Emergency Preparedness: Code White

WPV

Workplace Violence Prevention

AWARE ✚ NS

NOVA SCOTIA HEALTH + COMMUNITY SERVICES SAFETY ASSOCIATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 3: Emergency Preparedness: Code White

POLICY

Code White refers to a trained team response to a threat that is a behavioural emergency involving a client, resident, person supported, and family member or outside intruder. A Code White indicates the level of intensity has increased and there is imminent risk of harm to self or others. In the event that a Code White is initiated at the facility, all staff of [Organization Name] will follow the area specific procedures. These procedures are a supplement to [Organization Name] Code White procedure.

PURPOSE

- To gain control of an escalating situation of a perceived threat in which a resident's behaviours are beyond the staff's ability to control.
- To provide the aggressive resident with the best and safest care until the resident regains control of their behaviour.
- To prevent injury to the aggressive resident and others present.
- To prevent property damage.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

The potential for aggression exists and team members are trained on how to manage situations of aggression. However, there are times when extreme aggression occurs and it is during these times that we need to ensure an effective response is initiated to provide the safest environment possible.

During situations of extreme aggression, how the team works together and with their partners, can influence the outcomes of potentially dangerous and high risk situations. Having a clearly defined process for situations of extreme aggression, positively influences the competence and confidence of staff to respond to Code White situations and promotes safety for all involved in a Code White event.

Principles underlying a Code White team Response as described and recommended in these guidelines, include:

- All staff receive core training and education in _____ (examples: non-violent crisis intervention, MANDT, GPA and de-escalation techniques), Code White team receives additional risk specific training.
- Physical intervention is non-violent in dealing with physical aggression.
- Code White team physical intervention is used as a last resort to safely control a physically acting out resident until the resident regains control of their behaviour.
- The verbally aggressive client is managed through verbal defusing techniques.
- The client involved is always treated with utmost respect and professionalism.
- Intervention respects the rights of staff and others to have a safe work environment.

- Safety priority occurs in the following order at all times: self and other staff, others (visitor, family members) and then environment.
- The team does not intervene in any situation that may pose a risk beyond their resources.
- Untrained individuals are not to participate directly as Code White team members but may function in a supportive role when asked to do so.
- Code White team members must receive initial training and regular refresher training.
- Once Code White intervention has been decided upon by the Code White Team Leader, it should be organized and undertaken swiftly.
- Debriefing is to be conducted by the Code White Team Leader immediately following all Code White team responses.
- Additional follow-up and referral to existing support systems is made available to staff.
- Documentation is an important part of Code White protocols.
- Learning based upon recommendation following Code White response is incorporated into policy review, staff training opportunities, etc.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following identifies the roles and responsibilities at [Organization Name].

Senior Management

- Support and promote commitment to Workplace Violence Prevention (WVP) program.
- Provide resources for a WVP program including but not limited to Code White Team Response and to the training and orientation of all staff.
- Assign specific leadership responsibilities for the development and implementation of the WVP program including the Code White Team Response.
- Ensure appropriate policies and procedures are established to eliminate or minimize aggressive behaviours.

Managers/Supervisors:

- Assure the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of [Organization Name] WVP program policies and procedures.
- Ensure risk assessments are completed to identify real or potential hazards contributing to aggressive behaviours against staff and residents.
- Ensure effective response, reporting, follow-up and monitoring procedures are in place to address incidents of aggressive behaviour as per [Organization Name] standard of practice.
- Ensure all aggressive incidents are investigated and corrective action identified and taken to prevent recurrence.

Staff:

- Actively participate in the workplace violence risk assessment process by providing input and feedback.
- Learn and use techniques to avoid aggressive situations or potentially aggressive acts including their roles and responsibilities in a Code White situation.
- Apply [Organization Name] policies and procedures relating to workplace aggression.
- Report and document all incidents of aggression.

Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC):

- Monitor the WVP program by reviewing statistical information.
  (Risk assessment results, training records, incident reports, investigation reports, etc.)
- Review incidents of violence and make recommendations for prevention strategies, if necessary.
- Ensure recommendations for prevention strategies are followed-up.
- When appropriate and necessary, participate in investigations of incidents involving violence in the workplace.
- Participate in program review.

CODE WHITE SITUATION

During a Code White situation the roles and responsibilities of all staff involved are as follows:

Staff Initiating the Call:

Staff involved in the situation or the first staff member to come upon the scene:

- Identify that a situation exists requiring immediate assistance.
- The staff member should proceed to _____(i.e. red Emergency Telephone) pick up the receiver to activate the emergency overhead paging system and **CLEARLY announce, "CODE WHITE – [LOCATION] " THREE TIMES**.
- Protect your personal safety and others by staying at a safe distance from the agitated individual.
- Position yourself so that an escape route is always available (i.e. avoid placing yourself so that the resident is between you and the door).
- Maintain your composure. (If you convey feelings of frustration or anger, it could escalate the situation).
- Speak calmly but confidently, using a moderate volume and a considerate tone of voice.
- Avoid judgmental or dismissive comments such as "Why are you making such a big deal out of this?" or "Be quiet – you're upsetting everyone!"
- Be patient. Do not interrupt.
- Allow the resident some time to express her/his anger, frustration or concern.
- Engage in active listening.

- Maintain an "open" posture and body language (i.e. hands relaxed and arms at your side rather than fists clenched and arms raised or folded across your chest), to display a respectful and non-confrontational attitude.
- If possible, remove any objects that could be used as an instrument of harm.
- Remain at a safe distance.
- Follow the procedure outlined by [Organization Name] for requesting assistance.
- Direct other staff, as necessary, to reduce stimulation in the area (removing all residents, visitors from area, reducing noise levels by turning off radios/tvs, vacuum cleaners, etc.).
- Have resident's record or chart available if possible.
- Provide information to the Code White Team Leader about the situation and any action taken.
- Chemical restraint to be used or not
- In the event the resident is to be placed in seclusion, ensure the room is ready to receive the individual.
- Wait for any further direction for assistance from the Code White Team Leader.

Code White Team:

Roles and responsibilities assigned to each team member will vary depending on the team size, skills of each member, and needs of the resident and the location of the crisis.

Code White Team Leader:

- Assesses the situation.
- Calls, or directs a designate to call, for additional resources if required (i.e. Police).
- Acts as the spokesperson for the team and is the **ONLY PERSON TALKING** unless delegated to another Code White Team Member by the Code White Team Leader.
- Obtains information about the situation from the staff including:
    - Reason for Code White call.
    - Details of current situation including resident location.
    - Details of person involved.
    - History of past incidents, if appropriate, and interventions that have worked in past.
    - Any pertinent medical information including mental health status, if known.
    - Intervention needed (e.g. medication, removal to seclusion, etc.).
    - Any additional information that may be important.

- Develops intervention plan and ensures enough resources are available to safely carry out plan.
- Identifies team members (confirms all have been trained and are physically able to assist).All team member that respond may not be involved in the Code While Response based on the Code White Leader plan.
- Informs and directs team members about the plan of action, including approach to be used, type of intervention and how each member will exit from room.

Code White Response Team Members:

Upon arrival at the Code White location, the Response Team will:

- Gather in close proximity to the Code White Team Leader but beyond the agitated individual's field of vision.
- Be ready to assist if required.
    - **Note**: Any member of the Response Team who is assigned a specific task must report back to the Code White Team Leader once the task is completed.
- When the situation is resolved, use the _____ i.e. Emergency Telephone (and/or dial Switchboard/Security) to announce **"CODE WHITE – ALL CLEAR" THREE TIMES**.
- If the situation cannot be resolved and/or it appears that there is imminent or immediate danger to anyone, the Code White Team Leader will direct someone on the Code White Response Team to:
    - Call the Police.
    - Meet police officers at the appropriate entrance to direct them to the scene of the emergency.

Once the Police are present, they have authority of the situation and it is no longer a Code White situation.

Several important tasks must be completed **at the conclusion** of a Code White incident.

- If the situation involves an agitated resident, the Code White Team Leader, or designate, will notify and inform the following individuals as soon as possible:
    - The attending physician
    - The resident's family (Next-of-Kin or Personal Power of Attorney).
- The Code White Team Leader will complete an Incident Report Form. This will be forwarded to the respective Manager, (where the Code White incident occurred), for review and signature.
- The Manager is then responsible for forwarding the signed form to the Administrator.
- If injuries are incurred during the Code White situation, follow normal incident reporting procedures.
- If a resident or visitor sustained injuries, nursing staff will ensure that the appropriate medical assessment and treatment is provided and that an Unusual Occurrence Form is completed.

DEBRIEFING

Debriefing Ground Rules:

- Respect colleagues.

- Refrain from personal remarks or assigning blame.

- Be honest and willing to share your knowledge and experience.

- Keep discussions about individual performance within the group.

- Read through any available background information.

- Avoid getting bogged down in small details.

- Think about the big picture.

- Provide paths forward and solutions where possible.

- Observe the time limits allotted for the debriefing.

Code White Response Debriefing

The primary goal during a Code White incident is to achieve a safe resolution to the situation. However, even when a drill or an actual incident has a successful outcome, debriefing is important for:

- Ongoing skill development of the response team.
- Refinement of policies and procedures related to the prevention and management of Code White situations.
- The mental health of all of the participants.

Therefore, at the conclusion of a Code White incident:

- The Code White Team Leader will ensure that all response team members participate in a post incident debriefing session.
- The Code White Team Leader, or designate, leads a debriefing session to discuss the effectiveness of the response, recognizes the things that went well and identify opportunities for improvement.
- Ideally the debriefing will take place immediately after the conclusion of the Code White incident. If this is not possible, it must be done by the end of the shift. The debriefing should take no longer than 15 minutes.
- The Code White Team Leader facilitates the completion of the Code White Debriefing Form (Appendix A) and forwards it to the appropriate manager.

One on One Debriefing

Group debriefing after a Code White incident helps define what worked, what didn't work and offers an opportunity to make recommendations for future Code White responses. However, group debriefing cannot address the individuals' needs for support after a crisis event.

Follow-up is required for **all persons** involved in a Code White situation. The Code White Team Leader will:

- Check in with each individual involved.
- Inform the individual of supports available to them (i.e. OHN, OHS staff, union steward, other staff, family member, etc.)
- If necessary, refer the individual to Employee (& Family) Assistance Program.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The employer has to be committed to providing the necessary education and training if implementing a Code White response. The overall goal of Code White team training is to prepare specific staff to safely use non-violent intervention strategies to defuse an aggressive situation in which there is the potential or actual danger of harm.

The employer must ensure that education and training is appropriate to the needs of [Organization Name] and that the program's instructors/educators receive adequate and appropriate education and training. Both instructors/educators and team members require regular refresher training to maintain their skills. Refresher training schedule will be every _____ year(s).

Required Skills, Knowledge and Abilities for Code White Response Team Members

Ability to function as an effective team member includes:

- Rapid and accurate assessment skills of team's capacity to respond to the situation.
- Appropriate and effective decision making skills.
- Competence to perform Code White techniques.
- Accountability and responsibility.
- Ability to respond and effectively participate in Code White calls.
- Ability to function professionally in a stressful situation.
- Verbal de-escalation skills.
- Recognition of personal limitations, if present within a specific situation.

Team Training

Code White team members require initial education and training as well as annual refreshers. Regular refresher training sessions are necessary to maintain knowledge and skill levels. The frequency and length of these refresher programs are determined by [Organization Name], taking into consideration its experience with violent and aggressive behaviours requiring Code White intervention along with the resources available.

For education and training to be effective it is recommended that both the initial training and the annual refreshers be a minimum of eight hours each. Methods of delivery may vary, for example, this training may be provided in two four hour sessions. Additional education and training may be identified by [Organization Name] based upon its experience of Code White situations.

Core Components of Code White Team Training include:

- NS OHS Regulation re: Violence in the Workplace
- Definition of a Code White situation
- Code White Team philosophy (professionalism and respect versus power and control)
- Legal and ethical issues
- Code White Team composition
- Code White Team member roles and responsibilities
- Staff member roles and responsibilities in a Code White situation
- Code White Team intervention procedures (does not include pain compliance, impact or the use of compliance tools)
- Personal safety techniques
- Annual Mock scenario
- Debriefing
- Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)
- Documentation
- Relevant policies and procedures
- Resources supporting Code White team approach
- Prevention and management techniques for aggression
- Crisis communication techniques
- Management of specific behavioural emergencies common to [Organization Name] (i.e. cognitively impaired, psychogeriatrics, etc.)
- Protection of Persons in Care Act

General Staff Education and Training

In addition to core education and training on the prevention and management of aggressive behaviour, general staff training includes:

- Procedure for accessing Code White Team
- Preparation for Code White response:
  - Preparing the staff
  - Preparing the environment

- o   Preparing for the intervention (seclusion etc.)
- Methods to assist Code White Team
- Recognition of need for Critical Incident Stress Management following a Code White response
- Follow-up procedures (changes to protocols, physical environment, etc. to prevent further incidents)
- Documentation

DOCUMENTATION

Code White Response Documentation

Documentation is required for all Code White Team responses and is determined by [Organization Name]. Documentation should include:

- Demographics (i.e. date, time, location of incident, resident involved, etc.)
- Description of incident
- Triggers, if known
- Behaviours witnessed (compliant, passive resistance, active resistance, assaultive, etc.)
- Type of intervention (i.e. stand-by, verbal de-escalation, other?)
- Names of team members
- Staff injuries (if any occurred, staff need to document these on the appropriate workplace injury report form)
- Names of other responders (i.e. police, security, etc.)
- Debriefing session
- Recommendations
- Signature of Team Leader or designate

A policy/procedure should be written which states who is responsible for completing the Code White response documentation, who receives this documentation and who is responsible for follow-up.

Appendices

Appendix A: *Code White Debrief Form*

Appendix B: *Code White Involving a Weapon/Intruder*

Appendix C: *Lock Down/Shelter in Place*

Appendix D: *Strategies for Dealing with a Hostage Taker*

Appendix A – Code White Debrief Form

Date_____ Time_____ Location of Code_____

Area for Discussion (to be filled in by Code White Team Leader)	Yes	No
First person on the scene acted as the Code White Team Leader throughout the procedure OR		
First person on the scene acted as the Code White Team Leader until the responsibility was transferred to another more appropriate person		
Code White Zone Team Leader ensured participants understood their role		
Staff responded and assisted by:		

• Assisting directly using non-violent crisis intervention techniques: OR • Staying at a safe distance (ready to assist) but beyond the vision of the "out-of-control" person; OR • Removing bystanders to safe location; OR • Cleared area for safety		
Chemical restraint used		
Outcomes: (Code White Team Leader completes while responders present)		
Any questions about what just happened? (Person's behaviour, team response, intervention, results). Include what went well and acknowledge your efforts in a difficult situation.		
Any suggestions for improvement/something different you may want to try next time in the same or similar situation?		
Code White Response Team Attendees Please Sign (underline names of those who attended debrief)		
Code White Debrief Facilitator (Code White Team Leader if possible) Name _____		
Forward completed form to Manager of Code White incident location Name _____		

Appendix B – Code White Involving a Weapon/Intruder

If a weapon is found: Do not touch the weapon and secure the area to prevent access to the item.

If there is imminent risk of significant harm, such as in the case of a firearm on an agitated person, (intruder or otherwise) call 911 and tell the operator:

- o Your location. Give as much information as you can, i.e. entrance on the left side of the building, Physiotherapy unit.
- o The reason for your call, i.e. "our resident
- o A weapon is present and what type.
- o State any known injuries that have occurred.

If you are uncertain whether there is a weapon, share this information with the 911 operator. If during the event you become aware of a weapon, call 911 again and share this new information.

Appendix C – Lock Down/Shelter in Place

The term, Shelter-in-Place, means to seek immediate shelter and remain there during an emergency, rather than evacuate the area. It is always preferred to evacuate. Shelter-in-Place should only be used when an evacuation is not safe. The decision to Shelter-in-Place will be made by [Organization's Name]'s Administrator or delegate. Once the decision has been finalized, notification will be made using all means of communication available.

Shelter-in-Place Procedures:

In the event of the presence of a person or persons deemed to be a threat to [Organization's Name], a decision to Shelter-in-Place would be made by the Administrator or delegate. Shelter-in-Place controls pedestrian traffic on the property and access to the buildings.

Upon receiving notification to Shelter-in-Place:

- Stay in your rooms/offices.
- Notify those around you, and encourage others to remain in your room/office rather than to try to leave the building.
- Lock the doors, cover the door window, pull down the blinds, turn off the lights and stay calm.
- Stay away from the windows.
- Check your email or visit [Organization's Name] website, if a TV is available, turn it on, turn the volume off.
- Report any suspicious activity, sounds or smells to
- Only come out when you recognize the authority directing you to do so.

Initiation of Shelter-in-Place

When a situation requires the Shelter-in-Place Procedures to be initiated, the Administrator or delegate will activate the Shelter-in-Place notification system by:

• Notifying the person at the front desk or designate who will send the message to everyone via voicemail.

• Notifying Computer services of the situation who will relay the message via email/text alert. (Also posting message to tv screens in the buildings on the property. (If applicable)

• Sending a message to the authorities who can set up road barriers.

• Sending a message on the emergency response team's radio band to lock buildings and check all doors.

• Turning off card access to the facility.

Voice message: A situation has occurred on campus that requires you to stay inside until a recognized officer of law tells you it is safe. Please remain in your room and lock the door.

Appendix D – Strategies for Dealing with a Hostage Taker

There are some basic principles or suggested approaches that could help to achieve a successful resolution to a hostage taking situation. These are outlined below:

If you are a hostage...
- Make every effort to do whatever the hostage-taker asks. Avoid confrontation or arguments.
- Be especially courteous during the first four or five minutes. This is a critical time.
- Speak only when spoken to. Never "wisecrack" or appear to minimize the seriousness of the situation.
- Try not to show emotions openly. Act relaxed. Hostage-takers like to play on emotional weaknesses.
- Sit down if you get a chance to do so as it conveys a non-aggressive attitude.

- o Don't make suggestions about how to proceed. If your suggestions have a negative outcome, it may appear as though you planned it that way.
- o Don't turn your back on a hostage-taker unless ordered to do so.   It is critical to be able to observe anything that s/he is doing.
- o Try to maintain eye contact without staring. People are less likely to harm someone who is looking at them.
- o If there is a chance to escape, think carefully before you make an attempt. Don't try to break free unless you are very certain that you will be able to get completely out of harm's way. Do not try to run if your escape attempt could endanger anyone else.
- o Try to be patient. It may take some time for others to implement a plan to get you out of the situation.

If you are assisting with the response to a hostage-taking incident:

Have as much of the following information available when the police arrive:

- o Number of hostage-takers.
- o Number and type of hostages (i.e. residents/visitor/staff; age; gender; etc.).
- o Any other available information re: the hostages or hostage-takers.
- o Number and type of weapons.
- o Any specific threats or demands.
- o Precise location of area controlled by the hostage-taker.
- o Floor plan of the area.
- o Information regarding telephones in the area (location and telephone numbers).

Although negotiations with hostage-takers are best handled by specially-trained police, staff may have no choice but to enter into negotiations with hostage takers until police arrive. In that case, it is suggested that staff:

- o Try to have negotiations conducted by personnel with limited authority so that they can prolong or delay the negotiations by saying things like "I'll have to ask" or "I'll get somebody to clarify that".
- o Meet demands with "I'll do my best". Never say "No" as that may end any further negotiating.
- o Make every effort to regain control of the situation by peaceful means (such as discussion).

Never hesitate to contact any staff member who may be familiar with and/or have some influence over the persons involved in the hostage-taking incident.

REFERENCES

1. https://www.sjhcg.ca/_uploads/documents/CODE%20WHITE.pdf
2. http://policy.nshealth.ca/site_published/iwk/document_render.aspx?documentRender.IdType=6&documentRender.GenericField=&documentRender.Id=47752
3. http://www.phsa.ca/Documents/Occupational-Health-Safety/GuideGuidelinesCodeWhiteResponse.pdf