STEP 1 – WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION RESOURCE

1.0   Background

Violence in the workplace is an issue that affects the safety and security of employees, residents and visitors at your organization. Workplace violence claims a high personal cost due to the emotional trauma and physical injury experienced by victims, their families and co-workers. It can also lead to increased absenteeism, higher sick leave costs, lost productivity, high employee turn-over, higher insurance premiums and increased WCB premiums.

1.1   What is Workplace Violence

Workplace violence incidents usually fall into one of four categories:

- Type I (External): Committed by a perpetrator who has no connection or relationship to the workplace.

- Type II (Resident or Customer or Visitor): The perpetrator, who is a resident, customer, or visitor, becomes violent towards a worker or another resident.

- Type III (Worker-to-Worker): The perpetrator is an employee or past employee of the workplace and becomes violent toward another worker,

- Type IV (Domestic Violence): The perpetrator usually has a personal / domestic relationship with an employee, e.g., domestic violence in the workplace.

Nova Scotia's "Violence in the Workplace Regulations[1]" came into effect on June 9, 2007 and prescribe specific requirements for designated employers to do a violence risk assessment and establish and implement a workplace violence prevention plan where a significant risk of violence is identified. Supplementary to the Regulations, the Department of Labour and Advanced Education developed a reference guide providing a convenient overview of the regulations. Workplaces where the primary business is health services, including those services provided at a healthcare workplace, were required to implement the provisions as stipulated in the workplace violence regulations by April 1, 2008.[2]

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[1] http://www.gov.ns.ca/just/regulations/regs/ohsviolence.htm

[2] http://novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety/docs/WorkplaceViolence-ReferenceGuide.pdf

Incidents involving violence or threats of violence that occur in the workplace — such as assault, sexual assault, criminal harassment, stalking, robbery, and uttering threats — may fall within the scope of the Criminal Code.

The Criminal Code also establishes a duty for all persons "directing the work of others" to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of workers and the public. For more information, see "Bill C-45 " incorporated as part of the Criminal Code of Canada.

The "Violence in the Workplace Regulations" define "violence" as:

1. Threats, including a threatening statement or threatening behaviours that gives an employee reasonable cause to believe that the employee is at risk of physical injury

2. Conduct or attempted conduct of a person that endangers the physical health or physical safety of an employee

Types of violence that workers may experience in the workplace include hitting, grabbing, pinching, pushing, physical assault, sexual assault, stalking, criminal harassment, robbery, or threats of violence.

Other laws cover workplaces which fall under federal jurisdiction, or are located in other provinces, or in other countries. These laws may define workplace violence differently from the Nova Scotia *Violence in the Workplace Regulations*.

Some workplaces may wish to explore non-legislative descriptions of workplace violence that go beyond the definition set out in the Regulations. These descriptions may link harassment, abusive behaviour, bullying and violence within a continuum and not see clear distinctions between the behaviours. This view may be helpful when considering the scope and nature of violence in the workplace. Information to expand the scope of workplace violence is included in the **Workplace Violence Program Review Tool**.

1.2   Workplace Violence Injury Statistics

The following tables present the workplace violence injury statistics within Health and Social Services sectors (Ambulance Services, Family & Social Services, Home Care, Hospitals, Nursing Homes and Special Care Homes). **Figure 1** presents the total number of Registered Claims (RC) and Time Loss Claims (TLC) for all health & social services firms from 2007 to 2013. **Figure 2** presents the total number of RC and TLC over the 6 year time frame (2007-2013) for each health and social services sub-sector.

Figure 1: Total Registered Claims & Time Loss Claims for all Health & Social Services Firms (2007 to 2013)
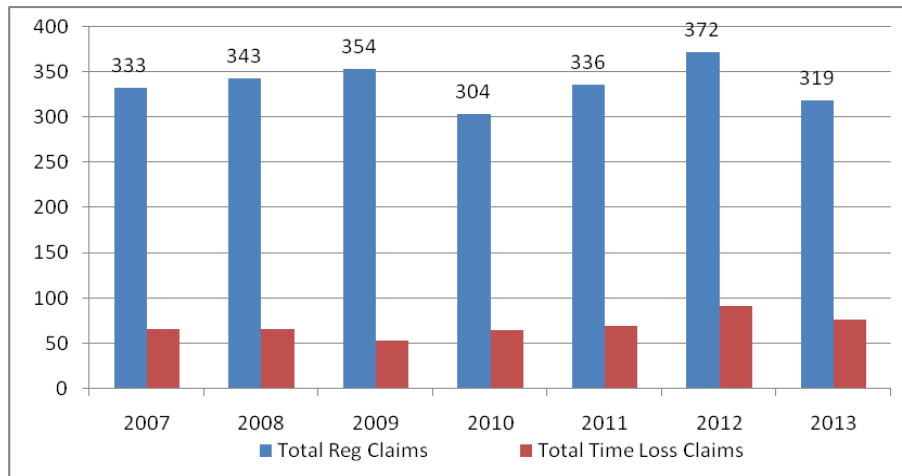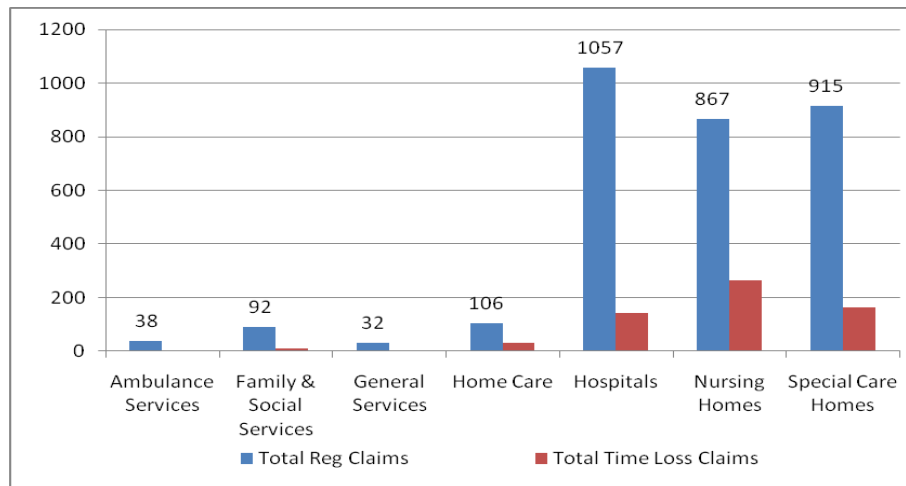

Figure 2: Total Registered Claims & Time Loss Claims by Health & Social Services Sub-Sector (2007-2013)

1.3   Workplace Violence in Health Care Services

Within the health and community services sector incidents of workplace violence may be attributed to a resident or patient becoming violent towards a worker. The antecedents of the actions resulting in violence include but are not limited to:

- Worsened medical situation (e.g. progressive dementia, higher level of need for care on admission, etc.)

- **Behavioral** disturbances (e.g. denial of requests, increasing distress, anxiety)

- Effects of medication or lack of medication

- Care transitions (e.g. move of care from hospital to residential care)

- Language or cultural barriers

- Anniversary or a significant event

- Physiological needs (e.g. fatigue, hunger)

- Reaction to caregiver

- Time of day or week

In addition, within the global context of workplace violence there are changes recognized regarding workplace violence including:

- Shift from physical violence to psychological violence (e.g. mistreatment, bullying, harassment).

- Shift from a one-off event to repeated events of violence directed at a worker.

Thus, Employer workplace violence prevention plans need to be reviewed and updated as part of a continuous improvement strategy of moving from reacting to workplace violence to predicting and better predicting workplace violence

Consequently, it is the intent of Step 1 of Workplace Violence Prevention Resource to provide Employers within the health and community services sectors with tools to assess workplace violence to better manage and prevent incidents.

2.0   The Next Step

Supplementary to this narrative are two tools for workplaces to apply; the **Workplace Violence Prevention - Program Review** and the **Workplace Violence Prevention - Employee Perception Survey**.

The purpose of the Workplace Violence Prevention - **Program Review** tool is to provide an opportunity for Employers to assess Safety Culture within their respective Organization regarding workplace violence through the application of the **Employee Perception Survey**. In addition, the **Program Review** tool will serve to evaluate their Organization's compliance with the Nova Scotia Workplace Violence Regulations and consider some optional best practice program elements to enhance the workplace violence prevention program.