



## STEP 2 - WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION RESOURCES

### Leadership, Responsibilities and Risk Assessment

The Workplace Violence Prevention Resource was developed to support workplaces in their efforts to reduce incidents of workplace violence. These resources are intended to assist Employers to ensure a comprehensive violence prevention plan is developed and to help share practices to minimize risk factors associated with workplace violence.

#### 1.0 BACKGROUND – STEP 1

'Step 1' of the workplace violence prevention resource was launched in March 2014 and includes a narrative and 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 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. In addition, the **Employee Perception Survey** allows for an assessment of an Organization's safety culture as it relates to workplace violence prevention.

#### 2.0 LEADERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITIES AND RISK ASSESSMENT – STEP 2

##### 2.1 Leadership Commitment

"Safety leadership – from the top and from every rung on the organizational ladder in every workplace – is key. Everyone in the workplace is responsible for safety, but organizational leaders have an enhanced level of accountability. Safe work is an investment that pays off. Understanding workplace safety should be a core competency for all managers and carry real weight in hiring decisions and performance management practices. But safety leaders can come from all levels of an organization, and need to work together to mentor and champion workplace safety. ".1

<sup>1</sup> A *Workplace Safety Strategy for Nova Scotians, 2013–2017* (Workers' Compensation Board of NS & NS Department of Labour and Advanced Education, 2013)

Leadership commitment extends to addressing hazards such as **workplace violence** to prevent incidents from occurring and ultimately improving the overall corporate safety culture. Leaders recognize and endorse the Internal Responsibility System which is the underlying philosophy of the legislation whereby all workplace parties participate in managing health and safety issues.

## **2.2 Precautions and Duties**

### **2.2.1 Employers**

Employers must ensure the health and safety of anyone at or near the workplace and take every reasonable precaution to prevent accidents. Specifically, with respect to workplace violence, the following responsibilities are further defined:

- Assess the risks of workplace violence that may arise from the nature of the workplace, the type of work or the conditions of work;
- Re-assess, as prescribed, to ensure that the associated program including procedures and guidelines continues to protect employees from workplace violence.
- Develop and implement a violence prevention plan including a workplace violence prevention policy;
- Take and document reasonable measures to lessen, and where possible get rid of, the risk of violence **or** use a code of practice on violence prevention;
- Establish and use procedures for information and training requirements; and
- Establish and use procedures to report, document and investigate incidents and communicate and maintain this process.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act and regulations, including “Violence in the Workplace Regulations<sup>2</sup>,” describe your responsibilities in detail and you are encouraged to read these documents and learn more about what they mean for you and your workplace.

### **2.2.2 Employees**

- Employees have a duty to report anything in the workplace that they think may be dangerous to themselves or a co-worker. The report should be made to (a) a supervisor, (b) if the supervisor does not fix the situation to the employee’s satisfaction, the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative, (c) if the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative does not fix the situation to the employee’s satisfaction, the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gov.ns.ca/just/regulations/regs/ohsviolence.htm>

- Wear proper safety equipment and use safety procedures when doing a job;
- Co-operate with the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative;
- Comply with the workplace violence prevention plan including participating in training;
- Immediately notify their supervisor or other designated person of any incident of workplace violence whether the notifying employee is the victim or not. In the case of an extreme or imminent threat of physical harm to themselves or any person from workplace violence, the employee should contact the police.; and
- Fully cooperate in any investigation of complaints or incidents of workplace violence or breaches of this procedure.

### **3.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

#### **3.1 Recognize the Risk Factors for Violence**

The risk of violence occurring in the workplace is linked to a number of factors including the nature of the workplace, the type of work and the conditions of the work, taking into account the circumstances of the workplace.

The *nature of the workplace* considers the physical aspects of the workplace, whether it is a building, construction site, vehicle or forest. This may include workplace lighting, lines of sight, depth of counters, entrances, exits and objects that could be used to hurt employees.

The *type of work* refers to the activities employees perform, the sector of work and people with whom employees interact.

The *conditions of work* refer to other aspects such as hours worked, the surrounding neighbourhood and whether employees move from location to location, work alone or in isolation.

The circumstances specific to the workplace consider geographic location, layout and design of the workplace, protective measures and procedures, including security measures already in place and historical workplace violence incidents.

The following activities or circumstances may increase the risk of workplace violence.

- Community based work
- Transporting people and/or goods
- Mobile workplaces
- Working with individuals with challenging / responsive behaviours
- Working alone
- Providing care

- Dispensing medications, tobacco and/or alcohol
- Handling cash, protecting or securing valuables
- Making organizational change decisions
- Having performance management responsibilities

### 3.2 Risk Assessment Considerations

A risk assessment involves the identification of the risk of violence in your workplace. The assessment of risk involves the identification of workplace hazards, the likelihood of an incident happening related to those hazards (probability) and the consequences of the event happening (severity). The assessment is done in consultation with the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (or Health and Safety Representative if applicable) and a copy of the final assessment report must be given to them.

A risk assessment should include a review of the following:

- **past violence incidents\***
- violence that happens in similar workplaces
- conditions under which the work is done
- potential interactions amongst individuals where the work is being done
- physical location and layout of the workplace

#### **\*Should we include workplace incidents of discrimination, harassment and domestic violence in our risk assessment?**

The Nova Scotia Violence in the Workplace Regulations define violence as:

(f) “violence” means any of the following:

- (1) Threats, including a threatening statement or threatening behavior 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.

If workplace incidents of discrimination, harassment or domestic violence meet the definition of violence as defined under the Regulation the information must be considered in your risk assessment.

Any reference to these items which falls outside of the definition discussed above are considered optional however it should be noted that some workplace violence prevention

programs do include provisions for these items.

Discrimination and/or harassment can take on many forms including: gestures or physical acts, slurs, taunting, verbal abuse or racial epithets, implicit or explicit coercive and inappropriate behaviour, displaying derogatory objects, cartoons, posters, drawings, or pictures.

Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviour used by one person to gain power and control over another with whom he/she has or has had an intimate relationship. This pattern of behaviour may include physical violence, sexual, emotional and psychological intimidation, verbal abuse, stalking and using electronic devices to harass and control. The perpetrator of domestic violence may be a spouse or former spouse, current or former intimate partner or a family member. Domestic violence becomes workplace violence when it occurs or spills over into the workplace.

### 3.3 Re-Assessment for Violence

In accordance with the regulations, a new violence risk assessment is required of the Employer in any of the following circumstances:

- A type of violence occurring in similar workplaces that was not taken into consideration when the previous violence risk assessment was conducted;
- Significant changes in the circumstances, interactions, location or layout of the work;
- Plans are developed to construct a new facility or renovate an existing facility;
- An order is issued by a Labour and Advanced Education Officer.

If the above situations are not applicable then a new risk assessment will need to be done at **least every 5 years.**

### 4.0 The Next Step

Supplementary to this narrative is a **Workplace Violence Hazard Risk Assessment** tool. The tool is an interactive document to allow Employers to enter the assessment data and maintain the document as a component of due diligence compliance.

Preventing and controlling workplace violence does not have to be difficult or complex. All you really need is the knowledge and ability to recognize, assess, and control the hazard of violence in your workplace, in the same way you would any other health and safety hazard.