## WORKPLACE HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE PREVENTION

[Organization Name] is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all employees. In pursuit of this goal, [Organization Name] has established a zero-tolerance rule for harassment or violence in the workplace. If harassment or violence should occur, this policy also outlines the process for complaints and investigations. Should [Organization Name] become aware of an occurrence of harassment or violence in the workplace, an investigation will follow.

DEFINITIONS

As per Alberta’s Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act and taken directly from the government of Alberta:

“Workplace Harassment” means: a single or repeated incident of objectionable or unwelcome conduct, comment, bullying, or action intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group. It is a serious issue and creates an unhealthy work environment resulting in psychological harm to workers.

“Workplace Violence,” whether at a work site or work related, is defined as the threatened, attempted, or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical or psychological injury or harm. It can include:

* physical attack or aggression
* threatening behaviour
* verbal or written threats
* domestic violence
* sexual violence

POLICY

[Organization Name] is committed to ensuring a safe working environment, specifically one that is free from violence and harassment. To ensure employee safety, this policy will outline the following:

* Awareness of what violence and harassment are
* Responsibilities of workplace parties
* Hazard assessment
* Prevention plans
* Incident investigation and reporting
* Worker training

Awareness of Violence and Harassment

Here are some of the ways that violence or harassment could manifest in the workplace (note that this list does not include every example; please speak with your supervisor if you have any doubt about the appropriateness of an action):

* Threatening behaviour, including verbal threats or abuse
* Aggressive behaviour, including encroaching on personal space
* Any sort of physical assault
* The spreading of malicious rumours or gossip about an individual or a group
* The social exclusion or isolation of someone or a particular group of people in the workplace
* Damaging, hiding, or stealing someone’s personal belongings or work equipment
* Persistently criticizing, undermining, belittling, demeaning, or ridiculing someone
* Swearing at someone or using inappropriate language toward them
* Using the Internet to harass, threaten or maliciously embarrass someone
* Using the Internet to make sexual threats, or to harass or exploit someone sexually
* Abusing authority by publicly ridiculing or disciplining a subordinate
* Abusing authority by interfering with a subordinate’s performance or job (for example, blocking applications for leave, training, or promotion in an arbitrary manner)
* Abusing authority by soliciting a sexual or romantic relationship from a subordinate, or making social invitations with sexual overtones to a subordinate
* Making abusive or derogatory remarks or jokes about someone’s gender, gender identity or gender expression, sex, or sexual orientation (for example, homophobic remarks)
* Sexual touching (for example, patting, pinching, caressing, kissing, fondling)
* Sexual invitations or requests in return for a promise of a reward (such as a promotion)
* Displaying offensive posters, cartoons, or images of a sexual nature
* Sending inappropriate electronic communications (for example, sexually explicit emails)
* Domestic violence (also called intimate partner violence, domestic abuse or relationship abuse) is a workplace hazard when it occurs in the workplace (it puts the targeted employee at risk and may pose a threat to coworkers)
  + This list is sourced from the [Government of Canada](https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/workplace-health-safety/harassment-violence-prevention.html)

Supervisorial/Managerial Duties

Nothing in this policy will limit the abilities of supervisors and managers to complete their duties provided they perform them in a respectful, professional manner in good faith. The exercise of supervisorial/managerial authority could include:

* Supervising employees, including setting out their performance expectations and providing feedback (both positive and constructive) about their work performance
* Taking measures to correct performance, including using performance improvement plans
* As necessary, taking disciplinary action
* Assigning work to employees and directing to them how and when it should be done
* Requesting updates or reports on the progress of the work
* Managing time off requests, including either approving or denying requests
* Where necessary, asking for medical documentation to support work absence(s)

Obligations of Work Site Parties

* [Organization Name] is responsible to make sure employees are not subject to workplace violence or harassment. They must also ensure they do not participate in it.
* Supervisors must make sure the workers they are supervising are not subject to workplace violence or harassment.
* Employees must ensure they do not take part in violent or harassing behaviours at any time.

Conducting a Hazard Assessment and Prevention Plans

[Organization Name] will conduct a hazard assessment for violence and harassment every three years. When conducting the risk assessment, [Organization Name] will take into consideration specific factors that may contribute to the risk of harassment or violence including:

* Working in a community-based setting
* Interaction with the public and/or working with unstable or possibly volatile clients.
* The exchange of money
* Working alone or in small numbers
* Working at night
* Working in a high crime area

Based on the hazard assessment, [Organization Name] will put prevention measures in place to mitigate the hazards.

Emergency Procedures

* If you require immediate assistance following an act of violence, are being threatened, or consider yourself to be in imminent danger, contact the police/emergency services immediately by dialing “911” and follow department/facility emergency response procedures (where relevant).
* If you are unable to phone 911 right away, you should:
  + Yell for help.
  + If in a vehicle, honk the horn repeatedly, turn on hazard lights and lock all vehicle doors.
  + If possible, use the vehicle’s emergency alarm.
  + Immediately move to a safe location.
  + Contact a manager/supervisor.

Canada’s *Criminal Code* specifically lays out matters such as violent acts, sexual assault, threats, and behaviours such as stalking. In the event of any of the above, [Organization Name] will immediately contact the police.

Making a Complaint / Complaint Investigation Process

Employees must:

* Immediately report any incident of harassment or violence one is subject to or witnesses to management
* Participate as required in internal and external investigations concerning incidents of workplace harassment or violence.

At [Organization Name], complaints regarding harassment or violence may be brought forward to:

* (Insert Title) or (Insert Title).
* An alternate report may be made to (Insert Title) if either of the above are the alleged harasser(s).
* Immediately upon receipt of a complaint, an investigation will begin, and additional information and context will be sought. The investigation may include:
* A review of the details of the incident;
* Separate interview(s) with the parties involved and any witnesses;
* Examination of any relevant documents, emails, notes, photographs, or video;
* A decision about whether the complaint constitutes workplace harassment; and
* The preparation of a report which summarizes the incident, the steps of the investigation, the evidence collected, and any findings

The employee who disclosed the complaint, as well as the alleged harasser (provided they are both employees of [Organization Name]), will be kept up to date on the investigation and will be notified of the results of the investigation and any subsequent actions to be taken.

Supervisors/Managers must:

* Take appropriate action(s) upon receipt of a complaint of workplace harassment or violence or when aware that workplace harassment or violence is occurring such as investigate incidents
* Prevent it from happening again
* Preparing investigation reports and retain them for at least 2 years
* Impose appropriate disciplinary measures in response to substantiated claims of workplace harassment or violence.

All members of management who are aware, or who ought reasonably to be aware that incidents of workplace harassment or violence are occurring or are thought to be occurring are obligated to take appropriate action to stop the offending behaviours and actions, even in the absence of a formal complaint.

Confidentiality During and After the Investigation

[Organization Name] will ensure that it protects the privacy of any persons involved in:

* An occurrence; and/or
* The resolution process for an occurrence.

[Organization Name] will ensure that information and documents regarding a complaint or incident will not be disclosed except to the extent necessary to protect workers, to investigate the complaint or incident, to take progressive discipline or as otherwise required by law.

All parties involved in a workplace violence complaint, including Complainants, Respondents, witnesses, management, and support persons are expected to treat the matter and any information they become aware of as confidential. No party shall discuss the matter or associated details with other employees or witnesses. An employee may face disciplinary action if it is determined that they have failed to adhere to these confidentiality expectations.

All investigation notes and full reports will be retained in a separate file and are not to be saved in employee personnel files. Investigation outcome letters and disciplinary action will be saved in applicable employee files only when the complaint has been verified and is found to be in breach of this policy.

Breaches of Policy

Any employee who is found to have breached this policy by engaging in violence or a form of reprisal; who breaches confidentiality expectations; fails to cooperate with an investigation; makes a complaint in bad faith or supplies falsified information will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

Disciplinary action may range from training, counselling, written warning, suspension, work transfer and termination of employment, depending on individual circumstances. Additionally, the organization may pursue criminal charges where warranted.

Review and Update of this Policy and Procedures

This policy will be reviewed annually or as often as necessary to properly protect employees from the risk of violence or harassment. This policy and program will be reviewed after any harassment or violence incidents to determine if changes are necessary.

Training on Violence and Harassment

Employees will receive instruction and training on the contents of this policy and the procedures contained within for complaints and investigations.