Local Police, RCMP detachment or fire department	refer to your local phone book
7. Stopping the Violence Branch, Ministry of Women's Equality (general information on women and violence)	756 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4 Phone: 953-3441

We want your comments!

If you have some suggestions for ways to improve this guide, some additional information you would like to see, or clarification of existing information, then we want to hear from you. Drop us a line or phone. You can reach us at the following address:

Occupational Health and Safety
Public Service Employee Relations Commission
548 Michigan Street
Victoria, BC V8V 1S3
Phone: 356-7938
Fax: 356-7946



Preventing Workplace Violence

Appendices

Appendices

Appendix 1 WCB Regulation Violence in the Workplace

Definition of Violence

4.27 “Violence”—means the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker, and includes any threatening statement or behaviour which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that he or she is at risk of injury.

Risk Assessment

- 4.28 (1) A risk assessment must be performed in any workplace in which a risk of injury to workers from violence arising out of their employment may be present.
- (2) The risk assessment must include the consideration of
- previous experience in that workplace,
 - occupational experience in similar workplaces, and
 - the location and circumstances in which work will take place.

Procedures and Policies

- 4.29 If a risk of injury to workers from violence is identified by an assessment performed under regulation 4.28 the employer must
- establish procedures, policies and work environment arrangements to eliminate the risk to workers from violence,
 - if elimination of the risk to workers is not possible, establish procedures, policies and work environment arrangements to minimize the risk to workers, and
 - establish procedures for reporting, investigating and documenting incidents of violence as required by Part 3 (Rights and Responsibilities).

Instruction of Workers

- 4.30 (1) An employer must inform workers who may be exposed to the risk of violence of the nature and extent of the risk.

- (2) The duty to inform workers, in subsection (1) includes a duty to provide information related to the risk of violence from persons who have a history of violent behaviour and whom workers are likely to encounter in the course of their work.
- (3) The employer must instruct workers who may be exposed to the risk of violence in
- the means for recognition of the potential for violence,
 - the procedures, policies and work environment arrangements which have been developed to minimize or effectively control the risk to workers from violence,
 - the appropriate response to incidents of violence, including how to obtain assistance, and
 - procedures for reporting, investigating and documenting incidents of violence.

Response to incidents

- 4.31 (1) Incidents of violence must be reported and investigated as required by Part 3 (Rights and Responsibilities).
- (2) The employer must ensure that corrective actions are taken in response to incidents of violence in accordance with the requirements of Part 3.
- (3) The employer must ensure that a worker reporting an injury or adverse symptom as a result of an incident of violence is advised to consult a physician of the worker’s choice for treatment or referral.

Note: The requirements for risk assessment, procedures and policies, the duty to respond to incidents and to instruct workers are based on the recognition of violence in the workplace as an occupational hazard. This hazard is to be addressed by the occupational health and safety program following the same procedures required by this Occupational Health and Safety Regulation to address other workplace hazards.

Appendix 2 Workplace Conduct

Definition

4.24 Definition of “improper activity or behaviour”

In sections 4.25 and 4.26 includes

- (a) the attempted or actual exercise by a worker towards another worker of any physical force so as to cause injury, and includes any threatening statement or behaviour which gives the worker reasonable cause to believe he or she is at risk of injury, and
- (b) horseplay, practical jokes, unnecessary running or jumping or similar conduct.

Note: Worker means a worker as defined under the *Workers Compensation Act*, and includes a supervisor or other representative of the employer.

Prohibition

4.25 A person must not engage in any improper activity or behaviour at a workplace that might create or constitute a hazard to themselves or to any other person.

Investigation

4.26 Improper activity or behaviour must be reported and investigated as required by Part 3 (Rights and Responsibilities).

Appendix 3 Workplace Violence Prevention

Risk Assessment Worksheet

(This is a guide only. Use additional space as required.)

Risk Element	Frequency (see note below)	Severity (see note below)	Comments
List the job duty or workplace factor that poses a risk of work-related violence Consider the following factors: occupational, work environment, geographic, worker attributes, time period, <i>Refer to Guide</i>			

Note: Degree of risk relates to a number of factors, based on current and/or historical information obtained about the risk.

The **frequency** or possibility for violence may be *High* (very likely), *Medium* (possible) or *Low* (unlikely). The **severity** of the risk may also be *High* (physical acts involving injury or trauma), *Medium* (physical acts or threats having potential to cause injury or trauma) or *Low* (verbal or written threats unlikely to cause physical harm).

Appendix 3(a) Workplace Violence Prevention

Risk Assessment Worksheet (This is an example only)

Risk Element	Frequency (see note below)	Severity (see note below)	Comments
<p>List the job duty or workplace factor that poses a risk of work-related violence</p> <p>Consider the following factors: occupational, work environment, geographic, worker attributes, time period, <i>Refer to Guide</i></p>			
<p>e.g.: receptionist station is isolated from other offices and is not visible by other employees. Client contact is high with clients who may be emotionally upset. There have been 5 previous instances this year of the receptionist requiring assistance due to a belligerent/threatening situation by clients.</p>	High	Medium	<p>review access to reception area, no signs in place, response procedure not well known.</p>
<p>e.g.: survey indicates employees are unaware of ministry's established response procedures in the event of an assault while visiting clients in the field. No incidents have been reported, although employees indicate they are uncomfortable not knowing how to prevent/respond to threats.</p>	Low	Low	<p>communicate check in procedures to staff, review conflict resolution training, diffusing techniques training needs.</p>

Note: Degree of risk relates to a number of factors, based on current and/or historical information obtained about the risk.

The **frequency** or possibility for violence may be *High* (very likely), *Medium* (possible) or *Low* (unlikely). The **severity** of the risk may also be *High* (physical acts involving injury or trauma), *Medium* (physical acts or threats having potential to cause injury or trauma) or *Low* (verbal or written threats unlikely to cause physical harm).

**Appendix 4
Workplace Violence Prevention
Prevention Measures Worksheet**

(This is a guide only. Use additional categories or additional space as needs require.)

Risk Element <i>List risk elements from Risk Assessment Worksheet</i>	Degree of Risk <i>High Moderate Low</i>	Policy	Prevention Procedures	Response Procedures	Training Needs

Note: Identified prevention recommendations and resulting actions should be assigned and due dates for completion established and monitored. When reviewing workplace design or layout use a workplace floor plan or workplace site plan to guide you.

Appendix 4(a) Workplace Violence Prevention Prevention Measures Worksheet (This is an example only)

Risk Element <i>List risk elements from Risk Assessment Worksheet</i>	Degree of Risk <i>High Moderate Low</i>	Policy	Prevention Procedures	Response Procedures	Training Needs
Client contact at reception desk (example only)	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ establish policy regarding response to hostile clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ install alarm buzzer to private office area ▶ detail response procedures for verbally or potentially physically abusive clients, clients under influence of alcohol/drugs ▶ establish protocol regarding call to police ▶ establish barrier/controlled gate between reception counter and public area ▶ review and establish signs on client behaviour ▶ remove loose objects from reception counter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ establish protocol for scaled response to client actions ▶ ensure 911 procedures are communicated to all staff ▶ provide for secure refuge area ▶ ensure hazard cleanup (breakage, etc.) is established ▶ establish critical incident response procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ train receptionist and all front line staff in recognizing hostile clients and response protocols ▶ conflict resolution, violence avoidance/de-escalation training for receptionist and response team designates ▶ ensure incident reporting procedures are communicated and practiced by all staff

Note: Identified prevention recommendations and resulting actions should be assigned and due dates for completion established and monitored. When reviewing workplace design or layout use a workplace floor plan or workplace site plan to guide you.

Appendix 5 Workplace Violence

Risk Assessment Survey



“Workplace violence” is defined by the Workers’ Compensation regulation (4.27) as:

“Violence means the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker, and includes any threatening statement or behavior which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that he or she is at risk of injury”



A threat against a worker’s family may be considered a threat against the worker where the threat arises from the work of the worker.

We need your help in completing a very important survey. Your completed survey will assist in ensuring that our workplace is safe, especially from the risk of workplace violence.

Completion of the survey is strictly voluntary and all information provided is confidential.

In this survey workplace violence can refer to situations where you experience actual or threatened physical harm from a client, patient or member of the general public in the course of your work. Implied threats may also be a violent act if you consider that the threat may result in physical harm.

Occupation _____

Job Location (City) _____

Division/Branch/Region _____

Job Location Type (check all that apply)

Office Lab Clinic

Hospital/Continuing Care

Field (Please specify) _____

Other (Please specify) _____

Length of time in position

<one year

1–2 years

3–5 years

>5 years

Age Range

<20 years

21–35 years

36–49 years

>50 years

Sex

Male

Female

For the following series of questions please check off the box next to the response that best applies or fill in the blanks as required. If more than one box is applicable check off as many boxes as required. All responses are confidential and will not identify you in any way.

Section 1—Issue Identification and Summary

1. I believe that current policies, procedures and security measures at my workplace are adequate in addressing violent situations.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - No Opinion
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
2. I frequently worry about my personal safety from violent acts on the job.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - No Opinion
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
3. I believe that I have received appropriate training on how to respond to threats or acts of workplace violence.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - No Opinion
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

Section 2—Incidents

If you have been personally subjected to or witnessed a work-related violent threat or act complete Questions 4–27 (as appropriate).

I have not experienced or witnessed a work-related violent act or threat.

(Move on to Question 28)

4. I have experienced witnessed work related violent acts or threats (Check all that apply)
5. How many incidents have personally subjected you to a violent act or threat in the past two years?
 - One
 - Two
 - Three
 - More than three
6. How many incidents have you witnessed?
 - One
 - Two
 - Three
 - More than three

7. Where did the incidents take place?
 - My Office
 - Client's Business
 - Client's Home
 - Office Lobby/exit
 - Workplace Parking lot
 - Public Meeting/hearing
 - Hospital/institution
 - Field location
 - Other (specify) _____
8. What was the nature of the interaction between the worker and the client?
 - Money transaction
 - Selling or dispensing drugs/alcohol
 - Health care/services
 - Social services
 - Enforcement/Regulatory
 - Provision of gov't reg's/program/policy
 - Other (specify) _____
9. Who was responsible for the violent act/threat?
 - Client
 - Patient
 - Stranger
 - Resident
 - Inmate
 - Other (specify) _____
10. What gender was the aggressor?
 - Male
 - Female
11. What was the nature of the aggression?
 - Verbal threat in person
 - Verbal threat by phone
 - Written threat
 - Threatening gesture
 - Physical assault
 - Other (specify) _____
12. Was a weapon involved?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Specify type _____
13. The injury that you co-worker sustained as a result of the violent act/threat was:
 - Minor laceration
 - Major laceration
 - Fracture
 - Sprain
 - Soft Tissue
 - Internal injury
 - Head injury
 - Emotional trauma
 - Miscarriage
 - Other _____

14. If you co-worker were subjected to verbal threats, were the threats:
- To injure
 - To kill
 - To injure a family member
 - To injure a co-worker
 - To damage or destroy personal property
 - Not applicable
 - Don't know
15. Did the violent act result in an absence from work?
Yes No
16. Was the act or threat racially motivated?
Yes
No
Don't know
17. What time of day did the incident occur?
Day (8 am–4 pm)
Evening (4 pm–12 am)
Night (12 am–8 am)
18. Prior to the incident did you suspect a violent incident might arise? (Check as many as apply)
- No
 - Yes, warning from chart/reports
 - Yes, warning from co-workers
 - Yes, warning from other professional
 - Yes, warning from supervisor
 - Yes, prev. involv. w/client, patient, resident
 - Yes, prev. knowledge
 - Yes, dangerous neighborhood
 - Yes, escalation of client, patient, resident behaviour
 - Yes, other _____
19. Was assistance requested prior to the incident?
Yes
No
Not sure
- If No go to Question 22**
20. If Yes to #19, from whom did you/worker request assistance?
- A supervisor
 - A co-worker
 - The police
 - Security
 - Other _____
21. Was requested assistance received?
Yes
No
Don't know
22. Were other people, not including the aggressor, close enough to provide assistance when the incident happened?
No, I was alone
Yes, other staff
Yes, police or security
Yes, other persons
(Specify) _____
23. Was the incident reported? (Check all that apply)
- Not reported
 - Don't know
 - To a supervisor
 - To a co-worker
 - To a health and safety committee member
 - To Shop steward/union
 - To police
 - To security
 - Other _____
24. How was incident reported?
N/A, not reported
In writing
Verbally
25. Was the incident investigated/followed up?
Yes
No
Don't know
26. What action was taken after the incident? (Check all that apply)
- Don't know
 - No action
 - Changed work procedures/policy
 - Changed work environment (access, layout, lighting, etc.)
 - Provided training
 - Response procedures established/changed
 - Other (Specify) _____
- Section 3—Concern Over Potential Violent Incidents**
27. Aside from incidents witnessed or personally experienced are there work situations that cause you concern regarding the potential risk of a violent act or threat?
Yes No
- If No go to Question 29**
28. If Yes to #27 what threat is most likely to take place? (Use additional space if necessary)
- _____
- _____
- _____

Section 4—Workplace Practices

- 29. Are you aware of policies or procedures at your workplace related to violence prevention?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
- 30. If policies and procedures exist, are they likely to eliminate or minimize the risk of violence at work?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
 - Some, not all
 - Please add any comments (use additional space/paper)

- 31. Are you ever alone during working hours (for example no other staff present)?
 - Always
 - Over 75% of time
 - Between 50–75%
 - Between 25–50%
 - Less than 25%
 - I never work alone
 - Don't know if I'm alone
- 32. Do you believe you are at risk of a violent act or threat while working alone?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

Section 5—Training

- 33. Have you received specific training about how to recognize and deal with potentially violent persons or situations? (Check all that apply)
 - No training received
 - No training required
 - Yes, during school or college
 - Yes, orientation in present job
 - Yes, during in-service workshops
 - Yes, during courses given by outside agencies or companies
 - Yes, during courses given by union
 - No specific training but have received information from supervisor
 - Other (specify) _____

Comments

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding the issue of workplace violence that you would like to mention? (Use additional paper if necessary)

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

The results of this questionnaire will be reviewed and incorporated into the risk assessment currently underway at the workplace.

If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire please contact

Appendix 6

Workplace Violence Prevention Sample Policy

Objective

The objective of this policy is to ensure that risks of violence to employees are identified and appropriate prevention programs and/or practices are established that eliminates or minimizes those risks, consistent with the requirements of Workers' Compensation Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

Scope

The Workplace Violence Prevention Policy applies to all employees/workers of _____

Statement of Philosophy

The _____ is committed to providing a workplace in which the respect and safety of the employees is paramount. The risk or occurrence of violent acts involving employees requires particular attention as violence undermines employees' ability to work effectively and impacts their quality of life. Any work-related threats or acts of violence against employees, or their families, are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Employees require safe working conditions which allow for: effective client service; input into well defined violence prevention and response procedures; support from supervisors and colleagues in preventing and responding to incidents; safety from violence and harassment outside of the work setting which results from their employment; and counselling if effected by a violent incident.

Definition

Violence means the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker, and includes any threatening statement or behavior which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that the worker is at risk of injury.

Policy

It is the policy of _____ to:

- ◆ promote a violence-free workplace for all employees;
- ◆ respect and protect the health, safety and dignity of all employees
- ◆ empower employees to make and act on decisions regarding risk of violence;

- ◆ ensure employees are aware of and follow safety practices to prevent and respond to violent incidents;
- ◆ establish written practices to identify and address risks for each work site, using input from all work site employees;
- ◆ offer critical incident debriefing and other support to employees affected by workplace violence; and
- ◆ as a minimum, comply with WCB regulation and applicable collective agreements.

Violence from a Co-worker

This policy does not apply to violence from a co-worker. The Employer, in consultation with the unions/ associations, has developed Policy and Procedures for preventing and addressing harassment and discrimination in the workplace. Employees subject to violence from a co-worker should seek a remedy to this problem through established procedures.

Violence from Clients/Public

Preventing, reducing and responding to violence directed toward employees from anyone other than a co-worker is addressed by the following:

Risk Assessment

Directors, Regional and/or local Managers shall, with input from employees at each work site, ensure a regular risk assessment for each work place where a risk of violence has been identified has been undertaken.

Workplace risk assessments must be documented and records maintained at the local office. Guidelines for conducting a workplace risk assessment are available from the Human Resources Branch and/or the publication "Preventing Workplace Violence—A Guide for the BC Public Service."

Local Office Violence Prevention Plan

A local office Violence Prevention Plan must be developed to address the risks of violence that are identified in each workplace, consistent with the requirements of WCB Regulation.

Employee and Supervisor Training

On the job training must include a review of the risks inherent in an employee's position, violence prevention procedures, correct response procedures, workplace emergency procedures and incident reporting procedures.

Incident Reporting, Investigation and Follow-up

Employees are required to report any violent incident or threat they have been subjected to on the job, consistent with ministry procedures. (Reference procedures document or guidelines established by the ministry.)

All reports of violent incidents shall be investigated by the manager or local supervisor, with the assistance of employees and the local Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

Responsibilities

Employees will:

- ◆ provide input into risk assessments;
- ◆ attend training sessions when requested;
- ◆ provide input into development of the local office Violence Prevention Plan;
- ◆ follow procedures for prevention of violence;
- ◆ report incidents of violence;
- ◆ provide input into incident investigations; and
- ◆ consider accessing critical incident debriefing or trauma counselling services when offered by the employer.

Supervisors will:

- ◆ comply with reporting, investigating and documenting procedures;
- ◆ facilitate ongoing discussions on workplace violence issues with staff, as required;
- ◆ provide input into risk assessments;
- ◆ assist in development and updating of the local office Violence Prevention Plan;
- ◆ instruct staff on procedures for prevention of violence;
- ◆ promote and encourage reporting of violent incidents; and
- ◆ advise impacted staff of critical incident debriefing or trauma counselling services available.

Directors/Regional and/or Local Managers will:

- ◆ ensure the reporting, investigating and documenting of incidents of violence in accordance with WCB regulation and ministry reporting procedures;
- ◆ ensure local office Violence Prevention Plans are prepared and updated;
- ◆ ensure risk assessments are undertaken;
- ◆ inform staff and supervisors of the nature and extent of the risk of violence;
- ◆ take corrective action and monitor its effectiveness; and
- ◆ ensure regular evaluation of the Workplace Violence Prevention Program.

Ministry Executive Committees will:

- ◆ ensure a relevant Workplace Violence Prevention Program is in place for the Ministry; and
- ◆ ensure a regular review of Workplace Violence Prevention Program(s).

Training and Safety Advisors will:

- ◆ assist in conducting a regular evaluation of the Workplace Violence Prevention Program as requested;
- ◆ compile statistics on reported incidents of violence;
- ◆ provide input into and assistance with risk assessments;
- ◆ provide input into the local office Violence Prevention Plans; and
- ◆ arrange or advise on the availability of related training.

Occupational Health and Safety Committees will:

- ◆ provide input into risk assessments;
- ◆ provide input into the local office Violence Prevention Plan;
- ◆ provide input into incident investigations; and
- ◆ provide input into a regular evaluation of the Workplace Violence Prevention Program.

Appendix 7

Guidelines for Developing a Violence Prevention Plan for your Local Office

A local office Violence Prevention Plan must be developed to address the risks of violence that are identified in each workplace consistent with ministry policy. It is essential that managers, with input from all local staff and in conjunction with local Occupational Health and Safety Committees, establish local office plans to address:

1. Violence Prevention
2. Response to Violent Incidents
3. Response after a Violent Incident
4. Communication
5. Employee and Supervisor Training

1. Violence Prevention

Adopt the attitude that everyone should be safe and secure in the workplace; no staff member should be put at risk when dealing with clients. Supervisors must not tolerate violence toward staff and must be supportive of staff concerns regarding safety. All staff must take an active role in prevention and security procedures in order for them to be effective.

Physical Environment and Security

Reception areas are often the focal point for violent office behavior. Consideration must be given to safeguarding employees while reducing the burden of security on the receptionist.

- ◆ use of physical barriers (locked doors, locked low gates);
- ◆ use of psychological barriers (low gates, “Staff Only” or “Report to Receptionist” signs);
- ◆ don’t prop open exits; and
- ◆ discourage public use of washrooms and lobbies (“Staff and Client Use Only” signs).

Some considerations when designing or modifying a reception area:

- ◆ anchor down all tables, lamps, chairs, etc.;
- ◆ remove heavy books, typewriters, and other possible projectiles from the lobby;
- ◆ remove scissors, letter-openers and other items which could be used as weapons from the reception desk;
- ◆ ensure the receptionist is out of arms reach through use of transparent dividers or wide counters; and
- ◆ try not to have the receptionist isolated from the rest of the office, and provide an escape route.

In every workplace a visual inspection must be conducted with the aim of ensuring the premises are well lit, that the worksite has a cared-for appearance and that the layout and positioning of furniture and equipment is conducive to prevention of violence.

Interpersonal Communication

A large part of prevention is the nature of the interaction between the client and the employee. Some considerations in dealing with clients, especially potentially violent clients are:

- ◆ Don’t schedule known difficult clients at the end of the day or the end of the week.
- ◆ If possible, have two staff members deal with a known difficult client.
- ◆ Keep your office door open during the meeting.
- ◆ Keep a solid object (desk or counter) between you and the client.
- ◆ Keep at least an arm’s length away.
- ◆ Don’t corner the client.
- ◆ Keep eye contact but avoid a locked stare which can be perceived as a challenge.
- ◆ Have an escape route.
- ◆ Ensure all employees are aware of difficult clients and procedures to deal with them.
- ◆ If violence is imminent call the police emergency number.
- ◆ In all cases where an employee is threatened by words, gestures or other actions, consider calling the police. The criminal offenses of *Threatening*, *Causing a Disturbance* or *Assault* may have been committed even without a physical contact.
- ◆ It is appropriate to enroll front-line staff in training opportunities designed to assist them to better deal with hostile clients.

Working Alone and Working Away From the Office

In offices where staff are required, or choose to work alone or away from the office, plans must be in place to provide staff with as safe an environment as possible. These plans should include a secure worksite, check-in procedures and who to call if threatened.

Plan For the Worst Case

Plans should be developed to respond to “worst case” situations such as bomb threats, armed robbery, or other incidents for which there may not be a history at each worksite. Refer to ministry emergency response procedures.

“Numerous studies, and clinical experience, tell us that those who anticipate various situations of physical and sexual violence, and **rehearse their responses**, are most likely to avoid being victimized and, if they do suffer violence, are most likely to minimize the damage.”—Dr. S. Lohrasbe, Forensic Psychiatrist, Ministry of Health.

2. Response to Violent Incidents

While effective preventive measures will reduce the frequency and the seriousness of violent incidents, local office Violence Prevention Plans should have specific strategies for employees to de-escalate and, if necessary, to respond to violent situations.

“Prevention can reduce the risk of an emergency occurring. Planning can reduce the seriousness of the consequences”—Provincial Emergency Program.

Individuals’ Roles and Responsibilities

Employee(s) Involved:

- ◆ Follow effective diffusing techniques and violence prevention techniques.
- ◆ Where necessary, explain that the client’s behavior is not acceptable, and that the employee is less able to assist the client in light of the client’s behavior.
- ◆ Call for help when needed (other employees or police, as appropriate).

Other Employees Witnessing the Incident:

- ◆ Be unobtrusive, and available to the employee without appearing to be congregating, which could be seen as either ganging up or as providing an audience.
- ◆ Be prepared and trained to assist as requested or as obviously needed.
- ◆ Call for help from the supervisor, other co-workers or the police, as appropriate.
- ◆ Assist with removing others at risk from the area and stop others from entering.

Supervisor:

- ◆ Be prepared and trained to intercede and assist when required.
- ◆ As required, take charge of the situation, provide direction to employees and decide what action is required to secure the office and maintain operation.

As well as the above, there must be an assignment of responsibility for decision making. For example, who will make the decision to evacuate the building in the event of a bomb threat?

Involving the Police

It is a good idea to invite the local police to come and talk to staff about violence prevention and response and police reporting requirements in the event of a critical incident. Ensure staff are aware and have posted emergency telephone numbers (911 where available) and information the emergency operator will require.

Staff should be encouraged to call the police whenever they feel a situation is threatening to their physical well-being. Employees or supervisors/managers must call the police if a criminal act has taken place. The criminal offenses of *Threatening*, *Causing a Disturbance* or *Assault* may have been committed even without a physical contact. This could include telephone, written or personal threats inside or outside the office.

See also: Ministry Emergency Response Procedures.

3. Response After a Violent Incident

First Aid/Hazard Reduction

The first priority after a critical incident is providing first aid and/or medical attention for impacted employees. Secondly, hazard reduction and clean-up of the worksite to allow for the continuation of business should be provided.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing/Employee Support

Supervisors, with input from their Manager and their Human Resources Advisor (or other designated person), must investigate the need for follow-up counselling and debriefing of impacted employees. Supervisors will also need to look at support that can be provided to impacted employees. This may include alternate short term work arrangements. Employees should be advised of the Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP).

Reporting/Investigation

Employees must be encouraged to report any violent behavior they have been subjected to on the job. A Violent Incident Report form has been developed to facilitate the reporting of incidents (*see Appendix 8*) and is available from Human Resources Branch or _____. Completion of the Violent Incident Report form does not eliminate the need to complete WCB or Police reports, as required. In cases where an employee has experienced a traumatic incident, discretion should be used in requiring the employee to fill out the form. In such cases supervisors can use copies of police or WCB reports to provide the information required by the government.

All reports of violent incidents shall be investigated by the manager or local supervisor, with the assistance of employees and the local Occupational Health and Safety Committee. The purpose of the investigation is to:

- ◆ review actions taken in response to the incident to evaluate their effectiveness; and
- ◆ investigate the need for follow-up counselling and debriefing of impacted employees.

Corrective action should be taken in the event that the worksite procedures or employees' adherence to them is found to be lacking.

See also: Ministry Emergency Response procedures.

4. Communication

Response Procedures Written and Acknowledged by All Staff

Once Violence Response Procedures are established, ensure all staff are aware of their roles. Ensure new staff receive this information as part of their office orientation.

5. Employee and Supervisor Training

Training can address a number of issues associated with violence in the workplace. On the job training may include a review of the risks inherent in an employee's position, correct response procedures and workplace emergency procedures. More formal training may be required for employees and their supervisors in dealing with hostile clients. Training is available through the WCB on conducting workplace risk assessments and accident investigations. Contact Human Resources Branch or _____ for a more complete inventory of related training.

Appendix 8 Violent Incident or Threat Report

The information contained in this report will assist the employer in conducting any investigation and report as required by Part 3 of the WCB regulation.

Employees reporting injuries or adverse symptoms as a result of an incident are advised to seek first aid and/or consult their personal physician for treatment or referral.

1. Identifying Information

Name _____ Job Title _____

Shift _____ Ministry _____

Div/Reg/Br _____

Workplace
Location/Address _____

Location of Incident (specify, e.g.: reception, hallway 2nd floor, road check, etc.)

Date and Time of Incident _____

Type of Assault/Threat Verbal Struck Pushed Written
Threat

Telephone Threat Other _____

(Add additional information on nature of threat, as appropriate (e.g.: struck with—, bitten, etc.) _____

Describe incident (what happened) Use additional paper if required.

Medical attention/First Aid obtained? Yes No

2. Assailant

Who was the assailant, if known (Name and/or position)?

Description Male Female

Age: _____ Complexion: _____ Height: _____ Weight: _____

Other _____

3. Other Information

Was the assailant (if known) in any previous violent incidents? Yes No

Have there been similar incidents in the past? Yes No

Are there any measures in place to prevent a similar incident? Yes No

Please provide any additional information you think may be relevant, including any recommendations for preventative measures.

Investigation Initiated? Yes No

Reported to Supervisor? Yes No

Reported to Police/Security? Yes No

Name of Supervisor _____

Note: This report is not in place of an accident/incident investigation and report where required by WCB regulation 3.8, but will be very helpful in its completion. An accident/incident investigation is to be completed on the PSC 38.

Appendix 9

References to the Criminal Code of Canada

The following are excerpts from the Canadian Criminal Code that are particularly relevant to violence prevention, as discussed in this Guide. This should be used as a guide only.

SECTION 177

Trespassing At Night

Every one, who without lawful excuse, the proof of which lies on him, loiters or prowls at night on the property of another person near a dwelling-house situated on that property is guilty of an offence punishable on summary convictions. R.R., c. C-34, s.173.

SECTION 178

Offensive Volatile Substance

Every one other than a peace officer engaged in the discharge of his duty who has in his possession in a public place or who deposits, throws or injects or causes to be deposited, throws or injected in, into or near any place,

- (a) an offensive volatile substance that is likely to alarm, inconvenience, discommode or cause discomfort to any person or to cause damage to property, or
- (b) a stink or stench bomb or device from which any substance mentioned in paragraph (a) is or is capable of being liberated,

is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction, R.S., c. C-34, s.174.

SECTION 264

Criminal Harassment

- (1) No person shall, without lawful authority and knowing that another person is harassed or recklessly as to whether the other person is harassed, engage in conduct referred to in subsection (2) that causes that other person reasonably, in all the circumstances, to fear for their safety or the safety of anyone known to them.
- (2) The conduct mentioned in subsection (1) consists of
 - (a) repeatedly following from place to place the other person or anyone known to them;
 - (b) repeatedly communicating with, either directly or indirectly, the other person or anyone known to them;

- (c) besetting or watching the dwelling house, or place where the other person, or anyone known to them, resides, works, carries on business or happens to be; or

- (d) engaging in threatening conduct directed at the other person or any member of their family.

(3) Every person who contravenes this section is guilty of

- (a) an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years; or

- (b) an offence punishable on summary conviction. 1993, c.45, s.2.

SECTION 264.1

Uttering Threats

(1) Everyone commits an offence who, in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys or causes any person to receive a threat

- (a) to cause death or bodily harm to any person;

- (b) to burn, destroy or damage real or personal property; or

- (c) to kill, poison or injure an animal or bird that is the property of any person.

SECTION 364

Extortion

(1) Everyone one commits extortion who, without reasonable justifications or excuse and with intent to obtain anything, by threats, accusations, menaces or violence induces or attempts to induce any person, whether or not he is the person threatened, accused or menaced or to whom violence is shown, to do anything or cause anything to be done.

SECTION 372

False Messages

(includes indecent telephone calls/harassing telephone calls)

(1) Every one who, with intent to injure or alarm any person, conveys or causes or procures to

be conveyed by letter, telegram, telephone, cable, radio, or otherwise information that he knows is false is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years.

- (2) Every one who, with intent to alarm or annoy any person, makes any indecent telephone call to that person is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.
- (3) Every one who, without lawful excuse and with intent to harass any person, makes or causes to be made repeated telephone calls to that person is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction. R.S., c. C-34, s. 330.

SECTION 423

Intimidation

- (1) Every one who, wrongfully and without lawful authority, for the purpose of compelling another person to abstain from doing anything that he has a lawful right to do, or to do anything that he has a lawful right to abstain from doing
 - (a) uses violence or threats of violence to that person or his spouse or children, or injures his property,
 - (b) intimidates or attempts to intimidate that person or a relative of that person

by threats that, in Canada or elsewhere, violence or other injury will be done to or punishment inflicted on him or a relative of his, or that the property of any of them will be damaged,

- (c) persistently follows that person about from place to place,
- (d) hides any tools, clothes or other property owned or used by that person, or deprives him of them or hinders him in the use of them,
- (e) with one or more other persons, follows that person, in a disorderly manner, on a highway,
- (f) besets or watches the dwelling house, or place where that person resides, works, carries on business or happens to be, or
- (g) blocks or obstructs a highway,

is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

- (2) A person who attends at or near or approaches a dwelling-house or place, for the purpose of obtaining or communicating information, does not watch or beset within the meaning of this section. R.S., c. C-34, s. 381, 1980-81-82-83, c. 125, s. 22.