

## **Prevention of Workplace Violence**

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This policy addresses the prevention of workplace violence as part of the Port Colborne Public Library Board's responsibility for worker health and safety under the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The Port Colborne Public Library Board is committed to building and preserving a safe, productive and healthy working environment for its employees based on mutual respect. In pursuit of this goal, the Board does not condone and will not tolerate acts of violence or harassment/bullying against or by any employee.

In accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code, all persons employed at the Port Colborne Public Library have a right to a workplace that is free from harassment of any kind by the employer, or agent of the employer, or by another employee because of their membership within a protected class as outlined in the Code.

Violent behaviour in the workplace is unacceptable from anyone including staff, members of the Board, volunteers, clients, and others who do business with the library. Individuals who violate this policy may be removed from library property, and in the case of employees, are subject to disciplinary action including termination.

### **Section 1: Definitions**

Complainant: A person who has made a complaint about another individual who they believe committed an act of violence or harassment against them.

Respondent: A person whom another individual has accused of committing an act of violence or harassment.

Workplace Violence or Bullying: Workplace violence or bullying is the exercise, statement or behaviour of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical or psychological injury to the worker.

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying is the use of electronic communication to harass,

intimidate, or bully a co-worker. It can take many forms, including emails, texts, social media posts, video calls, and online discussions, such as:

- Sending unsolicited and/or threatening e-mail or messages.
- Encouraging others to send unsolicited and/or threatening e-mail or messages to overwhelm the victim with e-mail messages.
- Sending viruses (electronic sabotage).
- Making defamatory comments.
- Harassing the victim during a live chat.
- Leaving abusive messages online, including social media sites.
- Sending graphic material that is knowingly offensive.
- Creating online content that depicts the victim in negative ways.

1. The Port Colborne Public Library Board recognizes the definition of **workplace violence** as set out in the Occupational Health and Safety Act 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. Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter O.1, s.1 (1)
2. Violence in the workplace may include:
  - a) verbally threatening to attack a worker
  - b) leaving threatening notes or sending threatening e-mails to the workplace
  - c) shaking a fist in a worker's face
  - d) hitting or trying to hit a worker
  - e) throwing or kicking an object
  - f) sexual aggression against a worker
3. Violence in the library or on library property also includes:
  - a) intentionally or recklessly damaging of the property of another person
  - b) intentionally causing alarm
  - c) recklessly creating a risk by fighting

- d) creating a hazardous condition or danger by recklessly engaging in conduct which creates a substantial risk of serious physical injury
- e) intentionally placing or attempting to place another person in fear of imminent serious physical injury
- f) wielding a weapon

## **Section 2: Responsibility and Response**

1. The CEO or designate must develop and maintain a workplace violence program which will set out:
  - a) process for assessing the risk of violence in the workplace
  - b) measures to control risk including those from domestic violence
  - c) procedures for reporting incidents of violence
  - d) the process for dealing with, and investigating, violent incidents and complaints (See Appendix A)
2. Employees are encouraged to report behaviour that they reasonably believe poses a potential for violence as described above.
3. Anyone experiencing or witnessing imminent danger or actual violence involving weapons or personal injury should call the police.
4. Workplace violence should be reported immediately to the CEO or most senior staff available.
5. Physical or sexual assault or threat of physical violence will be reported to the police.
6. All reports will be thoroughly investigated by the CEO or designate.
7. The library will provide staff with information on the risk of violence in the library and training workshops on a periodic basis addressing concerns such as “dealing with difficult people.”
8. The library, at the request of an employee, or at its own discretion, may prohibit members of the public, including family members, from seeing an employee on library property in cases where the employee suspects that an act of violence, will result from an encounter with said individual(s).

9. This policy (HR-03) and the Workplace Violence Program (Appendix A) will be:
  - a) reviewed annually by the Library Board
  - b) posted on the Health and Safety bulletin board
  - c) made available in a binder at the Reference Desk
  - d) reviewed by staff on an annual basis

### **Section 3: Confidentiality and False Reports**

1. All investigations shall be conducted in strict confidence to the extent possible. Documents will be stored by the City Human Resources department and access to these records will be restricted.
2. Employees are found to have made false or malicious complaints will be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Related Documents:**

- Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter O.1
- Bill 168: An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with Respect to Violence and Harassment in the Workplace and Other Matters. (Statutes of Ontario, 2009, Chapter 23)
- Port Colborne Public Library. HR-01: Human Resources Policy and Management.
- Port Colborne Public Library. HR-08: Health and Safety Policy Statement.
- Port Colborne Public Library. HR-12: Workplace Harassment and Discrimination.
- Port Colborne Public Library. Risk Assessment Report and Recommendations, 2017
- City of Port Colborne. CAP-55: Workplace Violence and Harassment

## **Appendix A: Workplace Violence Program**

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### **Section 1: Plan for Maintaining Security in the Library**

1. In collaboration with the City of Port Colborne, library staff will conduct a worksite assessment as often as necessary to ensure measures for violence prevention are effective. The assessment will:
  - a) identify jobs or locations with the greatest risk
  - b) identify high risk factors
  - c) include a physical workplace security audit
  - d) evaluate the effectiveness of existing security measures
2. The CEO or designate will annually review the history of past incidents to identify patterns or trends.
3. The CEO or designate will review annually the previously recognized areas of higher risk in the library including:
  - a) ongoing contact with the public
  - b) working alone or in small numbers
  - c) the circulation desk where money is kept
  - d) closing the library building at night or opening in the morning
  - e) monitoring the main entrance and the staff entrance to the library
  - f) monitoring the auditorium, basement levels, and stairwells
  - g) quiet areas in the library including the adult fiction and non-fiction rooms

### **Section 2: Measures for Reducing the Risk of Workplace Violence**

#### **1. Learn to recognize the signs of violence**

- a) Early identification and prevention of violence in the workplace is encouraged. Potential threats of violence that should be reported could include the following:
  - threatening statements to do harm to self or others
  - reference to other incidents of violence
  - confrontational behaviour
  - major change in personality, mood or behaviour
  - substance abuse

## **2. Institute general measures to reduce risk including:**

- a) designate the locked-down areas of the Computer Room on the main floor and the Repair Room on the administrative floor (both locked and with available telephones) for staff to use as emergency safe rooms
- b) keep all secondary entrance doors locked
- c) keep the exterior lights around the building in good working order
- d) ensure staff do not work alone in the library without prior consent of the CEO or designate

## **3. Staff procedures to increase personal safety**

- a) Notice your surroundings and report any unsafe or dangerous situation to the CEO or designate. If the CEO is not on-site, inform the most senior staff member on duty, or co-worker who will immediately inform the CEO.
- b) If you feel uncomfortable about a person who has entered the library, trust your instincts. If you feel threatened, make a scene - YELL!
- c) Use a buddy system when leaving work.
- d) If you ever find you are working alone in the library or off-site doing program outreach or other library work, you must let the CEO know the situation and when you expect to leave.
- e) If you enter a bathroom and suspect it is unsafe, do not call out. Back out, go to a safe room with a lockable door and telephone (such as the Computer Room or Repair Room) and call for help.
- f) Know the nearest exit or room with a lock.
- g) Review the recommendations for library staff safety in the Risk Assessment Report and Recommendations (2017) periodically. The CEO will include regular review of the Risk Assessment at staff meetings.

## **4. Staff procedures for threatening behaviour**

- a) Do not argue with a threatening person.
- b) Identify yourself as a library staff member. Remain calm and keep your voice low and firm.
- c) Do not put yourself or others in danger. Keep a distance of at least four feet.
- d) Be friendly but firm, introduce yourself, look at the individual(s) while you talk to them. Let the individual talk, clarify the problem, and offer solutions.
- e) Get assistance from another staff person.
- f) Advise the person that the police will be called if the abuse does not stop.
- g) If the behaviour does not change, call the police.**
- h) Notify the CEO or designate.

## **5. Staff procedures for dealing with violence/assault**

- a) If you hear raised voices, or sounds of a scuffle, investigate.
- b) **If you witness violence or an assault, call the police and describe the situation.**
- c) Recruit other staff to move others out of the way to a safer location.
- d) Do not block exits to prevent a threatening/violent person from leaving the building.
- e) Do not invade the personal space of the threatening person.
- f) Do not get between two people fighting.
- g) Notice details so you can describe the situation to the police.
- h) Notify the CEO.

## **6. Domestic violence: steps to increase your personal safety**

- a) Tell someone at work about your situation.
- b) Make up a “code word” for co-workers so they know when to call for help.
- c) Ask your co-workers to screen your calls and visitors.
- d) Ask a co-worker to call the police if the abuser is bothering you.

## **Section 3: How to Report a Situation**

1. A report should be made as soon as possible after an action or behaviour occurred.
2. An informal, verbal complaint may be brought forward to the CEO. It is in the best interest of all concerned that a report be written.
3. If a formal complaint is requested, the employee must file a written report with the CEO using the form Workplace Violence form.
4. The report should include a brief statement of the incident, when it occurred, where it occurred, date and time it occurred, the person(s) involved and the names of any witnesses if any.

## **Section 4: Investigation and Dealing with Incidents or Complaints**

1. After receiving a report, the CEO or designate will complete an investigation as quickly as possible, depending on the nature and severity of the issue. This will include interviews with the employee, the alleged perpetrator, if a staff member, and any witnesses.

2. The results of the investigation will be discussed with the employee and recommended preventative actions and/or resolutions presented.
3. A separate meeting will be held with the alleged perpetrator, if the perpetrator is a staff member.
4. If the findings do not support the allegations, the CEO will recommend that no further action is necessary and that the matter be closed.
5. Should the investigation conclude that there is evidence of misconduct, the CEO will prescribe a resolution that may include police intervention.
6. Employees who are found to have made false or malicious complaints will be subject to disciplinary action.