## WORKPLACE HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

[Organization Name] is committed to ensuring the safety and security of everyone in the workplace or who is conducting work for the organization. We have a zero-tolerance policy for harassment and violence in the workplace.

This policy is in place to detail the process for filing complaints and conducting investigations in accordance with the *Northwest Territories (NWT) Human Rights Act*, the *NWT Safety Act, RSNWT 1988*, c. S-1, and the accompanying *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*. These legislative frameworks ensure the protection of workers' rights and promote a safe and healthy work environment free from harassment and violence.

DEFINITIONS

Harassment," according to the Safety Act, means a course of vexatious comment or conduct at a work site that:

* is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome; and
* constitutes a threat at the work site to the health or safety of a worker​​.

To constitute harassment, any one of the following must have occurred:

* repeated conduct, comments, displays, actions, or gestures; or
* a single, serious occurrence of conduct, or a single, serious comment, display, action or gesture, that has a lasting, harmful effect on the worker’s health or safety​​.

Harassment does not include reasonable action taken by an employer or supervisor relating to the management and direction of the workers or of the work site​​.

“Discrimination,” according to the Human Rights Act, means no person shall, on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination, harass any individual or class of individuals:

* in the provision of goods, services, facilities, or accommodation;
* in the provision of commercial premises or residential accommodation; or
* in matters related to employment"​​.

"Violence," according to the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, means the attempted, threatened or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause injury and includes any threatening statement or behaviour that gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that the worker is at risk of injury​​.

POLICY

[Organization Name] is committed to providing a healthy, safe, and supportive work environment for all employees that is free from workplace violence and harassment. We will not tolerate any such incidents that are perpetuated by or against an employee, client, volunteer, vendor, or visitor.

In pursuit of this commitment, [Organization Name] will take all reasonable steps to prevent workplace violence and harassment and will deal with incidents and complaints made in good faith in a fair, consistent, and timely manner.

Employee Responsibilities

* Understand what constitutes workplace violence and harassment as defined in this policy and adhere to the organization’s zero tolerance requirement.
* Immediately report any incident of violence or harassment one is subject to or witnesses in accordance with the organization’s anti-violence program.
* Participate as required in internal and external investigations concerning incidents of workplace violence or harassment.
* Refrain from any retaliatory acts against any individual who has brought forward a complaint of violence or harassment.
* Attend and actively participate in training and education sessions regarding workplace violence.

Employer and Management Responsibilities

* Assess the risk of workplace violence and implement procedures, response plans, and other controls to help minimize the identified risks.
* Educate and train employees on this policy and program, response plans, and other controls established to protect employee health and safety.
* Ensure a copy of this policy is available to all employees.
* Review the workplace violence and harassment policy and program 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 violent incident to determine if changes are necessary.
* Take appropriate action(s) upon receipt of a complaint of workplace violence or when aware that workplace violence is occurring.
* Impose appropriate disciplinary measures in response to substantiated claims of workplace violence.

All members of management who are aware, or who ought to reasonably be aware, that incidents of workplace violence or harassment 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.

CODE OF PRACTICE - HARASSMENT

A workplace harassment incident or complaint should be reported immediately upon experiencing or witnessing it. This enables an investigation of the incident to begin promptly.

Employees may report workplace harassment incidents or complaints verbally or in writing.

At [Organization Name], complaints regarding harassment 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 be started, 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 videos;
  + 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
* [Organization Name] will take appropriate measures to ensure that employees and/or witnesses involved in filing the complaint are protected, as necessary. This may include temporary reassignments or shift changes. [Organization Name] will ensure that these changes do not penalize any employee who brought forward a complaint or any witness to the complaint.
* [Organization Name] will not disclose any information regarding a complaint of harassment (including any identifying personal information of any of the individuals involved) unless the disclosure is necessary. The disclosure may become necessary for the purposes of investigating the complaint, taking disciplinary action, or as required by law.
* 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.

CODE OF PRACTICE - VIOLENCE

Reporting Incidents of Workplace Violence

* In the event you are directly affected by or witness to an act of violence or a threat of violence in the workplace, it is imperative that the incident be reported immediately. Reports are to be made to your direct supervisor, their designate, or any other relevant party.
* For the health and safety of everyone, employees are encouraged to request an informal meeting with their supervisor, manager, or designate to discuss issues concerning or related to workplace violence.
* Employees should also notify their supervisor, manager, or designate if any restraining order affecting them is in effect or if they are aware of a non-work-related situation that could result in violence in the workplace, including concerns regarding the potential for domestic violence to occur in the workplace.

If you are subject to workplace violence, you also have the option to pursue recourse through the Police or the Federal Criminal Code.

Summoning Immediate Assistance

* If you require immediate assistance following an act of violence, are being threatened, or consider yourself to be in imminent danger, contact the police or emergency services immediately by dialling “911” and follow departmental or facility emergency response procedures (where relevant).
* If you are unable to call 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 or supervisor.

Violence Risk Assessment

[Organization Name] will conduct a risk assessment of the work environment to identify any issues related to potential violence that may impact the organization and its employees and will institute measures to control those risks.

When conducting the risk assessment, [Organization Name] will take into consideration specific areas that may contribute to the risk of 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

As part of its assessment, the organization may review records and reports (incident reports, health and safety inspection reports, etc.). The organization will assess workplace violence hazards in all jobs and throughout the workplace (with worker participation). It conducts risk assessments on a yearly basis as well as when new jobs are created or job descriptions are significantly changed.

Late Night Premises

"Late night retail premises" means a work site that is open to the public between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. for the purposes of making retail sales to consumers.

As applicable, [Organization Name] will ensure that a work site hazard assessment is completed and reviewed at minimum every three years or sooner if an incident occurred that affected the employees working late nights. The following security measures will also be implemented: the development of written safe cash handling procedures that minimize the amount of money that is readily accessible to employees; the use of video cameras that capture key areas in the work site including cash desks and outdoor gas pumps, if applicable; and the establishment of measures to ensure good visibility into and out of the premises; the placement of signs to indicate the workers' limited access to cash and valuables, and the use of video cameras on the premises.

A written check-in system/procedure will also be implemented and employees will be provided with a personal emergency transmitter that signals for emergency response when activated.

Violence Investigation Procedure

The investigation process will be initiated upon receipt of a formal complaint from an employee or at the discretion of the employer where workplace violence is known or suspected to be occurring.

The organization will endeavour to complete investigations within 90 calendar days or less once the process has been initiated, unless extenuating circumstances warrant a longer investigation (for example, where more than five witnesses must be interviewed or in the event a witness, Complainant or Respondent is unavailable due to illness).

Once initiated, the investigation procedure will generally adhere to the following steps and guidelines:

1. The organization will appoint an internal or external investigator(s) to promptly conduct and document an investigation into the incident in which all facts are examined in a manner that is timely, fair, and impartial.
2. No person shall be appointed to the role of investigator if they have been named in a complaint.
3. Any allegations against (Insert Title) will be investigated by a neutral third-party investigator.
4. The investigator(s) will review this policy, the submitted complaint, and supporting documents and will meet with the Complainant to gather additional details and information regarding the incident(s).
5. Individual(s) named in the complaint (known as Respondents) will be advised via written notification of the complaint that has been filed against them. The notification will inform the Respondent of the alleged offensive action(s)/behaviour(s) made against them.
6. The investigator will then meet with the Respondent to allow the individual to respond to the presented allegations and gather facts and information.
7. Where warranted, the organization may issue a paid administrative leave to the Respondent, complainant, and any other party deemed necessary until the investigation is completed.
8. Employees on paid administrative leave pending the results of the investigation must remain available to meet with the investigator and return to work as requested.
9. The investigator may also individually meet with witnesses and any other individual deemed necessary to provide additional evidence or context or information pertinent to the investigation.
10. Once the investigator is satisfied with the amount of factual information collected from all parties, they will make a determination as to whether or not the allegation(s) are substantiated based on a balance of probabilities and, where substantiated, make recommendations on any remedial action to be taken.
11. The investigator will provide an investigation report, which must include a summary of the steps taken during the investigation, the complaint and allegations of the Complainant, the response from the Respondent(s), the evidence of any witnesses, any additional evidence gathered, findings of fact, the conclusion of the investigation, and any recommendations made.
12. If the investigator deems a breach of the policy has occurred, the organization will take necessary progressive discipline where deemed appropriate to do so.
13. If the results of the investigation do not substantiate that a breach of this policy has occurred, the allegations will be disregarded in any subsequent employment decision affecting the parties involved. This is the case except where there is repetition of the same allegation from the same or different parties, and in that case, further investigation and progressive discipline may occur. However, if, after investigating any complaint, the organization determines that the complaint is not genuine or that an employee has deliberately provided false information regarding the complaint, disciplinary action may be taken against the Complainant or the individual who gave the false information.
14. If the Complainant disagrees with the outcome of the investigation, they will have the option to pursue recourse through the applicable legislation.
15. [Organization Name] will provide the Complainant and Respondent (where the Respondent is an employee) with a written outcome letter summarizing the investigation findings and any disciplinary action to be taken as a result of the investigation.
16. All parties involved in the investigation process, including the Complainants, Respondents, and witnesses, are responsible for fully cooperating with the investigator(s) throughout the investigation process.

Disciplinary Action

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, a written warning, or termination of employment, depending on individual circumstances. Additionally, the organization may pursue criminal charges where warranted.

Training

[Organization Name] will provide training for employees which includes the means to recognize potentially violent situations, the procedures, work practices, administrative arrangements, and engineering controls to eliminate or reduce the risk of violence to workers, the appropriate responses of workers to violence, including how to obtain assistance, and procedures for reporting violence.

Exposure to Violence

[Organization Name] recommends that any employee who has been exposed to violence should consult the worker's physician for treatment or referral for post-incident counselling.

Records

All reports and investigations into workplace violence and harassment are retained for a period of five years.

Policy and Program Review and Availability

This policy and program for preventing workplace violence and harassment will be reviewed regularly, at minimum, every 3 years or sooner if a violent incident occurs.

[Organization Name] will make a copy of the policy readily available to workers upon request.