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Table of Contents:

PHILOSOPHY.....	2
PURPOSE	2
POLICY STATEMENT	3
RESPONSIBILITIES	3
• EMPLOYER	3
• MANAGERS/ SUPERVISORS.....	5
• EMPLOYEES	6
• PHYSICIANS	6
• OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY	6
• JOINT HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE	6
DEFINITIONS.....	7
• WORKPLACE VIOLENCE	7
• WORKPLACE HARASSMENT.....	7
• WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT.....	7
• ASSAULT	8
• NEAR MISS	8
• PHYSICAL ATTACK	8
• PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE	8
• SEXUAL ABUSE	8
• SEXUAL ASSAULT	8
• THREAT	8

- VERBAL ABUSE 8
- FOUR CATEGORIES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE 9
- REPORTING, INVESTIGATION AND RESPONSE 9**
 - FLAGGING 9
 - CONFIDENTIALITY..... 10
 - EMERGENCY RESPONSE MEASURES..... 10
 - RISK ASSESSMENTS/ PREVENTION 10
 - EDUCATION AND TRAINING..... 11
 - CONTROL 11
- SUPPORTS FOR EMPLOYEES AFFECTED BY WORKPLACE VIOLENCE11**
- POLICY REVIEW12**
- REFERENCES & RESOURCES.....12**

Philosophy

TEGH is committed to the expenditure of time, attention, authority and resources to the workplace parties to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for all employees and patients/clients for whom we care.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define behaviour that constitutes workplace violence and to define procedures for reporting and resolving incidents of workplace violence. TEGH is committed to providing a working environment free of violence by ensuring that all workplace parties are familiar with the definitions of workplace violence and their individual responsibilities for prevention and corrective action. To establish this policy, TEGH, has consulted the joint health and safety committee and the following legislation governing workplace violence in Ontario:

- The Occupational Health and Safety Act
- The Criminal Code of Canada
- The Ontario Human Rights Code
- The Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997
- The Compensation for Victims of Crime Act
- The Regulated Health Professions Act
- The Occupier’s Liability Act
- The Public Hospitals Act

Policy Statement

- The Toronto East General Hospital (TEGH) is committed to ensuring a work environment that is safe, healthy, secure and respectful of each individual and that at no time are staff, physicians, volunteers, students, contractors, patients and visitors exposed to any form of violent, abusive or aggressive acts or potential violent acts in the TEGH environment. TEGH is committed to the implementation of measures and procedures to prevent, control and minimize the risk of workplace violence. As a hospital community, we have a shared interest in the prevention of violent, abusive and aggressive behaviour. All members of the TEGH community (including patients, staff, physicians, students, contractors, volunteers, and visitors) share a significant interest, role and responsibility in connection with securing and maintaining a hospital environment that is free from any form of violence. TEGH is committed to exhibiting a zero tolerance for violence, abusive and aggressive behaviour. We believe that a safe workplace is built on a solid partnership and relationship among union representatives, union and non-union employees, privileged health care professionals and management.
- This policy applies to all incidents of violence and potential violence involving employees, contract employees, students, interns, residents, medical staff, patients, visitors, volunteers, suppliers, contractors, consultants, vendors and tenants.
- All workplace parties are accountable for complying with the policy, program, measures and procedures related to workplace violence.

Responsibilities

• Employer

- Take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker.
- Actively participate in the management of violent/aggressive behaviour.
- Facilitate medical attention and support for all those either directly or indirectly involved.
- Ensure that measures and procedures identified in the violence prevention policy and program are carried out and that management is held accountable for responding to and resolving complaints of violence and appropriate investigation is conducted into incident and complaints of workplace harassment ([Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy](#))

- Ensure compliance by all persons who have a relationship with the organization, such as physicians, contractors, volunteers, etc.
- Identify and alert staff to patients/persons with a history of violent behaviour if the worker can expect to encounter the person in the course of work, and if the worker may be at risk of physical injury. In doing so, personal information may be disclosed, but only what is reasonably necessary to protect the worker from physical injury.
- Conduct regular risk assessments related to Workplace Violence.
- Advise the JHSC of the results of any risk assessments related to Workplace Violence and provide a copy if in writing.
- In consultation with the JHSC, establish control measures and procedures.
- In consultation with the JHSC establish and deliver training and education for all employees.
- Integrate safe behaviour into day-to-day operations.
- Review all reports of violence or threats of violence in a prompt, objective and sensitive manner. This includes a review of all investigations associated with violence-related incidents.
- Take corrective action.
- Provide response measures.
- Ensure any deaths or critical injuries have been reported to a Ministry of Labour (MOL) inspector, the police (as required), the JHSC, and trade union (as required) and are investigated with the JHSC, and that a report goes to all parties in writing within 48 hours of the occurrence on the circumstances of the occurrence, including such information and particulars as the Occupational Health and Safety Act and regulations prescribe.
- Ensure a report goes to WSIB of all accidents/illnesses where a worker loses time from work, requires health care, earns less than regular pay for regular work, requires modified work at less than regular pay or performs modified work at regular pay for more than seven days. Copies of accident/illness information (where there is no critical injury) must be provided to the JHSC and trade union within four days of the occurrence, as the Occupational Health and Safety Act and regulations prescribe.
- The Employer has the obligation to ensure that this policy and process are applied fairly. It is necessary to provide an environment in which people feel free to bring complaints forward. It is equally important to give those identified by the complainants a full and fair opportunity to respond to allegations.
- Ensure there is a review at least annually of the Workplace Violence Prevention Policy and Program.
- Reporting to police (as required, ensuring privacy considerations are taken into account).

• Managers/ Supervisors

- Take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker.
- Identify and alert staff to patients/persons with a history of violent behaviour if the worker can expect to encounter the person in the course of work, and if the worker may be at risk of physical injury. In doing so, personal information may be disclosed, but only what is reasonably necessary to protect the worker from physical injury.
- Actively participate in the management of violent/aggressive behaviour.
- Investigate all workplace violence using the organization's incident investigation procedure and form, and contact the police department as required.
- Take immediate action to eliminate the hazard and take further action based on the workplace investigation.
- Facilitate medical attention for employee(s) as required.
- Ensure that debriefing is completed for those either directly or indirectly involved in the incident.
- Ensure employee is aware of/referred to the Employee Assistance Program as required.
- Contact Human Resources to ensure the employee receives further counseling about the employee's legal rights.
- Promote/ensure completion of workplace violence reports and follow-up procedures and the establishment of controls/measures.
- Conduct/contribute to risk assessments related to Workplace Violence.
- Advise the JHSC of the results of any risk assessments related to Workplace Violence and provide a copy if in writing.
- Support efforts to prevent violence through an appropriate care plan, which may include chemical/physical/environmental/social restraints as a last resort where necessary, and other appropriate measures.
- In conjunction with Occupational Health and Safety, immediately report a death or critical injury to a Ministry of Labour (MOL) inspector, the police (as required), JHSC, and trade union (as required), and investigate with JHSC and report to all parties in writing within 48 hours of the occurrence the circumstances of the occurrence, including such information and particulars as the regulations prescribe.
- Enforce policy and procedures and monitor worker compliance.
- Track and analyze incidents for trending and prevention initiatives.
- Share hazards identified and related follow-up actions with other units.
- Reporting to police (as required, ensuring privacy considerations are taken into account).

• Employees

- Follow TEGH's Summoning Immediate Assistance procedure when faced with violence or a threat of violence
- Report all incidents or injuries of violence, or threats of violence, to their Manager supervisor immediately, completing the Workplace Violence Incident Report.
- Seek immediate medical attention.
- Participate in education and training programs to be able to respond appropriately to any incident of workplace violence.
- Understand and comply with the violence in the workplace prevention policy/program and all related procedures.
- Actively participate in the management of violent/aggressive behaviour.
- Inform the JHSC or worker member of the JHSC about any concerns about the potential for violence in the workplace.
- Contribute to risk assessments.
- Seek support from the Manager/Supervisor when confronted with violence or threats of violence.
- Participate in a review at least annually of the workplace violence prevention program.
- Support efforts to prevent violence through an appropriate care plan, chemical/physical/environmental/social restraints where necessary, and other appropriate measures.
- Reporting to police, as required (and in consultation with the Employer ensuring privacy considerations are taken into account).

• Physicians

- Be aware of and give appropriate order for chemical or physical restraints to prevent or control violent behaviours that include information for staff concerning the purpose of restraints and their short- or long-term use.

• Occupational Health & Safety

- Issue a report to Joint Health & Safety Committee (and WSIB) on all accidents/illnesses involving lost time, where a worker requires health care, earns less than regular pay for regular work, requires modified work at less than regular pay or performs modified work at regular pay for more than seven days. Copies of accident/illness information (where there is no critical injury) must be provided to the JHSC and trade union within four days of the occurrence, as the Occupational Health and Safety Act and regulations prescribe.

• Joint Health and Safety Committee

- Be consulted and make recommendations to the employer about the development, establishment and implementation of violence policy, measures and procedures (the Workplace Violence Prevention Program).

- Be advised of the results of any risk assessments related to Workplace Violence and be provided a copy if in writing.
- Be consulted and make recommendations to the employer to develop, establish and provide training in violence policy, measures and procedures (the Workplace Violence Prevention Program).
- Take part in a review at least annually of the workplace violence prevention policy and program.
- The worker designate should investigate all critical injuries/fatalities related to violence and report the findings to the MOL and the Joint Health and Safety Committee.
- Receive and review reports of any critical injury or death immediately and in writing outlining the circumstances and particulars as prescribed within 48 hours of the occurrence.
- For non-critical injuries, receive and review written notice within four days outlining the circumstances and particulars as prescribed on all accident/illnesses where any person is disabled from performing his or her usual work or requires medical attention.

Definitions

• Workplace Violence

For the purpose of this policy, “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 behavior 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

In addition, “workplace violence” is 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.

• Workplace Harassment

Engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.

• Workplace

- (a) Engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against

Sexual Harassment

a worker in a workplace because of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, or

- (b) Making a sexual solicitation or advance where the person making the solicitation or advance is in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement to the worker, where it is known or ought reasonably to be known that the comment, conduct, solicitation or advance is unwelcome.

• **Assault**

Any intent to inflict injury on another, coupled with an apparent ability to do so; any intentional display of force that causes the victim to fear bodily harm.

• **Near Miss**

An act of striking out, but missing the target.

• **Physical Attack**

An act of aggression resulting in a physical assault or abuse with or without the use of a weapon. Examples include hitting, shoving, pushing, punching, biting, spitting, groping, pinching or kicking the victim, unwelcome displays of affection or inciting a dog to attack.

• **Psychological Abuse**

An act that provokes fear or diminishes an individual’s dignity or self-worth or that intentionally inflicts psychological trauma on another.

• **Sexual Abuse**

Any unwelcome verbal or physical advance or sexually explicit statement, displays of pornographic material, pinching, brushing against, touching, patting or leering that causes the person to believe their health and safety is at risk.

• **Sexual Assault**

Any unwanted act of a sexual nature imposed by one person upon another.

• **Threat**

A communicated intent (verbal or written) 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 Abuse**

The use of vexatious comments that are known, or that ought to be known, to be unwelcome, embarrassing, offensive, threatening or degrading to another person (including swearing, insults or

condescending language) which causes the person to believe their health and safety is at risk.

• 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
- (From the Public Services Health & Safety Association)
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Reporting, Investigation and Response

- Workers are to report all violence-related incidents or hazards to their manager or supervisor. [Employee Incident Reporting](#) For further information
 - The manager or supervisor receiving the report, investigates the report and ensures that measures are taken to safeguard employees and curtail the violence.
 - The worker designate on the JHSC should also investigate all critical injuries/fatalities related to violence and report the findings to the MOL and the Joint Health and Safety Committee.
 - The same managers or supervisors inform the employee who made the report of the investigation outcome to the extent necessary to optimize future safety from similar incidents. For further information about TEGH's response procedure
 - The employer reports all injuries to the MOL and WSIB, JHSC and Union as required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.
 - For further details pertaining to Reporting, Investigation and Response refer to TEGH's Reporting, investigation and response procedures
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• Flagging

The managers or supervisors who are made aware of the reported

incident of violence or violent person will warn all staff who might be affected by the potentially dangerous situation(s) associated with the reported incident. All staff will follow TEGH's Flagging procedures. For further information about TEGH's Flagging Procedures please review [Workplace Violence Prevention - Flagging Process for Patients Exhibiting Acting Out Behaviour](#)

• Confidentiality

- Workers are to report all violence-related incidents or hazards to their supervisor. TEGH will do its best to preserve and protect the confidentiality in the alleged case. However, where required by law or required in order to investigate and/or resolve the matter it may be necessary for TEGH to take action.
- Employees or clients who report acts of violence or aggression will not suffer retribution or reprisal as a result of their actions. Disciplinary measures will be taken should any such retribution or reprisal take place.
- Individuals must recognize that any complaint found to have been made in bad faith will be considered serious misconduct, could result in severe disciplinary action being taken by the employer and could result in legal action by the individual accused.

• Emergency Response Measures

Refer to TEGH's emergency response procedure (e.g. code white, code black, security response procedure) found in the following policies:

[Code Black - Bomb Threat Procedure - Emergency Procedures](#)

[Code Green - Evacuation Plan - Emergency Procedures](#)

[Code Orange – Disaster Plan - Emergency Procedures](#)

[Code Purple - Hostage Taking Weapons - Emergency Procedures](#)

[Code Red – Fire - Emergency Procedures](#)

[Code White – Procedure to Respond to Violent Persons - Emergency Procedures](#)

[Code White Paediatric Up To 18th Birthday - Emergency Procedures](#)

• Risk Assessments/Prevention

TEGH's commitment to preventing workplace violence/aggression includes but is not limited to the development and communication of a workplace violence policy and program, prominently displayed signage and risk/threat assessments designed to identify potential risks and recommend changes and controls to minimize/alleviate these risks.

• Education and Training

- TEGH's commitment to education and training includes but is not limited to specific public/community, employee, and supervisory education/training. Employees and supervisors will receive education/training regarding general and site-specific training to the Workplace Violence Prevention Policy/Program including the employees and supervisor reporting/response expectations/requirements (internal and external), interventions to minimize risk and the supportive processes available to them e.g. EAP. Education/training will also entail increasing awareness of specific disease processes that can affect client understanding of their actions, training on domestic violence and measures to promote employee and client safety. Supervisors will also receive training to ensure competency under the OHSA and how to investigate, document and follow-up incidents, including corrective action. All training is done in consultation with the JHSC.
- As part of their general orientation to TEGH, all new employees will receive education and training regarding general and site-specific training to TEGH's Workplace Violence Prevention Policy/Program. There will be an annual educational reminder to all vested parties.

• Control

This step includes but is not limited to the implementation of systems to identify, analyze, control and communicate information about potentially violent or aggressive situations and/or clients. All reported incidents of workplace violence will be monitored for purposes of trending and system improvement.

Supports for Employees Affected by Workplace Violence

TEGH is committed to the provision of a safe, healthy, secure and respectful workplace. Any member who has been exposed to any form of workplace violence or has witnessed any form of workplace violence will be supported through all aspects of the event including reporting, investigating, the follow-up and treatment and/or corrective action stages.

Management will respond promptly, assess the situation and ensure that these interventions are followed:

- Immediately keep worker safe and develop a safety plan for the affected worker
- Facilitation of medical attention
- Debriefing (by skilled professional)
- Referrals to community agencies, treating practitioner and employee assistance program
- Referral to trade union

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- Completion of incident reports, WSIB reports, reports to MOL (critical injury or fatality)
 - Reporting to police (as required , ensuring privacy considerations are taken into account)
- Team debriefing

Policy Review

This policy and the procedures which make up the Workplace Violence Prevention Program will be reviewed annually, or more frequently if necessary, upon advice of the JHSC, the employer, or if there is a change in circumstances that may affect the health and safety of a worker.

Procedures in the WVP Program:

WVP Risk Assessment Procedure
Security & Summoning Immediate Assistance Procedure
Post Incident Response Process
Flagging Procedure
Reporting & Investigation Procedure
Domestic Violence Policy
WVP Training Procedure

References & Resources

Related policies:

- [Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy](#)
- [Civil and Respectful Hospital Environment](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Standards of Behaviour](#)
- [Work Refusal due to Safety Concerns](#)
- [Vocera Communications System](#)
- [Code White – Procedure to Respond to Violent Persons - Emergency Procedures](#)
- [Code White Paediatric Up To 18th Birthday - Emergency Procedures](#)
- [Restraints policy](#)
- [Joint Health & Safety Committee](#)
- [Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace](#)
- [Diversity in the Workplace](#)
- [Domestic Violence Policy](#)
- [Workplace Violence Prevention - Flagging Process for Patients](#)

[Exhibiting Acting Out Behaviour](#)

- Occupational Health & Safety Act
- Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA) – *A Guide to the Development of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program, 2nd Ed* (extensively referenced in the preparation of this policy)