Policy Type: Human Resources **Policy Number: HR-08**

Policy Title: Prevention of Workplace Violence **Initial Policy Approval Date: July 21, 2009**
Last Review/Revision Date: October 2024
Year of Next Review: October 2025

This policy addresses the prevention of workplace violence as part of the Township of Madawaska Valley Public Library Board's (the Board) responsibility for worker health and safety under the ***Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act*** (OHSA). This policy is for the mutual protection of staff and clients from violence or threats of violence.

Violent behaviour in the workplace is unacceptable from anyone including staff, members of the Board, volunteers, clients, and others who do business with the Library. Individuals who violate this policy may be removed from Library property, and in the case of staff members, will be subject to disciplinary action which may include termination.

Section 1: Definition

1. The Library recognizes the definition of violence as set out in the ***Occupational Health and Safety Act.*** Workplace violence means:
   a) the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker;
   b) an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker;
   c) 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. Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter O.1, s.1 (1)

2. Violence in the workplace may include:
   a) verbally threatening to attack a worker;
   b) leaving threatening notes or sending threatening e-mails to the workplace;
   c) shaking a fist in the worker's face;
   d) hitting or trying to hit a worker;
   e) throwing or kicking an object;
   f) sexual aggression against a worker.

3. Violence in the Library or on library property also includes:
   a) intentionally or recklessly damaging of the property of another person without permission;
   b) intentionally causing alarm;
   c) recklessly creating a risk by fighting;
   d) creating a hazardous condition or danger by recklessly engaging in conduct which creates a substantial risk of serious physical injury;

e) intentionally placing or attempting to place another person in fear of imminent serious physical injury;
f) wielding a weapon.

Section 2: Responsibility and Response

1. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or designate must develop and maintain a workplace violence program, which will set out:
   a) a process for assessing the risk of violence in the workplace;
   b) measures to control risk including those from domestic violence;
   c) procedures for reporting incidents of violence;
   d) the process for dealing with, and investigating, violent incidents and complaints. (See Appendix A.)

2. Employees are encouraged to report behaviour that they reasonably believe poses a potential for violence as described above.

3. Anyone experiencing or witnessing imminent danger or actual violence involving weapons or personal injury should call the police.

4. Workplace violence should be reported immediately to the most senior staff member available.

5. Physical or sexual assault or threat of physical violence will be reported to police.

6. All complaints, reports or advisements will be thoroughly investigated by the CEO or designate.

7. The Library will provide staff members with information on the risk of violence in the library and training workshops on a periodic basis addressing various issues of violence in the workplace such as “dealing with difficult people.”

8. The Library, at the request of an employee, or at its own discretion, may prohibit members of the public, including family members, from seeing a staff member on Library property in cases where the staff member suspects that an act of violence will result from an encounter with said individual(s).

9. This policy (HR-08) and the Workplace Violence Program (HR-08-Appendix A) will be:
   a) reviewed annually by the Board;
   b) posted in the staff room(s);

c) posted on the Library's website.

Section 3: Confidentiality and False Reports

1. All investigations, interviews, and deliberations shall be conducted in strict confidence to the extent possible. The documents will be stored by the CEO in a Human Resources file and access to those records will be restricted.

2. Staff members who are found to have made false or malicious complaints will be subject to disciplinary action.

Related Documents:
Occupational Health and Safety Act R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER O.1
Bill 168 – An Act to amend the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace and other matters. S.O. 2009 Chapter 23
Policy Number **HR-07: Workplace Harassment and Discrimination**
Policy Number **HR-09: Health and Safety**
Policy Number **OP-02: Safety, Security and Emergency**

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Appendix A — Workplace Violence Program

Plan for Maintaining Security in the Library

1. The Library staff will conduct a Worksite Assessment as often as necessary to ensure measures for violence prevention are effective. The assessment will:
   a) identify high risk factors;
   b) identify jobs or locations with the greatest risk;
   c) include a physical workplace security audit;
   d) evaluate the effectiveness of existing security measures.

2. The CEO, or designate, will annually review the history of past incidents to identify patterns or trends.

3. The CEO, or designate, will review annually the previously recognized areas of higher risk in the Library including:
   a) ongoing contact with the public;
   b) working alone or in small numbers;
   c) the circulation desk where money is kept;
   d) closing the Library building at night;
   e) monitoring of secondary entrances to the Library.

Measures for Reducing the Risk of Workplace Violence

1. Institute general measures to reduce risk, including:
   a) designate the staff washroom (room with door that locks and take a mobile phone) as an emergency safe room
   b) keep all secondary entrance doors locked, use closed circuit camera and buzzer
   c) ensure staff will not working alone in the Library without prior consent of the CEO
   d) keep the exterior lights around the building in good working order.

2. Recognize the Signs of Violence
   a) Early identification and prevention of violence in the workplace is encouraged. Potential threats of violence that should be reported could include the following:
      i) threatening statements to do harm to self or others;
      ii) reference to other incidents of violence;
      iii) confrontational behaviour;
      iv) major change in personality, mood or behaviour;

v) substance abuse.

3. Steps for Staff Members to Increase Personal Safety
   a) Notice your surroundings and report any unsafe or dangerous situations to the most senior staff member.
   b) If you feel uncomfortable about a person who has entered the Library, trust your instincts. If you feel threatened, make a scene – YELL!
   c) Use a buddy system when leaving work.
   d) If you ever find you are working alone in the Library, let the CEO or someone at home know the situation and tell him or her when you expect to leave.
   e) If you enter a room and suspect it is unsafe, don't call out. Back out, go to a safe, lockable place with a phone and call for help.
   f) Know the nearest exit or room with a lock

4. Staff Procedures for dealing with:
   a) Threatening Behaviour
      i) Do not argue with a threatening person. Identify yourself as a library staff member. Remain calm and keep your voice low and firm.
      ii) Do not put yourself or others in danger. Keep a distance of four feet.
      iii) Be friendly but firm, introduce yourself, look at the person while you talk to him/her, let the person talk, clarify the problem and offer solutions.
      iv) Get assistance from another staff member.
      v) Advise him/her that the police will be called if the abuse does not stop.
      vi) **If the behavior does not change, call the police.**
      vii) Notify the CEO or designate.

   b) Violence/Assault
      i) If you hear raised voices or sounds of a scuffle, investigate.
      ii) **If you witness violence or an assault call the police and describe the situation.**
      iii) Recruit other staff members to move others out of the way to a safer location.
      iv) Do not block exits to prevent a threatening/violent person from leaving the building.
      v) Do not invade the personal space of the threatening person.
      vi) Do not get between two people fighting.
      vii) Notice details so you can describe the situation to the police.
      viii) Notify the CEO or designate.

5. Domestic Violence – Steps to Increase Your Personal Safety
    i) Tell someone at work about your situation.
    ii) Make up a "code word" for co-workers so they know when to call for help.
    iii) Ask your co-workers to screen your calls and visitors.
    iv) Ask a co-worker to call the police if your abuser is bothering you.

How to Report a Situation

1. A report should be made as soon as possible after an action or behaviour occurred.
2. An informal, verbal complaint may be brought forward to the CEO. It is in the best interest of all concerned that a report be written.
3. If a formal complaint is requested, the staff member must file a written report with the CEO.
4. The report should include a brief statement of the incident, where it occurred, date and time it occurred, the person(s) involved, and the names of any witness, if applicable.

Investigation and Dealing with Incidents or Complaints

1. After receiving a report, the CEO or designate, will complete an investigation as quickly as possible, depending on the nature and severity of the issue. This will include interviews with the staff member; the alleged perpetrator, if a staff member; and any witnesses.
2. The results of the investigations will be discussed with the staff member and recommended preventative actions and/or resolutions presented.
3. A separate meeting will be held with the alleged perpetrator, if a staff member.
4. If the findings do not support the allegations, the CEO will recommend that no further action is necessary and that the matter be closed.
5. Should the investigation conclude that there is evidence of misconduct, the CEO will prescribe a resolution that may include police intervention.
6. Employees who are found to have made false or malicious complaints will be subject to disciplinary action.