

VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN THE WORKPLACE

HS 4

INTENT

Sunshine Coast Community Services is committed to providing a violence-free environment and recognizes that workplace violence is a health and safety issue. All reasonable steps will be taken to reduce or eliminate the threat to the personal safety of employees.

POLICY

All measures will be taken to ensure a safe environment free of threats and violence. An emergency response to violence in the workplace will be developed for every worksite, communicated to staff and practiced annually. Staff will be knowledgeable of procedures to use when a client is threatening or violent. Behaviours that could be considered to be a threat include intimidation, verbal threats and harassment, acts of terrorism, and the use of weapons. If any threat occurs all measures to ensure client and staff safety are paramount. The concern for staff and client safety outweighs the concern for physical aspects of the building.

Community Services serves a variety of individuals who are on a continuum of lower to higher risk for safety concerns including potential for violence. It is important to keep in mind that there could always be a possibility for some individuals to exhibit violent or aggressive behaviour. Staff members are cautioned to be aware of areas where potential violence may occur during the course of the workday and are encouraged to address personal safety on an everyday basis. Staff members should also be aware there is the potential for co-workers who may be under duress to become violent; for partners of employees to threaten their family member and for other individuals in the community to become violent.

Program staff members, clients or the public are not expected to tolerate harmful or threatening behaviour. All acts and threats of aggression are not permitted and will be taken seriously. Perpetrators will be held accountable for their behaviour.

PROCEDURE

Preventative

Clients will be screened, when possible, to identify their potential risk for aggressive behaviour and clients who are deemed to be a threat to other clients or to staff based on that screening process, overt behaviours or previous history with the agency, may be refused service.

Any potentially dangerous objects will be kept from client access in offices when at all possible. Sharp objects such as scissors, letter openers, etc. will be out of sight to clients and visitors. Office furniture will be positioned to facilitate easy access to a door.

Potentially at Risk

When there is reason to believe that the life or health of a client, staff person, or another person is threatened, the person made aware of the situation must report this to the RCMP and make every attempt to contact the endangered person. Program Directors, Program Coordinators and other staff should be advised about the matter.

Immediate Risk

- If any serious or violent threat occurs all measures needed to ensure client and staff safety must be taken, and the emergency be contained in the area where it occurs. If deemed necessary, call 911.
- The staff person involved should do everything possible to diffuse the situation without putting any person at risk, and if safely possible, alert other staff.
- The staff will avoid trying to overcome threatening behaviour unless the client or other persons are in immediate danger of physical harm, in which case the Emergency Evacuation Procedure should be started, if safe to do so.

Reporting

- Potential and immediate risks will be reported to the Supervisor. Program Directors will determine if a critical incident report is in order. With the direction of the Supervisor all safety concerns and actions taken will be documented on the appropriate form. The form will be forwarded to the Health and Safety Committee. The information, at the Supervisor's discretion, will be placed on the client file. If the supervisor is involved in the incident, the Executive Director will determine the action to be taken.
- Employees who are concerned about a co-worker under duress are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their immediate supervisor or manager who will discuss the situation with the Program Director.
- Employees whose partner is threatening violence against them while they are at work must report this to their immediate supervisor in order that steps can be taken to decrease the risk to the employee, team members and clients.

PRECAUTIONS/STEPS YOU CAN TAKE:

Interactions – What can you do when dealing with an agitated person:

- Let them vent their anger or hostility. Do not feed into the individual's anger by parroting, agreeing with him/her or judging.
- Put forth a co-operative attitude. Get the individual's name and use it frequently. Keep repeating a single phrase over and over again without being insulting or patronizing (i.e., "I notice that you are very concerned..." or "I notice you're upset...")
- Identify the anger or hostility. Ask for clarification.
- Do not make provocative statements.
- Do not be argumentative.
- Maintain eye contact but do not get into a staring contest.
- Be patient.
- Do not get personal. Stick to the issue.
- Find a common ground.
- Allow for an area of disagreement.

In the Case of an agitated or violent person while at the office:

- Always face the person.
- Keep your office door open or unlocked if it is closed.
- Tell the person that you see they are angry and this may not be the right time to address concerns. Possibly (depending on atmosphere) negotiate a mutually convenient time to talk about issues.
- If sitting, stand up.
- If another staff member is close by, enlist their help or tell the person that you are not able to provide the answer and that you are going to call someone who may be able to help. Often, the presence of another staff member will prevent violence.
- Leave if you fear for your safety or ask the person to leave.
- Staff members should not attempt to disarm a violent person. Remove yourself from the situation and call 911 to inform the police that a person has threatened violence at your site and that you need assistance.
- If a staff person becomes aware of an individual being aggressive, threatening or indicating they have a weapon the staff person should call 911 and ask for assistance. If there is a concern that the individual is out of control or threatening acts of violence, possibly with a weapon, staff may choose to lock themselves in an office or room until assistance arrives. Staff should ensure that other clients, visitors and other staff are moved from the vicinity of the violent or potential violent individual.

PORTABLE PANIC ALARM

- Community Services locations at Inlet Avenue, Arrowhead Centre, Visitor Information Centre, Farnham Family Place, Food Bank, Community Based Victim Services, 5782 Cowrie Street and Trail Avenue Sechelt all have Portable Panic Alarms. Staff is familiar with the location of the portable panic alarm and if they feel threatened or in an unsafe situation with someone, this alarm can be discreetly pushed and is connected to our alarm monitoring station. The alarm company will immediately contact the police and send them to the building to investigate.
- Portable Panic Alarms are to be tested on a monthly basis and reported to the Facilities Coordinator.

EFFECTIVE: Dec. 1, 2015	APPROVED BY: Executive Director	
REPLACES: July 2014	MONITORING: H&S Committee	FREQUENCY: Annually