

# **General Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention Training**

## **1 About the training**

The following training consists of a general overview of workplace violence and harassment prevention.

In addition to this general training, you must review the following HGH policies and documents to be aware of the measures and procedures in place to prevent violence, to summon assistance, to respond and report violent incidents should they occur. You will find the documents in Policy Medical.

- ✓ ADM-12-102: Workplace Violence Prevention Program
- ✓ ADM-03-102-3.01A: Workplace Harassment Program
- ✓ ADM-12-3007: Workplace Violence Event Report Form
- ✓ ADM-12-3019: Harassment Complaint Form
- ✓ ADM-06-2061- Code White- Violent or Threatening Person

### **1.1 Learning objectives**

- Understand the definition of workplace violence and harassment through examples of violence and harassment behaviours.
- Understand risk factors.
- Know how to plan a safe environment.
- Understand what an aggression escalation continuum is.
- Know how to respond to aggressive behaviours.
- Know what to do following a violent incident and how to report it.
- Know how to report workplace harassment.
- Know how to get help.

### **1.2 Did you know?**

- Almost one in five violent incidents in Canada occurs at work.
- Health care sectors are considered at higher risk for workplace violence.
- Workplace violence is considered an occupational health and safety hazard.

## 2 What is workplace violence?

Workplace violence is defined by the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* as:

- The exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker.
- An attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.
- A statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.

### 2.1 Examples of violent behaviours

- Verbally threatening to attack a worker.
- Shouting, swearing, hate speech.
- Hitting, punching, scratching, spitting, grabbing, choking or biting.
- Leaving threatening notes or sending threatening e-mails to a workplace.
- Shaking a fist in a worker's face.
- Wielding a weapon at work.
- Throwing an object at a fellow worker.
- Sexually offensive remarks or violence against a worker.

## 3 Work-related factors and risks of violence

Certain work factors, processes and interactions with people can increase the risk of workplace violence, such as:

- Working with patients and families in distress.
- Providing service or care that requires close personal contact.
- Having people wait for a long wait time for appointments.
- Working with unstable or volatile persons.
- Dispensing of medications.
- Working alone or in small groups.

### 3.1 Physical environment

Adequate planning of the physical environment is one of the most effective ways to lower the probability of physical violence or aggression in the workplace.

#### 3.1.1 Examples of an adequately planned environment

- Doors can be locked.
- Areas can be sealed off, isolated or access controlled.
- Number of exits is sufficient.

- Furniture is selected and installed based on intended use and clientele.
- Escape routes in case of crisis are planned and identified.
- Reception areas allow the monitoring of patients and visitors.
- Objects that could become potential weapons are identified and secured or removed.
- Movement flow is planned to avoid crowding.
- Level of lighting is appropriate.
- Emergency call button (Code White) or a telephone are available.
- Layout is planned to keep hallways unobstructed.
- Locked storage for medications is available.

### 3.2 Aggression escalation continuum and how to respond

Aggression usually doesn't happen suddenly and without warning. It often occurs over time and escalates through different phases of the aggression escalation continuum. Phases are:

**Subtle changes in behaviour:** changes in social interaction style, manner of speaking, language used, and change in energy level.

**Worker's response:** stay out of patient's personal space, ensure there is a clear exit route, let the patient know you are available to discuss the problem to solve it.

**Escalating behaviours:** increased questioning of staff, challenging staff, increase in rate or volume of speech, resistance to instruction and physical tension.

**Worker's response:** communicate in a non-confrontational manner, listen actively to their concerns, acknowledge their feelings, treat the patient with respect, direct the patient to a more private area, without isolating yourself.

**Imminent behaviours:** patient speaks explosively, swears and uses obscenities, intense physiological signs such as redness in the face, fast and heavy breathing, threatening gestures such as showing the fist or pretending to throw objects and moving towards staff with visible higher agitation.

**Worker's response:** remove others from the immediate area, alert other staff of the situation, call security if necessary, allow patient to vent, avoid making counter threats, remind them of previously agreed-upon plan.

**Physical aggression behaviour:** hitting, kicking, scratching, pulling hair, biting, use of objects as weapons and other physical aggression.

**Worker's response:** do not physically intervene if there is no immediate danger, call a code white for immediate assistance and remove yourself to a safe location if necessary.

### **3.3 What should you do following a violent incident?**

- Remove yourself from the area and try to calm yourself and regain your composure.
- Seek medical attention if needed.
- Inform your manager of the events.
- Complete the Workplace Violence Event Report Form (ADM-12-3007).
- If you would like counselling, contact the Employee and Family Assistance Program provided by Morneau Shepell at the following number: French services at 1-844-880-9143, English services at 1-844-880-9142. This program is free and confidential.

## **4 What is workplace harassment?**

Workplace harassment is defined by the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* as:

- Engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. The comments or conduct typically happen more than once.

### **4.1 Examples of workplace harassment include**

- Making unwelcome remarks, creating or perpetrating rumours and false statements towards others.
- Making demeaning jokes, taunts or suggestions about a person's body, clothing, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, pardoned convictions or other personal characteristics.
- Humiliating an employee in front of co-workers.
- Bullying.
- Displaying or circulating offensive pictures or materials in print or electronic form.
- Making repeated offensive or intimidating phone calls or e-mails.

## **5 What is workplace sexual harassment?**

- Engaging in a course of vexatious comments or conduct against a worker in a workplace because of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, where the course of comments or conduct is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome, or
- Making a sexual solicitation or advance where the person making the solicitation or advance is in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement to the worker and the person knows or ought reasonably to know that the solicitation or advance is unwelcome.

## **5.1 Examples of sexual harassment**

- Inappropriate comments or questions about sexual activities.
- Rough or vulgar humour or language related to sexuality, sexual orientation or gender.
- Displaying or circulating pornography, sexual images, or offensive sexual jokes in print or electronic form.
- Leering or inappropriate staring.
- Invading personal space.
- Unwelcome physical contact, including inappropriate sexual touching.
- Demanding hugs, dates, or sexual favours.
- Making gender-related comments about someone's physical characteristics, mannerisms, or conformity to sex- role stereotypes.
- Verbally abusing, threatening or taunting someone based on gender or sexual orientation.
- Threatening to penalize or otherwise punish a worker if they refuse a sexual advance.

## **5.2 What are your responsibilities as a worker?**

- Treat others with respect and speak up if you or someone else is being harassed.
- Report harassment for yourself or others to your supervisor or Human Resources.
- Respect the confidentiality of anyone involved in a harassment complaint.

## **5.3 What should you do if you are being harassed?**

- Speak up right away.
- If possible, tell the person that you are not comfortable with their behaviour and want it to stop.
- Tell someone you trust what is going on.
- Keep notes and record each instance of unwelcome or harassing behaviour, documenting what happened: when, where, how, frequency, people present, etc.
- If speaking to the individual does not stop the behaviour, report the harassment by completing the Harassment Complaint Form (ADM-12-3019).
- Follow the reporting procedure of the Workplace Harassment Program.

## **6 If you need support**

You can contact the Employee and Family Assistance Program provided by Morneau Shepell at the following number: French services at 1-844-880-9143, English services at 1-844-880-9142. This program is free and confidential.

