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## 6.6 VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

### Objective:

- ✚ Raise awareness regarding the prevention of abusive and aggressive behavior at work.
- ✚ Establish a comprehensive reporting and tracking mechanism to document and investigate incidents that threaten the safety of our staff and wellness of our environment.
- ✚ Educate and/or train employees in the prevention and elimination of abusive and aggressive behavior.
- ✚ Educate clients about our “violence-free” work environment.
- ✚ Provide the necessary physical and emotional support to those who perceive they have been victims of aggression/violence at work.

### Guidelines:

- ✚ Promote a violence-free workplace for all employees.
- ✚ Respect and protect the health, safety and dignity of all employees.
- ✚ Empower employees to make and act on decisions regarding risk of violence.
- ✚ Ensure employees are aware of and follow safety practices to prevent and respond to violent incidents.
- ✚ Offer critical incident debriefing and /or other support, including authorization for leave from work to consult with a physician of their choice for treatment or referral, to employees directly affected by workplace violence.
- ✚ At minimum, comply with the NL OH&S Act and Regulations.

### Purpose:

- ✚ To promote a work environment whereby every individual feels free from any kind of threatening or abusive behavior.
- ✚ To provide employees with effective tools and strategies to prevent and respond to incidents of abuse and aggression in the workplace.
- ✚ To make available information regarding ways to identify those who potentially predict an incident of abusive and aggressive behavior and therefore prevent these from occurring.
- ✚ To implement and exceed provisions in applicable legislation regarding the creation of safe environments for employees, including:
  - Occupational Health and Safety Act & Regulations
  - Duties of Employers
  - Duties of Supervisors
  - Duties of Workers
  - Due Diligence
  - Safe work practices & conditions
  - Training
  - Human Rights Code
  - WHSC Act and Legislation

## **Types of Violence:**

Verbal abuse and threatening behavior (also known as psychological abuse) could include but is not limited to:

- ✚ Shouting
- ✚ Condescending language
- ✚ Swearing
- ✚ Bullying or any other behavior meant to intimidate, belittle or demean another.
- ✚ Making racial slurs or comments.
- ✚ Obscene or threatening phone calls at work or home.
- ✚ Any behavior meant to offend, humiliate or embarrass.
- ✚ Veiled threats or open threats.
- ✚ Gestures with the hands or other parts of the body that indicate harm.
- ✚ Stalking
- ✚ Display or use of any kind weapon, including a gun, baseball bat, knife, surgical instrument, etc., or any other object that could be interpreted as being dangerous.

Physical abuse and threatening behavior could include but is not limited to:

- ✚ Slapping
- ✚ Shoving and pushing
- ✚ Pinching
- ✚ Hair pulling
- ✚ Punching
- ✚ Hitting
- ✚ Throwing an object at a person
- ✚ Kicking
- ✚ Scratching
- ✚ Tugging at clothes
- ✚ Biting
- ✚ Shooting and stabbing
- ✚ Suicide/attempting suicide

Damage to employees' personal property or to company property, such as:

- ✚ Throwing of any object.
- ✚ Vandalism to employee's car.
- ✚ Deliberately kicking or punching fixtures and fittings.
- ✚ Banging or throwing equipment.
- ✚ Interfering with or causing damage to employee vehicles at work.

## **Responding to incidents of violence**

- ✚ If an incident of violence or aggression occurs that is of an immediate or threatening nature with a client; the employee who feels he/she is in immediate danger should leave the area immediately and report to the site manager.
- ✚ In a situation involving a perpetrator with a weapon or a hostage, lock yourself in a room/area and call 911 if it is available in your area or call the RCMP at 1 800 709 RCMP (7267).
- ✚ In a violent situation with a client or a client's family member; the employee must leave the client's home immediately and contact the site manager. The client must then be identified as having a history of violence so as to inform all other employees.

## **Clients Prone to Violence:**

The most useful criteria in indicating a potential for immediate violence have been changes in the client's autonomic nervous system. Sweating, flushed face, changes in the size of the pupil's of the eye, muscle tension are some cues to look for. Other behaviors that can signal whether a client's behavior is escalating toward violence are as follows:

- ✚ Rapid, loud, or profane speech.
- ✚ Sudden change in the client's level of consciousness such as increased disorientation and confusion.
- ✚ Clenched fists, gritted teeth, reddened face, widened eyes, flaring nostrils, rapid breathing.
- ✚ Motor agitation, such as agitated pacing and inability to remain still.
- ✚ Hallucinations, which can be auditory or visual and may be benign or command-orientated.
- ✚ Sudden change in or extremes of affect (exhilaration, grandiosity).
- ✚ sudden lack of affect in someone who was previously very agitated and threatening, which may indicate that he's made a decision to take violent action.
- ✚ Use of alcohol or drugs.

## **Precaution for dealing with clients with a history of violent behavior:**

- ✚ A risk assessment must be completed and documented on the client's file prior to placement with a staff member.
- ✚ The client's file is to be flagged as a client prone to violence.
- ✚ Staff must inform the site manager about any client who exhibit threatening or abusive behavior.
- ✚ Criteria for this flag would include previous actual acts of violence and any risk factors identified.
- ✚ "Acting out Behavior" alerts should be communicated to staff to warn of the potential for violence.

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