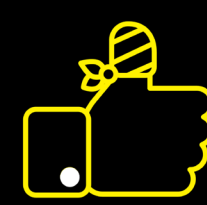


Agilus Health & Safety Bulletin

Violence and Harassment in the Workplace



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What is workplace violence and harassment?

Workplace harassment is defined as 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.

While exact definitions vary between provinces, generally speaking workplace violence includes:

- Threatening behaviour – such as shaking fists, destroying property or throwing objects.
- Verbal or written threats – any expression of an intent to inflict harm.
- Verbal abuse – swearing, insults or condescending language.
- Physical attacks – hitting, shoving, pushing or kicking.

What are signs that a worker may need support?

It's often difficult to know when a co-worker needs support. A physical altercation is easy to identify but some less obvious behaviors may signal that a co-worker is struggling and needs workplace support. It's crucial to look for multiple signs and escalating behavior. Each situation is unique, and professional judgment or outside help may be required. Warning signs can include changes in behavior, disruptive conduct, and the presence of multiple adjacent signs, such as emotional outbursts, absenteeism, disrespect for authority, errors, poor decision-making, and social isolation. As managers and co-workers, it is important to monitor these signs and intervene if the behaviour escalates or forms a pattern.

What can you do if you are concerned for the safety of yourself or others?

In cases where safety is at risk, immediate action should be taken such as calling 911 and taking the appropriate steps to protect yourself from harm, such as leaving the area. Other actions include adhering to your workplace's policies for addressing violence and harassment, and reporting incidents witnessed. Workers can report concerns to supervisors, human resources, or designated violence prevention personnel within their organization. It's important to prioritize safety and follow established procedures in such situations.

Information and instruction on workplace violence and harassment

All workers must be familiar with their employer's workplace violence and harassment policies and programs.

For workplace violence, workers should:

- Know how to immediately request assistance when workplace violence is imminent or occurring.
- Understand the process for reporting incidents of workplace violence to their employer or supervisor.
- Be aware of how the employer will investigate and address incidents, threats, or complaints related to workplace violence.
- Understand and be capable of implementing the protective measures and procedures in place to safeguard them from workplace violence.
- Be able to execute any other procedures integral to the workplace violence prevention program.

For workplace harassment, workers should:

- Be aware of the procedure for reporting instances of workplace harassment to their employer or supervisor.
- Know how to report workplace harassment incidents when the employer or supervisor is the alleged harasser.
- Understand how their employer will investigate and handle workplace harassment complaints.
- Be informed about the confidentiality of information regarding harassment incidents or complaints, unless disclosure is necessary for investigation or corrective action, or as required by law.
- Know that the results of an investigation and any corrective actions will be communicated to the worker who reported workplace harassment and to the alleged harasser (if they are also employed by the same employer).

Building a healthy, diverse and inclusive workforce

The federal and provincial governments in Canada have been taking various measures to reduce workplace violence and harassment. These efforts aim to create safer and more respectful work environments for employees by establishing frameworks and clear expectations for behaviours. Here are some common actions governments are taking in Canada:

1. **Legislation and Regulations:** Many governments have enacted laws and regulations that require employers to address workplace violence and harassment. These laws often mandate the development and implementation of policies and programs, as well as training for employees and managers.
2. **Anti-Discrimination Laws:** Laws prohibiting discrimination based on factors such as gender, race, sexual orientation, and disability can indirectly contribute to reducing harassment in the workplace by promoting equal treatment.
3. **Occupational Health and Safety Regulations:** Governments include workplace violence prevention in occupational health and safety regulations. Employers are often required to assess and address potential risks of violence in the workplace.
4. **Awareness Campaigns:** Some governments run public awareness campaigns to educate both employers and employees about workplace violence and harassment, their rights, and available resources.
5. **Training and Education:** Governments provide funding to partner organizations for workplace violence and harassment prevention training. This training may focus on recognizing, preventing, and addressing such issues.
6. **Research and Data Collection:** Governments invest in research to better understand the prevalence and causes of workplace violence and harassment. This information helps in developing effective policies and programs.
7. **General Employee Protections:** Canada Labour Code prohibits employers from taking, or threatening to take, any punitive or disciplinary action against employees who have acted in accordance with the Code and Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations.

Understanding, recognizing and ending workplace violence and harassment is everyone's responsibility. Similar to workplace hazards, it's important to keep your eyes open and report situations that are repetitive in nature or escalating. Working together and maintaining open communication is the best defence against violence and harassment.

Please refer to Agilus' Workplace Harassment, Discrimination and Violence Policy included in your Code of Conduct onboarding documents for more information and specific reporting procedures.



Together, we can combat workplace violence and harassment.

Have questions regarding this bulletin, or workplace health and safety?

Contact us at: safety@agilus.ca

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