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POLICY	Manual: Administrative	Section: Staff Safety	Code No.: S V020	Old Code No.: A V20, A V020
Title: Violence Prevention			Original Effective Date: Jun 01, 1993	
			Review/Revised Effective Date: Feb 17, 2016	
			Next Review Date: Aug 01, 2017	
Cross Index: S I010 , Code White , S H010 , A A020 , Health & Safety forms	Authoring Committee/Program/Dept: Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness		Approved By: AMC	

POLICY

Southlake Regional Health Centre (Southlake) will not tolerate any type of violence or harassment within the workplace or during work-related activities and recognizes the right of staff to freedom from workplace harassment because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, or other characteristic as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code. Southlake shall make every reasonable effort to identify all potential sources of such risk to eliminate or minimize them through our workplace violence and harassment prevention program.

Southlake will take every reasonable precaution to protect staff from physical injury if we become aware, or believe that domestic violence is a risk.

Incidents of workplace violence will be brought to the attention of the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) by Human Resources within 4 business days. The prevalence and trending of incidents of violence in the workplace will be reviewed by the JHSC. Incidents of harassment will be reviewed by Human Resources.

The Vice President of Human Resources and Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness is responsible for adherence to this policy.

Preamble

Southlake recognizes the potential for violence and harassment in the workplace and is committed to providing a safe, healthy and supportive work environment by treating our staff and clients with respect, fairness and sensitivity.

Violence and harassment in the workplace can have devastating effects on a staff member's quality of life and organizational productivity. Workplace violence is:

- the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker;
- an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker; or,
- a statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker (Occupational Health and Safety Act, s.1).

Definitions:

- "Staff" for the purposes of this policy is defined as employees, physicians, volunteers, students, medical trainees, medical staff, and contract workers.
- "Workplace Violence" - any actual, attempted or threatened behaviour of a person that causes or is likely to cause psychological harm/injury/illness or that gives a person reason to believe that s/he or another person is at risk of psychological harm/injury/illness.
- Definitions associated with Workplace Violence and Harassment:
 - **Physical assault:** is any physical force or threat of physical force to create fear and control another person.
 - **Sexual assault:** is any unwanted sexual act imposed by one person upon another.
 - **Sexual harassment:** is often interpreted as objectionable comments or conduct of a "sexual" nature including one or a series of incidents involving unwelcome or sexual advances, requests for sexual favours or other verbal or physical conduct.
 - However, sexual harassment, in the broader context of unequal treatment based on gender, may refer to instances where the behaviour is not overtly sexual in nature, but is related to the person's gender, and demeans or causes personal humiliation or embarrassment to the recipient.
 - **Threat (verbal or written):** is a communicated intent to inflict physical or other harm on any person or to property by some unlawful act. A direct threat is a clear and explicit communication distinctly indicating that the potential offender intends to do harm, for example, "I am going to make you pay for what you did to me." A conditional threat involves a condition, for example, "If you don't leave me alone you will regret it." Veiled threats usually involve body language or behaviours that leave little doubt in the mind of the victim that the perpetrator intends to harm.
 - **Verbal/Emotional/Psychological abuse:** is a pattern of behaviour that makes someone feel worthless, flawed, unloved, or endangered. Like other forms of abuse, it is based on power and control. Examples include: swearing, put-downs/name calling over a period of time, labeling the victim in a derogatory way such as stupid, crazy or irrational, acts of humiliation, extreme jealous behaviour, attacking the victim's self-esteem in other ways. It can also include harming pets and damaging property.
 - **Near Miss:** An act of striking out, but missing the target.
 - **Workplace Bullying:** repeated and persistent negative acts towards one or more individuals, which involve a perceived power imbalance and create a hostile work environment (Salin, 2003)
 - **Workplace Harassment:** engaging in a course of vexatious (provoking irritation) comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome, and causes the person to believe her/his health and safety are at risk. (Occupational Health and Safety Act, s.1)

There are four categories of workplace violence:

- *Type I (Criminal Intent): Committed by a perpetrator who has no relationship to the workplace*
- *Type II (Client or Customer): The perpetrator is a client at the workplace who becomes violent toward a worker or another client*
- *Type III (Worker-to Worker): The perpetrator is an employee or past employee of the workplace*
- *Type IV (Personal Relationship): The perpetrator has or has had a relationship with an employee, e.g., domestic violence in the workplace*

(Public Services Health & Safety Association, 2010)

PROCEDURE

Purpose:

- Southlake is committed to preventing violence and harassment by familiarizing all workplace parties with the related terminology as well as their individual responsibilities for prevention and corrective action. As well, Southlake will take every reasonable precaution under the circumstances for the protection of staff against violence and harassment.

Responsibility: (refer to specific duties in [Responsibilities](#) section below)

- Employer
- Employee
- Manager/Supervisor
- Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC)

Equipment:

- [SafePoint](#)

Method:

Reporting and Action:

1. At any time a staff member may seek confidential advice or assistance from Human Resources on how to deal with a situation involving workplace violence or harassment or how to bring forward a complaint.
2. Staff who feel they have experienced or witnessed workplace violence or harassment should discuss the problem with his/her immediate supervisor and/or a Human Resources Representative as soon as possible.
3. The immediate supervisor and/or Human Resources Representative will interview the party reporting the alleged violence or harassment and determine what immediate steps are necessary which may include removal of one or more parties from their area of assignment or from the workplace pending investigation, reminding parties of available resources such as Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness (OHSW) and our independent Employee Assistance Program and, contacting the police if appropriate.

Investigating and Follow Up:

1. The matter will be investigated immediately by the immediate supervisor, or the Human Resources department and/or others assigned by the Human Resources department and the individual(s) alleged to have engaged in workplace violence or harassment will be advised of the allegation(s) made against them.
2. The investigation will include review of written and verbal accounts of the date(s), times (s), location(s), description of behaviour, and any occasion when the alleged behaviour occurred, investigation notes and other relevant evidence available to the investigator(s).
3. The results of the investigation and recommended discipline and/or remedial action will be shared with the complainant and the individual alleged to have engaged in the workplace violence or harassment.
4. If the complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily, the complainant may then submit the complaint in writing to the Chief Human Resources Officer or designate who will conduct a further review of the issue which may include an opportunity for all parties having knowledge of the matter to state their case.

Responsibilities:

Employer:

- Ensure that measures and procedures are developed for the protection of staff against workplace violence and harassment through the use of risk assessments.
- Ensure compliance with the measures and procedures developed for workplace violence and harassment prevention.
- Ensure accountability for responding to and resolving complaints of workplace violence

and harassment.

- Ensure compliance by all who have a relationship with the organization
- Post a copy of this policy in the workplace.
- In consultation with the JHSC, conduct regular risk assessments which will include tracking and analysis of incidents for trending and prevention initiatives.
- In consultation with the JHSC, establish control measures to prevent injuries or illnesses associated with workplace violence or harassment.
- In consultation with the JHSC, establish and deliver training and education for all employees regarding the workplace violence and harassment prevention programs and the control measures that have been implemented for their protection.
- Ensure that staff report incidents of workplace violence using SafePoint (refer to [Incident and Hazard Reporting and Investigation for Staff](#) policy)
- Ensure that staff report incidents of workplace harassment and bullying to Human Resources.
- Ensure that reports or threats of violence/harassment are investigated in a prompt, objective and sensitive manner.
- Ensure any deaths or critical injuries are reported and investigated as per the Critical Injuries Incident Reporting policy.
- Ensure that JHSC receives reports of incidents of workplace violence within four business days.
- Ensure that all necessary corrective actions are taken to prevent future incidents of workplace violence and harassment.
- Ensure that staff report to OHSW or the Emergency Department to receive the appropriate medical attention and support that may be needed by those that are directly or indirectly involved in acts of workplace violence and harassment.
- Ensure that the appropriate resources are made available to managers/supervisors in their efforts to prevent and control workplace violence and harassment.

Manager/Supervisor:

- Enforce the workplace violence and harassment policies and procedures and monitor worker compliance.
- Identify and alert staff to violent persons and hazardous situations.
- Investigate all workplace violence and harassment incidents using the Southlake incident investigation procedure (refer to [Incident and Hazard Reporting and Investigation for Staff](#) policy) and contact the police as required.
- Ensure the incident is also reported in SafePoint if the incident or near miss involved staff, patients and/or visitors
- Ensure that staff report to OHSW or the Emergency Department to receive the appropriate medical attention and support that may be needed by those that are directly or indirectly involved in acts of workplace violence and harassment.
- Debrief with those involved in the incident either directly or indirectly. Ensure that those involved in the incident directly and indirectly receive the appropriate supports as required.
- Contact Human Resources to ensure the employee receives further counseling about her/his legal rights.
- Ensure proper procedures for reporting and investigating critical or fatal injuries are followed as per policy

Employee:

- Participate in education and training programs relating to workplace violence and harassment to ensure ability to respond suitably to any incident of workplace violence or harassment.
- Understand and comply with the violence and harassment prevention policies and related procedures and programs.
- Report all incidents or injuries of violence and harassment or threats of violence and harassment to the manager/supervisor immediately.
- Complete necessary documentation such as:
 - Code White Record for Patient (if incident involved a patient)
 - SafePoint incident report if the incident or near miss involves staff, visitors and/or patients. Also report the need for medical attention.
- Assist the employer in performing risk assessments by contributing comments or concerns.
- Seek support including use of your code white button, dialing extension 2333 or using your voice to call a code white when confronted with violence and harassment or threats

of violence and harassment.(Refer to [Code White](#) policy)

- Seek medical attention as necessary.
- At a minimum annually, participate in a review of the workplace violence and harassment prevention policies and program through Core Curriculum.

Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC):

- Ensure consultation about the development, establishment and implementation of violence prevention measures and procedures
- Make recommendations to the employer for developing, establishing and providing training and education in violence prevention measures and procedures.
- At a minimum, annually take part in a review of the workplace violence and harassment prevention policies and program.
- The worker-designate should investigate or assist in the investigation of all critical or fatal injuries relating to workplace violence or harassment.
- Ensure that any workplace violence risks/hazards are assessed during the monthly workplace inspections.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. Confidentiality must be distinguished from anonymity. In any complaint, the employee seeking a remedy through this policy must be prepared to be identified to the alleged perpetrator(s).

The written complaint and information regarding the investigation may be shared with individuals with a legitimate need to know, as determined by Human Resources.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

If there is evidence of harassment or violence, appropriate discipline may be applied, ranging from a written reprimand and apology up to and including termination from employment.

If there is no evidence of harassment or violence, and the complaint was made in good faith, no documentation of the complaint will be placed in the employee file of the alleged perpetrator, or any person involved in the complaint.

Any employee who knowingly makes a false claim will be subject to the appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

FREEDOM FROM REPRISAL

The Hospital is committed to protecting any staff making a complaint about harassment or violence in good faith, or providing information about a complaint, from reprisal or threat of reprisal or retaliation. Any individual who retaliates against another individual for making a complaint or for providing information regarding a complaint will be subject to disciplinary action up to including termination of employment.

RECORD RETENTION

All records of reports and investigations of workplace violence and harassment will be maintained for five years.

Special Considerations:

Not Applicable.

References:

- [The Compensation for Victims of Crime Act](#)
- [The Criminal Code of Canada](#)
- [The Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)

- [The Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- [The Regulated Health Professions Act](#)
- [The Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997](#)
- Ontario Safety Association for Community and Healthcare, March 2010
- Public Services Health and Safety Association, 2010

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Dave Williams, President & CEO

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Date

*signed and dated copy maintained by Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness.

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