

RESOURCES

Tips for Preventing and Managing Incidents of Violence or Harassment

1. Dealing with a potentially violent person:

(a) Tips for verbal communication

- Focus your attention on the other person to let them know you are interested in what they have to say.
- Do not glare or stare, it may be perceived as a challenge.
- Remain calm and try to calm the other person. Do not allow the other person's anger to become your anger.
- Remain conscious of how you are delivering your words.
- Speak slowly, quietly and confidently.
- Speak in simple terms.
- Avoid communicating a lot of technical and complicated information when emotions are high.
- Listen carefully. Do not interrupt or offer unsolicited advice or criticism.
- Encourage the person to talk. Do not tell the person to relax or calm down.
- Remain open-minded and objective.
- Use silence as a calming tool.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings. Indicate that you can see he or she is upset.

(b) Tips for non- verbal communication and behavior

- Use calm body language – relaxed posture with hands unclenched, attentive expression.
- Arrange yourself so that your exit is not blocked.
- Position yourself at an angle rather than directly in front of the other person.
- Give the person enough physical space.
- Do not make sudden movements that can be seen as threatening.
- Do not fight. Walk or run away. Get assistance from security or police.
- Get on the other person's physical level. If they are seated try kneeling or bending over, rather than standing over them. Do not pose a challenging stance such as:
 - Standing directly opposite someone
 - Putting your hands on your hips
 - Pointing your finger
 - Waving your arms
 - Crossing your arms

2. Responding to a physical attack:

- Make a scene, yell or scream as loudly as possible. Try shouting words like STOP, FIRE or HELP.
- If you are being pulled along or dragged, fall to the ground and roll.
- Blow a whistle, activate your personal security alarm or push the security alarm.
- Give bystanders specific instruction to help you. "You in the yellow shirt call police".
- If someone grabs your purse, briefcase or other belongings, do not resist. Throw the item to the ground several feet from your location and run in the opposite direction yelling HELP or FIRE.
- Do not chase a thief.
- Run to the nearest safe place.
- Call security or the police immediately after the incident.
- If the attack does not warrant calling the police, inform your employer.
- File an Incident Investigation Report.

3. Be Prepared:

- Take a self-defense course.
- Try to imagine yourself responding successfully to different types of attacks and practice your responses.

4. Working Off-Site:

If you work away from a traditional office setting you must exercise extra caution. In many cases you have less or no ability to control your work environment. You may require special training to avoid violence by using conflict resolution and mediation tactics. Nevertheless, the following specific preventative tactics or procedures will minimize or prevent risks associated with working off-site:

- Have access to a cell phone or similar means of communication.
- Use an established check-in procedure that allows you to manage a typical situation you may encounter off-site.
- Prepare a daily work plan so that you and others know where and when you are expected somewhere.
- Arrange to meet in a safe environment.
- Be alert and make mental notes of your surroundings when you arrive at a new or different setting.
- Use the buddy system.
- Determine under which circumstances an unaccompanied visit would involve unacceptable risk.
- Exercise your right to refuse work in clearly hazardous situations.
- Disclose feelings of discomfort or apprehension about an impending appointment.
- Do not enter any situation or location where you feel threatened or unsafe.

5. When you are in unfamiliar premises:

- Check for escape routes and position yourself near an escape route.
- Mentally rehearse what you will do if an individual becomes aggressive or hostile.
- Decide what your best preventative tactic will be.
- Take control of the seating arrangements. If possible seat yourself near the door.
- Maintain a reactionary gap between you and others – out of reach of the average person's kicking distance.
- Be well prepared for an appointment. Review the available information about the individual(s) you are meeting.
- Terminate the appointment in a non-confrontational manner if the individual appears to be:
 - Intoxicated
 - Under the influence of drugs
 - Emotionally disturbed and threatening or out of control

6. Terminating a potentially violent interaction:

- Interrupt the conversation firmly but politely
- Tell the person that you:
 - Do not like the tone of the conversation
 - Will not accept such treatment
 - Will end the conversation if necessary
- If the behavior persists, end the conversation
- Ask the person to leave
- If the person does not agree to leave, remove yourself from the scene and inform your employer
- Do not return to the person if you believe they pose a physical threat
- Advise other staff and have them leave the immediate area
- Call security or police
- File an incident report

Domestic Violence

Possible signs a person is being physically abused:

- Unusual or unexplained injuries, such as bruises, cuts, burns, bite marks, etc.
- Defensive response when asked about an injury
- Signs of new injuries before old injuries have healed or recurring injuries
- Torn clothing or damaged personal property

Possible signs a person is being verbally/emotionally abused:

- Constantly apologizing
- Decreased ability to cope with familiar situations
- Social withdrawal from co-workers and friends
- Extreme or unusual behavior, such as aggression, compliance or withdrawal
- High levels of anxiety or depression
- Lateness or frequent absence, reduced productivity and poor job performance
- Constant phone calls from spouse/abuser checking in on the worker (member)
- Chronic fatigue and other side effects such as headache, chest pain, neck pain

How to talk to someone you suspect is a victim of domestic violence:

Show concern, for example, "something seems to be going on with you. Can I help?"
Listening is the single most important and helpful thing that you can do. Let them talk without interruption or judgment. Believe them. Give your support by telling them the abuse is not their fault and that they are not responsible for their partner's behavior. Tell them that they do not ever deserve to be abused. Then offer information only – do not try to counsel them.

Talk to them in a safe and private place. Respect their right to keep their concerns confidential. Provide information for Victim Services or a women's shelter and encourage them to talk to them about the abuse. Do not take offence if they refuse your help or do not want to share what is going on with you. Remind them that your company has policies and procedures that protect them while in the workplace.

Local Community Resources

Ministry of Labour: www.labour.gov.on.ca
1-800-268-8013

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board: www.wsib.on.ca
1-800-387-0750

Occupational Health & Safety Act www.e-laws.gov.on.ca

Canadian National Centre for Occupational Health and Safety: www.ccohs.ca
1-800-668-4284

St. Catharines Sexual Health Centre
277 Welland Ave. L2R 2P7
905-688-3817

Community Mental Health
3550 Schmon Parkway
Unit 2, 2nd Floor PO Box 1042
Thorold, ON 905-688-2854

Gillian's Place (For Women)
15 Gibson Place
St. Catharines, L2R 0A3
24/7 Support Line
905-684-8331

Southridge Community Church
201 Glenridge Avenue
St. Catharines L2T 3J6
Temporary shelter for men and/or
women who are homeless for any
reason.

Community Addiction Services:
Alcohol, Drugs, Gambling
60 James Street, St. Catharines
905-684-1183
Gambling only – 905-684-1859