

Workplace Violence: *Opportunities for Prevention*

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Our challenge:

for those present to work ... and those present to learn ...

To maintain personal respect and dignity for one another.

It is the goal of the institution to provide a safe and secure campus. The safety of all employees, students, contractors and visitors is extremely important, both in terms of enhancing the educational environment for students, and promoting a supportive working atmosphere for all employees.

In the face of greater obligations from government authorities to improve violence prevention, this session will introduce the audience to an expanded definition of violence covering topical events of working alone, workplace bullying, cyber-violence, and domestic violence. These represent new opportunities for improvement, thereby reducing risk.

Ministry of Labour (May 2007) - Violence Definition

Everyone should be able to work without fear of violence, in a safe and healthy workplace. Violence in the workplace is not tolerated in Ontario.

http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/workplace_violence.html

“... threatened, attempted or actual exercise of any physical force by a person that endangers the physical health or safety of a worker.

... includes any threatening behaviour that gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that they are at risk of physical injury.

The Ministry of Labour requires employers to:

- Perform a workplace risk assessment
- Establish and maintain written policies and procedures to deal with identified risks
- Provide training with respect to the policies and procedures
- Provide and maintain appropriate protective equipment

What is occurring in our Educational Workplaces?

Bullying, Harassment, Cyber-Violence, and Domestic Violence

Do you know what to do - if you witness or are subjected to workplace violence?

Harassment means a person is engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that constitutes a threat to the health and safety of a worker and that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome and that may adversely affect the worker's psychological or physical well-being.

Criminal Harassment is prolonged, repetitive & threatening, causing a fear for one's safety. The behaviour exhibited may involve: following, communicating, watching, or threatening conduct.

Bullying is defined as a form of *repeated, persistent* and *aggressive* behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is *intended* to cause or *ought to be known* to cause fear and distress and or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation.

Victims of bullying are employees who at one time were good hard working team members. Typically they were dedicated to their institution and like to come to work, like their job and like their co-workers. As a result of being the victim of bullying, they now withdraw from the social life of work.

Bullying adversely affects a person's ability to work or learn.
Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.

Ministry of Education (February 2008) Policy PPM 144 - Bullying

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/safeschools.html>

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/symposium.html>

Reduce the risk of Cyber – Violence, the use of technology for the purpose of bullying and harassment

Cyber-violence occurs in today's workplaces through the use of technology for the purposes of bullying, and includes text messaging, website, internet (on-line), and voice messaging. These may be in the form of email, instant messaging, chat rooms, bash boards, and voting / polling booths.

Online Bullying Goes Big Time, Depending How You Define It -- One in three teens report being [cyber-bullied](#), according to a recent study -- most commonly by having private emails forwarded by someone else or shared publicly as form of harassment or embarrassment.

Recognize the risk, Reduce the Risk...

Publish your Codes of Conduct for Parent/School Councils and All participants in your Workplace community.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/conduct/conduct.html>

Privilege to use computers at school

Student Code of Conduct

Staff, Visitors & Parents Codes of Conduct

Anti-harassment & Anti-bullying statements

It is illegal to threaten someone online or offline

Domestic Violence: Recently, the murder of Lori Dupont in her place of work, a hospital, has highlighted that fact that domestic violence or intimate partner violence may be of relevance to the workplace and its workplace community when they are at risk of spill over into the workplace.

Everyone in the workplace community has a role to play in helping to prevent woman abuse. This may be of relevance to the workplace and its workplace community when they are at risk of spill over into the workplace. .Workplaces should include policy and programs to address domestic violence and abuse and harassment.

“ In the majority of cases there were several risk factors that family, friends or co-workers could have identified. Had they understood the significance of what they were seeing, they might have been able to inform the person who became the victim of the risk or they may have been able to intervene with the abusive man.” (Dr. Peter Jaffe, Academic Director, Centre for Education and Research on Violence Against Women and Children.)

The tragedy at Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal has focused our views about violence against women especially in our sector. Domestic violence or intimate partner violence may be of relevance to the workplace and its workplace community when they are at risk of spill over into the workplace.

Dr. Jaffe reported that one-in-four women may face abuse in an intimate relationship, which may be lethal as the most common form of homicide faced by women. Dr. Peter Jaffe stated that, in the workplace, there are significant gender differences such that the major concern for female employees is sexual harassment and domestic violence. It is not just strangers or angry people/clients/students – it’s the people you know, love and trust. “In fact, fifteen times greater occurrence of harm from someone you love than by a stranger/client.”

Dr. Jaffe reported that, astoundingly, seventy percent (70%) of individuals suffering from domestic violence are victimized at work. Abusive spouses may place harassing phone calls or make unwelcome appearances at work.

Typically, leaving work or leaving an abusive partner to avoid the abuse will have significant negative consequences, both economic and emotional, on the woman’s life. This results in the woman feeling trapped or seeing herself as having limited options. Accordingly these women are likely to be isolated and to be fearful about the consequences of reporting. The workplace’s role is to be supportive so as to allow the women to feel less isolated, to allow her to report and to disclose the circumstances properly. We have a role to help her take the steps to address the problem.

Dr. Peter Jaffe is Professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario, and Director of the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children. (referenced from a Teleconference April 2, 2008 OSACH)

How to Talk to the Abuser

Sometimes people around an abusive individual overlook their behaviour and only focus on supporting the abused person. At other times people may sympathize with the abusive individual, which may inadvertently escalate their abuse. Talking to an abusive individual is an important part of preventing abuse, but it needs to be done carefully.

Abusive behaviour won't go away on its own. There are services to help in your the community. Here is what you can do when you recognize the warning signs of abuse.

Choose the right time and place to have a full discussion.

Approach them when they are calm.

Be direct and clear about what you have seen

Tell them that their behaviour is their responsibility.

Avoid making judgmental comments about them as a person.

Don't validate their attempt to blame others for their behaviour.

Inform them that is behaviour needs to stop

Don't try to force them to change or to seek help

You feel it is none of your business ...

It could be a matter of life or death, Violence is everyone's business.

You don't know what to say ...

Saying you care and are concerned is a good start.

Overcoming your hesitation to help

You might make things worst ...

Doing nothing could make things worst.

It's not serious enough to involve the police ...

Police are trained to respond and utilize other resources.

Remember our focus ...

To maintain an environment where conflict & difference can be addressed in a manner characterized by respect and civility.

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CODES of CONDUCT

In Ontario, the Ministry of Education Policy PPM 128, Code of Conduct, sets clear provincial standards of behaviour. These standards of behaviour apply not only to students, but also to all individuals involved in the institution – parents, volunteers, teachers, professors, and other staff members.—whether they are on institution property, on buses, at institution related events or activities, or in other circumstances that could have an impact on the institution’s climate.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/conduct/conduct.html>

Ensure that all members of the educational community, especially those in positions of authority, are treated with respect and dignity,

Promote responsible citizenship, and

Promote the safety of all members of the educational community.

Encourage the use of non-violent means to resolve conflict

Treat one another with dignity and respect at all times and especially when there is disagreement,

Respect differences in people, their ideas, and their opinions, respect the rights of others.

Demonstrate honesty and integrity, show proper care for property of the institution and others.

Respect all members of the institution’s community, especially persons in positions of authority.

Respect the need of others to work in an environment that is conducive to learning and teaching.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/symposium.html>

Clear codes of behaviour, supported by procedures that are conducive to a culture that encourages and supports early identification and intervention, meaningful discussion and follow-up, are expected.

The goal of a workplace violence program is to provide supports for the victims of violence and supports for the witnesses of violence, including a reporting system that ensures safety and in a way that will minimize the possibility of reprisal.

Also, the person who is aggressive requires a comprehensive intervention strategy that focuses on developing healthy relationships throughout the institution.

Responsible citizenship involves appropriate participation in the civic life of the institution community. Active students and employees are aware of their rights, but they also accept responsibility for protecting their rights and the rights of others.

No matter whether you are an employee, employer, supervisor, student, visitor, parent, community partner, neighbour, supplier or contractor, everyone must be part of the program... Violence does not discriminate against its victims. What ever your reason to be part of this educational community, in what ever manner or stripe you may wear, we are a TEAM.

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