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Workplace Violence Prevention Program

DEFINITIONS:

Designated Worker Members are worker members of the Workplace Inspection Teams (WIT) or the Health and Safety Representative at schools/sites.

The Joint Health and Safety Committee is composed of worker and employer representatives. Together, they should be mutually committed to improving health and safety conditions in the workplace.

A **Supervisor** is:

- A person who supervises workers or work done by others. Some examples of Supervisors include Principals, Vice-Principals, Managers and Officers.

Violence in the workplace is defined by the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) as:

- the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that 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.

General Duties:

As an employer, the Waterloo Catholic District School Board (the Board) is responsible for the health and safety of its employees. Under the OSHA, the Board is required to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of workers (section 25(2)(h) of OHSA).

Supervisors, as defined by the OHSA, are also required to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of workers (section 27(2)(c) of OH&SA). This duty includes the requirement to advise workers of the existence of work-related hazards which include potentially violent workplace circumstances (section 27(2)(a) of OHSA).

In addition to the requirements of employers and supervisors, workers also have duties prescribed by OHSA. Workers must act in compliance with the Act and regulations and, importantly, are required to report to their employer or supervisor of the existence of any hazard/potentially violent circumstances of which they are aware (section 28(1)(d) of OHSA).

The OHSA requires all employees to act cooperatively in dealing with any circumstances which pose unacceptable risks in the context of the duties and responsibilities of employment with the Board.



Risk Assessments:

The risk of workplace violence can be prevented by recognizing the dangers, implementing preventive measures, engaging in prompt action on reports of violent incidents in the workplace, and by keeping all employees at the workplace informed of the potential for violent acts.

As a first step to enhancing employee safety, the Board performs annual risk assessments for the potential of violent incidents in all schools and facilities by November 30 of each school year.

The annual risk assessment includes the physical structure of the workplace and the nature of the work being completed. Completed assessments are shared with the Joint Health and Safety Committee.

Based on the results of the risk assessment, the Board develops preventive measures to address all instances of identified risk.

Reassessments must occur in the event of unforeseen circumstances that could cause any safety plans or preventative measures established after the annual assessment to fail.

The Board recognizes that the risk of workplace violence in school environments may arise from students, parents, visitors, or other members of the school community. Based on the results of the risk assessment, the Board develops preventive measures to address all instances of identified risks.

Measures and procedures to control the risks identified could include (but are not limited to):

- Identifying a means to summon immediate assistance, if required. Measures and procedures to summon immediate assistance should be appropriate given the specific circumstances.
- Video Surveillance in secondary schools, in accordance with Administrative Procedure - APC028
- Workplace Violence Risk Assessments and Reassessments
- Employee training (e.g., Behaviour Management Systems)
- Procedures and measures specific to the employee's assignment (e.g., Safety Plans)
- The need for and use of Board-provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Establishing and maintaining controlled access to school buildings
- Provision and maintenance of communication systems such as classroom phones and walkie-talkies
- Regular maintenance and repairs of facilities
- Consideration of barriers and other measures
- Other applicable school board policies or programs

Role of the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC):

The role of the JHSC is to ensure the Board remains compliant with its obligations to prevent incidents of workplace violence.

The JHSC is responsible for

- review annual risk assessments;
- identifying hazards in the workplace;



- obtaining information from the employer regarding workplace violence, including documents related to the assessment of the risk of workplace violence and measures to address these risks;
- making recommendations to the Board; and
- obtaining information from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)

REPORTS OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS:

1. Employees are required to report acts of violence in the workplace.
2. Any employee reporting an act of violence in good faith will not be subject to reprisals or any negative consequences of any kind.
3. The Board will provide an easily accessible method for reports of violent incidents in the workplace. Reports shall be made to an employee's immediate supervisor, to Health and Safety within Human Resources Services and to any other staff deemed necessary (e.g. Facility Services, Student Services).
4. All reports of violent incidents will be investigated. In most case, the investigation will be done by the immediate supervisor.
5. The results of the investigation and any resulting preventative and/or corrective measures will be communicated to the employee(s) who reported the incident and to others involved in the investigation that reasonably ought to be informed of the result.
6. Debriefing of employees regarding incidents of workplace violence will occur:
 - After a critical / serious incident; and/or
 - After a physical containment of a student has been completed; or
 - At the direction of Student Services or a Superintendent

The Board will provide a debriefing template to guide the appropriate supervisor through the process.

Summoning Immediate Assistance

Depending on the nature, location and level of risk, an employee may seek assistance:

- From the site supervisor including the Principal or Vice Principal
- From members of the site's Emergency Response Team
- It may be necessary to contact police or emergency services (dialing 911)
- By using various communication devices (including school wide PA system, classroom phone, cell phone or handheld radios (walkie-talkie) and may include vocalizing for help

Staff should refer to the Student Services Safety Plan guide for more detailed information.



INTERNAL INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES FOLLOWING A VIOLENT INCIDENT

Conducting an investigation in a quick and efficient manner is a sure sign of the effectiveness of a violence prevention program.

The aim of an investigation is to objectively establish the series of events leading to an incident, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the preventive measures in place and effectiveness of communication.

The results of the investigation should help to determine how such an incident could have been averted and serve to prevent a similar type of incident from occurring again.

It must be emphasized that in the event that the police become involved at the beginning of the incident, they will take control of the situation and the environment. Their instructions must be adhered to, and they must be allowed to complete their tasks before an internal investigation is initiated.

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING THE INVESTIGATION

If there is any question as to whether the violent incident constituted assault under the Criminal Code, the police should be notified immediately. The Board will not investigate until the police have conducted their investigation.

In the case of a critical injury (loss of consciousness, substantial loss of blood, a fracture of the leg or arm, loss of sight, significant burns) as defined by regulation 834 under the OHSA, the incident must be reported immediately to the Occupational Health and Safety Branch of the Ministry of Labour (MOL). In this situation, the Supervisor contacts the Health & Safety Officer who will advise the MOL.

- First meet with the employee(s) who reported the incident and all witnesses. If possible, request written statements. Document all information.
- Establish facts based on all information gathered.
- Determine the root cause of the incident.
- Recommend counter-measures in order to prevent a similar incident from occurring again in the future.