

## Pembroke Public Library



Policy Type: **Human Resources**

Policy Number: **HR-01**

Policy Title: **Violence in the Workplace**

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The Library is committed to providing a safe and secure workplace for its employees, free from threats and violence. The Library will not tolerate any form of threatening remark or gesture against an employee of the Library while carrying out his/her normal duties. All reports of incidents are taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. Employees who are found to have engaged in such conduct are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

#### **Violence**

For the purposes of this policy, violence is defined as any conduct, threatened or actual, by any person, that causes or is likely to cause injury, and includes any threatening statement or behaviour that gives an employee reasonable cause to believe that he/she is at risk of injury.

#### **Workplace Violence**

Workplace violence includes:

- threatening behaviour such as shaking fists, destroying property, or throwing objects;
- verbal or written threats — any expression of intent to inflict harm;
- harassment — any behaviour that demeans, embarrasses, humiliates, annoys, alarms, or verbally abuses a person and that is known or would be expected to be unwelcome. This includes words, gestures, intimidation, bullying, or other inappropriate activities;
- verbal abuse — swearing, insults, or condescending language; and
- physical attacks — hitting, shoving, pushing, or kicking.

Spreading rumours, swearing, verbal abuse, pranks, arguments, property damage, vandalism, sabotage, pushing, theft, physical assaults, psychological trauma, anger-related incidents, rape, arson, and murder are all examples of workplace violence.

Workplace violence can occur at off-site Library business-related functions, at social events related to work, in clients' homes, or away from work but resulting from work (e.g. a threatening telephone call to an employee's home).

**PROCEDURES:**

1. To ensure early identification and prevention of violence in the workplace, all employees are responsible for reporting to the Chief Executive Officer and/or Library Board Chairperson any incident committed by a Library employee, a client, or a member of the public, that constitutes a potential or actual threat of violence towards a Library employee, especially if one or more of the following factors is known to be present or to have occurred (this list is not exhaustive):
  - 1.1. threatening statements to do harm to self or others;
  - 1.2. references to other incidents of violence;
  - 1.3. intimidating behaviour such as insubordination, open defiance, pestering, or confrontational behaviour;
  - 1.4. history of violent, reckless, or anti-social behaviour;
  - 1.5. recent marked decline in performance;
  - 1.6. major change in personality, mood, behaviour, or standards of personal grooming;
  - 1.7. obsessions with persons or things, particularly weapons;
  - 1.8. experiencing what appears to be serious stress in personal life; and
  - 1.9. substance abuse.
  
2. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for:
  - 2.1. coordinating specific training for employees when such a need has been identified;
  - 2.2. providing active support to Supervisors in implementing this policy, and
  - 2.3. exercising responsibilities similar to those described for Supervisors, for their area of responsibility.
  
3. Supervisors are responsible for:
  - 3.1. ensuring that all employees are aware of the contents of this policy;
  - 3.2. promoting enrollment in training courses in these areas that are available to employees;
  - 3.3. ensuring that their own skills in these areas are current;
  - 3.4. being aware of and using appropriate stress-defusing measures when dealing with clients and members of the public, and when conducting performance reviews or engaging in discipline and termination of employees;
  - 3.5. intervening in any incident to implement this policy;
  - 3.6. taking immediate action when necessary, including, but not limited to, calling the Police, Fire Department, and Ambulance Services, and summoning employees certified in First-Aid as needed; and
  - 3.7. immediately reporting to the Chief Executive Officer or Library Board Chairperson, any direct or veiled threats of violence made to an employee, and any action taken.

4. Following a report of an incident, the Chief Executive Officer or Library Board Chairperson shall:
  - 4.1. coordinate an immediate investigation, in cooperation with Police Services or through a trained risk assessor, when any incident or potential incident of violence is reported, in order to assess the risk, or continued risk, to Library employees:
    - 4.1.1. investigations may include interviews with the employee, Supervisors, and other employees; and a review of previous incidents if available; and
  - 4.2. if violence or threats are found to have occurred, take immediate steps to eliminate the risk and any possible recurrence;
  - 4.3. develop or recommend, and monitor, the implementation of an action plan until there is a final resolution of the risk of violence;
  - 4.4. document any information received or action taken in a separate file and take measures to protect the confidentiality of this information;
  - 4.5. advise the Chief Executive Officer (if applicable) and Supervisors on how to minimize the risk of violence associated with performance appraisals, disciplinary measures and terminations, and courses relating to the management of violent and abusive behaviour;
  - 4.6. coordinate the provision of assistance to employees who were the target of violence or witnesses to violence, and who may suffer adverse effects from the situation; and
  - 4.7. ensure that all employees receive a copy of this policy and coordinate general training as well as specific training in response to identified needs.
  
5. The employee shall:
  - 5.1. use appropriate stress-defusing behaviour with clients and with members of the public;
  - 5.2. report to the Chief Executive Officer or Library Board Chairperson, as appropriate, any early warning signs of a potentially threatening situation which arouse concern and any instances of threatening statements or threatening behavior which was directed at them or at any other employee of the Library; and
  - 5.3. cooperate fully in any fact gathering interviews which are designed to assess the risk of violence in the workplace and keep all information concerning the matter confidential.

Failure to do so will result in disciplinary or other appropriate action.
  
6. The following apply to actions resulting from a report:
  - 6.1. employees who, with good intentions, provide information about behavior or actions which they perceive as threatening or potentially violent will not be subject to disciplinary or other action if their perceptions are not substantiated;
  - 6.2. an employee who is the subject of a report and who refuses to discuss potentially violent behavior or cooperate in interventions to assess or defuse the risk of workplace violence is, if information is uncovered through fact-finding to establish a reasonable possibility of risk, granted leave without pay and benefits until he/she agrees to cooperate and provides proof of cooperation. Refusal to co-operate may result in dismissal if the employee has received written notice to that effect and has been given a reasonable opportunity to cooperate;

- 6.3. interventions that may form part of a risk assessment or plan of action for a Library employee who is the subject of a report or investigation may include referral to the employee's physician, use of short term disability plan or temporary leave of absence, referral to counseling and other services, fitness-for-duty evaluation and other appropriate interventions. Extreme situations may warrant suspension, obtaining appropriate court orders and/or police involvement;
  - 6.4. employees who are found to be at risk of engaging in violent conduct or who have engaged in violent conduct may be subject to suspension or dismissal if warranted. Disciplinary action will not normally be taken until all other avenues of assistance have been considered and found to be inappropriate or ineffective. Employees who engage in repeat violent behaviour after a first incident is reported may be subject to immediate dismissal or suspension, pending the development of an appropriate plan of action;
  - 6.5. where the threat or incident of violence has originated from an external source, actions that warrant consideration may include changes to the physical work space, changes to procedures to offer better support and protection, withdrawal of services, police intervention and the use of appropriate court orders;
  - 6.6. a summary of the incident will be kept in the personnel file and all other related documents will be kept in a separate file.
7. The following apply to trauma support:
- 7.1. Library employees who have witnessed or experienced a traumatic event may need special support. Their special needs will be acknowledged and accommodated.
  - 7.2. the Chief Executive Officer or Library Board Chairperson will advise affected staff of their support options and will coordinate any special assistance that may be required.