

Workplace Violence & Harassment Prevention Awareness Program



**for
Workers**

What is Workplace Violence & Harassment

- It can come in many forms and different characteristics
 - » Psychological
 - » Physical
 - » Material/Financial
 - » Verbal
 - » Sexual

What Is Workplace Violence & Harassment?

- **Workplace aggression – emotional toll**
 - Expressions of hostility
 - Gestures, facial expressions and verbal assaults
 - Threats of physical violence
 - Harassment, intimidation, bullying
 - Ostracism/shunning



The Law

- Under Occupational Health and Safety Legislation, all employers must take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect the health and safety of their workers in the **workplace**
- This includes protecting them against the risk of **workplace violence and harassment.**



What is the “Workplace?”

- It’s any place where an employee does work and includes any off-site places where the employee goes to transact business.
- Don’t forget that the parking lot is also part of your workplace, as well as stairwells, elevators, and other places that would be more isolated than your regular work area.

Workplace Violence

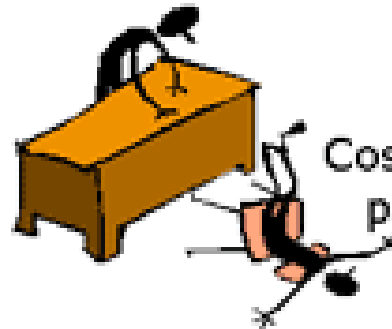
May:

- Be inflicted by a stranger with criminal intent
- Be inflicted by an abusive
 - Employee, supervisor or manager
 - Client, patient or customer
 - Former employee, manager or supervisor
 - Family member or significant other
- Affect or involve
 - Employees
 - Visitors, customers, patients or clients
 - Contractors

4 Primary Types of Workplace Violence



Violence in Connection to robbery and other criminal acts



Customer/client/patient-related violence



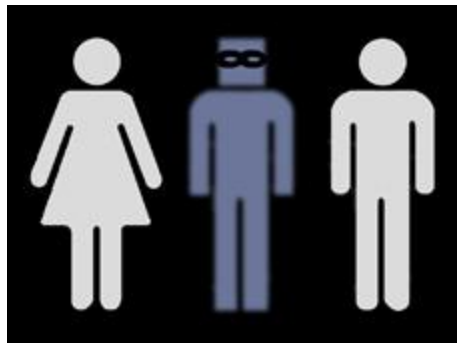
Violence between Co-workers



Domestic Violence spilling over to the workplace

Strangers

- Usually the stranger has no legitimate relationship to the worker or workplace.
- Enters the workplace, usually on the pretence of being a customer, to commit a robbery or other violent act.
- Workers also may be victimized by strangers outside the "traditional" workplace but while acting within the course and scope of their employment.



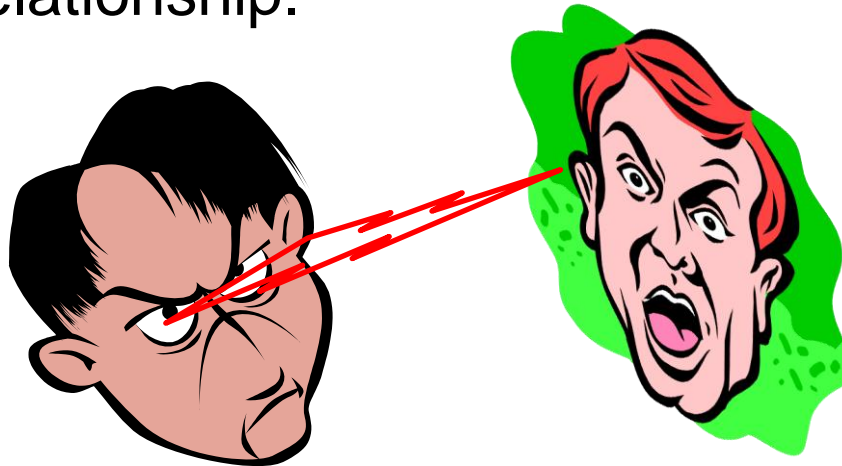
Clients/Customers

- Committed by someone who receives a service provided by a business, such as a current or former customer, client or patient, a passenger.
- The violence can be committed in the workplace or, as with service providers, outside the workplace but while the worker is performing a job related function.



Co-workers

- Has an employment relationship.
- Current or former employee. May even be a prospective employee.
- May include violence that occurs outside the workplace, but which resulted or arose from the employment relationship.



Two types of Co-worker Violence

Between supervisors and subordinates.



Between workers at the same level.



Domestic and Personal Relationships

- Violence is committed by someone who has a personal relationship with the worker, such as a current/former spouse or partner relative or friend.
- Includes the perpetrator who has a personal dispute with the worker.
- Perpetrator calls the workplace to harass or threaten.
- Perpetrator enters the workplace or calls to harass, threaten, injure or kill.



Identifying Workplace Violence

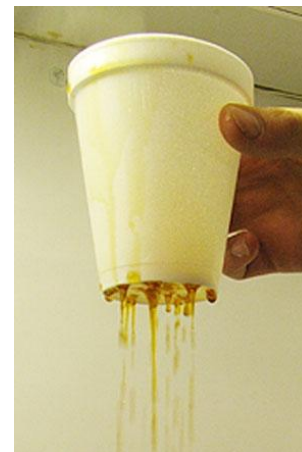
- Perhaps the most important step in prevention is being able to identify the various types of workplace violence



Violence is more than just physical assault !

Identify Workplace Violence

- It can include
 - Verbal abuse
 - Arguments
 - Property damage
 - Pushing or kicking
 - Theft
 - Malicious pranks
 - Anger-related incidents
 - Throwing objects



Emergency

- Always *call the police* when an act of **physical violence** has occurred or someone is threatened with **physical violence** in the **workplace**
- Acts of **physical violence**, and threats of acts of **physical violence**, are covered by Canada's Criminal Code, which is enforced by the police



Physical Workplace Violence

- 80% committed by males
- 40% committed by complete strangers
- 35% committed by casual acquaintances
- 19% by individuals well known to victim
- 1% by relatives of the victim

(Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics)

Risk Factors

- Isolated work area
- Working nights/evenings
- Poor lighting outside
- High crime area
- No controlled access to work site
- Working with people with history of violence
- Access to potential weapons
- Lack of emergency response procedures
- Working with cash or drugs
- Lack of escape route
- High stress environment
- Lack of training and support

Types of Workplace Violence

Definitions

Workplace Violence

Defined by the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act, “workplace violence” means,

(a) the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker,

(b) an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker,

(c) 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.



Grievous Assault

- Defined as
 - Gestures intended to injure or maim and can be fatal



Destructive Behaviour

- Defined by
 - Throwing or breaking objects



Harmful Work Environment

- A harmful work environment is a work environment:
 - ✓ that is detrimental;
 - ✓ that is harmful to someone;
 - ✓ that has an adverse impact on the person, who is the victim of the violence or harassment.
- For instance, the work atmosphere created by the behaviour may lead to the victim's isolation in his/her work environment.



** The employer is under the obligation to take reasonable steps to prevent and put a stop to workplace violence and harassment when they are informed of such behaviour. This obligation is one of means and not of results, namely despite all the steps taken, the employer cannot guarantee the absence of workplace violence or harassment in their undertaking.*

Warning Signs

- Not all people will show the following signs, these types of behaviours and physical signs can serve as warning signs that a situation could turn violent.
- *Please note that one warning sign may not be a particularly strong predictor of violence but numerous warning signs increase the potential for violence.*

8 Warning Signs Of Violent Employee Behaviour

1. Fascination with weapons.

That's different than *ownership* of weapons.



2. Substance abuse.

Research shows a big correlation between substance abuse and violence.



8 Warning Signs Of Violent Employee Behaviour

3. Severe stress.

Stress is a function of modern society but people with a propensity toward violence allow that stress to become an excuse for violence.



4. Violent history.

“Once people cross that moral, ethical or professional barrier into violence,” Dennis A. Davis, a former SWAT team liaison officer says, “it's a lot easier for them to do it the next time.”

8 Warning Signs Of Violent Employee Behaviour

5. Decreased or inconsistent productivity.

Employees with a tendency toward violence have a harder time keeping a consistent level of productivity.

6. Social isolation and poor peer relationships.

Loners are more likely to act violently because they don't have a social network to work out problems.



8 Warning Signs Of Violent Employee Behaviour

7. Poor personal hygiene.

These people have moved into the dangerous “I don't care” phase.



8. Drastic changes in personality.

It's a myth that you need to watch out for introverted or extroverted employees. experts say “You need to pay attention to the person who flip-flops between the two.”

Employer's Duties

Domestic violence

If an employer becomes aware, or ought reasonably to be aware, that domestic violence that would likely expose a worker to physical injury may occur in the workplace, the employer shall take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of the worker.



Employer's Duties

- As stated earlier the employer and supervisor have a duty to provide information, including personal information, related to a risk of workplace violence from a person with a history of violent behaviour if,
 - (a) the worker can be expected to encounter that person in the course of his or her work; and
 - (b) the risk of workplace violence is likely to expose the worker to physical injury.

However, No employer or supervisor shall disclose more personal information in the circumstances than is reasonably necessary to protect the worker from physical injury.

Violence Prevention



Personal Security

- Personal Belongings
 - Should be kept at home
 - Secured at workplace
 - Locked in vehicle –out of view
- Vehicle Safety
 - Have key out and ready
 - Check back seat
 - Lock vehicle when in
- Walking
 - Walk with buddy (where possible)
 - Stay in well lit areas
 - Be alert...have a plan!



Working Alone

- Has a Check-in plan been developed?
- Ensure contact can be made i.e. cell phone, 2-way radio, etc.
- When on breaks and working alone on late afternoon or night shift, workers should stay in building
- Initiate a buddy system where possible
- When working alone in parts of building or off-site for hours... communicate regularly



How to Spot an Aggressive Situation

- Speaking loudly, frantically or quickly.
- Gesturing wildly.
- Aggressive stances and gestures such as pointing, getting close, clinching fists.
- Making threats and personal insults.

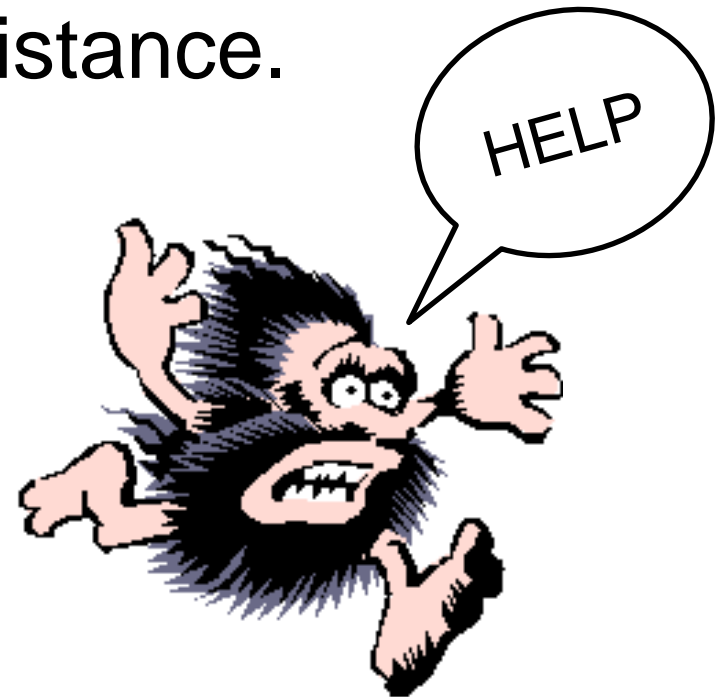


Actions To Avoid When Dealing With A Potentially Violent Situation:

- Do not be the hero. Your focus should be trying to divert the aggressive individual without putting yourself in harm's way.
- Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Do not make physical contact with the individual.
- Arrange yourself so that your exit is not blocked.

Remember!!

- If at any time you feel threatened or you believe your safety is in jeopardy, remove yourself immediately from the situation and call for assistance.



The image features several silhouettes of people in a workplace setting. In the foreground, a man in a black suit is gesturing towards a woman in a black dress. Behind them, a large red silhouette of a man stands against a blue background. To the right, a smaller, light-colored silhouette of a man stands against a white background. The text 'Workplace Harassment' is overlaid in a yellow, bold, sans-serif font with a red outline, slanted upwards from left to right.

Workplace Harassment

Workplace Harassment

- Defined by the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act, “workplace harassment” means,
 - 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
 - * *Vexatious behaviour is a behaviour that is humiliating, offensive or abusive for the person who is subjected to such behaviour, that undermines his/her self-esteem or that causes him/her torment*

The Many Faces of Harassment

- Harassment may occur at all levels within the workplace. It may manifest itself between work colleagues; persons in a position of authority may harass their subordinates and conversely, employees may harass their superiors.
- The persons involved may be individuals or a group of persons.
- The presumed harasser may also come from outside the workplace, such as a customer, a user, a supplier, visitor or a spouse.

Personal Harassment

- May include;
 - Any unwelcome behaviour, conduct or communication that is directed at a person
 - Offensive to any employee and is based on an employee's sex, marital status, race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation
 - Any form of behaviour that is perceived to be insulting, frightening, and or embarrassing can be considered personal harassment



Sexual Harassment

- Defined as
 - Any unwelcome, unsolicited sexual comments, gestures, physical contact or demands for sexual favours
 - Any comment or conduct of a sexual nature that is likely to cause an employee offence or humiliation, and
 - Is not gender specific



Bullying

- Defined as
 - The repeated less favourable treatment of a person by another or others in the workplace, which may be considered unreasonable and inappropriate workplace practice
- This can include behaviour that intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates a worker, possibly in front of co-workers, clients or customers



Psychological Intimidation

- Defined by
 - Dominating attitudes
 - Gestures
 - Words
 - Threats



Hostile Or Unwanted In Nature

- The incidences of behaviour, words, actions or gestures in question must be seen as hostile or unwanted.
- In some cases, such as at the time of aggression or sexual harassment, the unwanted nature does not necessarily require that the victim have clearly expressed his/her refusal or disapproval.

Effect On The Person's Dignity or Psychological or Physical Integrity

- Harassment has a negative impact on the person. A person who is the victim of harassment may feel diminished, degraded, denigrated, both personally and professionally.
- The harassment situation may also cause a deterioration in the physical health of the person who is the victim of harassment.



Complaints

- Each situation must be reported to management to take corrective action.
- Complaints regarding harassment, bullying and discrimination on prohibited grounds may be addressed by the [Ontario Human Rights Commission \(OHRC\)](#)
- The *OHRC* enforces the Ontario [Human Rights Code](#), which provides for the right to work without discrimination but does not regulate personal harassment.



Safety Tips For Conflict Resolution

- Do:
 - Stand away from the person
 - Pay attention using eye contact
 - Anticipate but do not expect
 - Speak respectfully
 - Hold your hands open and receptive at your sides
 - Remember that conflict affects everyone in the workplace

Safety Tips For Conflict Resolution

- Don't
 - Avoid the conflict, hoping it will go away
 - Stand face to face
 - Infringe on personal space
 - Use parental finger
 - Be judgmental
 - Try to control the person

Points to Ponder

- Personal harassment and/or bullying does not include acceptable social banter and humour in the workplace. It also does not include management decisions, such as discipline, performance or attendance management that is exercised in good faith and implemented in a reasonable manner.
- Often, employees file personal harassment complaints because they genuinely feel bad about a workplace argument with a co-worker or a negative discussion with or adverse performance appraisal from a supervisor. However, not all unpleasant communication or workplace conflict constitutes personal harassment.

Points to Ponder

- Workplace Harassment can occur on or off-site and can take place at off-duty social functions;
- Workplace Harassment can involve misconduct or inappropriate statements by clients, customers, members of the public and contractors;
- Employees or managers who retaliate against employees who file personal harassment/bullying complaints can be the subject of a separate complaint based solely on the indirect or direct retaliation; and
- Employees who intentionally file a personal harassment/bullying complaint against another individual for an improper motive or purpose may find themselves facing discipline for filing a malicious/vexatious complaint.

Think you're a Victim?

- FIRMLY tell the person that his or her behaviour is not acceptable and ask them to stop. You can ask a supervisor or union member to be with you when you approach the person.
- KEEP a factual journal or diary of daily events.
- RECORD:
 - The date, time and what happened in as much detail as possible
 - The names of witnesses
 - The outcome of the event

Think you're a Victim? cont...

- It is not just the character of the incidents, but the number, frequency, and especially the pattern that can reveal the bullying or harassment.
- KEEP copies of any letters, memos, e-mails, faxes, etc., received from the person.
- REPORT the harassment to the person identified in your workplace policy, your supervisor, or a delegated manager. If your concerns are minimized at that point, proceed to the next level of management.

Think you're a Victim? cont...

DO NOT RETALIATE! You may end up looking like the perpetrator and will most certainly cause confusion for those responsible for evaluating and responding to the situation.

