

## **PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE**

### **POLICY STATEMENT:**

The Canadian Red Cross Society (Society) is committed to providing a safe work environment and recognizes that workplace violence is a health and safety issue. The Society is committed to preventing incidents of workplace violence by assessing the risks of workplace violence and by developing and maintaining a program to implement this policy; 3.2 – *Prevention of Violence in the Workplace*, that includes measures and procedures that:

- define everyone's rights and responsibilities for a healthy and safe workplace environment,
- control the risks of workplace violence incidents,
- provide a means to summon assistance when required,
- facilitate the reporting of workplace violence incidents, and
- investigate and deal with workplace violence incidents and complaints.

All incidents and alleged incidents of workplace violence, regardless of magnitude or who it may involve, will be treated seriously and must be reported immediately to the supervisor and, when required, the police. All incidents of workplace violence will be investigated.

**The Society will *not* tolerate or accept any acts of violence or violent behaviour whatever the cause or whoever the perpetrator. An employee that subjects another employee to workplace violence or otherwise violates this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination for just cause.**

**NOTE:** During times of disaster response, expedited processes may be required in consultation with People Services.

### **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to define what constitutes workplace violence and to provide direction for reporting and investigating workplace violence.

### **SCOPE:**

This policy applies to all acts or threats of workplace violence involving employees, volunteers, delegates, students, clients, third party service providers, suppliers, and visitors to The Canadian Red Cross Society.

## DEFINITIONS:

**Workers** refer to employees, volunteers and delegates.

**Workplace violence** means:

- 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;
- A statement or behaviour 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.

Some types of **violence** include, but are not limited to verbal abuse, pranks, arguments, property damage, vandalism, sabotage, pushing, hitting, stalking, theft, physical assaults, psychological trauma, anger-related incidents, utterance of threats of violence.

**Workplace**, for the purposes of this policy, includes any location in which employees, volunteers, and delegates are engaged in Society business activities necessary to perform their duties. This includes, but is not limited to, Society buildings, Society parking lots, Society organized social events, field locations, clients' homes, and off-site business related functions including travel.

## PROCEDURE AND APPLICATION:

All workers are reminded of their obligation to follow The Canadian Red Cross Society's policy 2.1 - *Code of Conduct*, policy 2.2 - *Prevention of Harassment in the Workplace* and the Fundamental Principles, and to adhere to policies and procedures aimed at ensuring a positive work environment.

The provincial *Occupational Health and Safety Acts* and the *Criminal Code* may apply to acts of violence in the workplace.

In accordance with provincial legislative requirements, this policy will be posted in a conspicuous area in all Society locations.

### IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO VIOLENT ACTS IN THE WORKPLACE

- If you witness an act of workplace violence in progress or if an individual becomes violent and your safety is at risk, **leave the area immediately and call 911** or the emergency medical service number in your area.
- Victims of workplace violence must remain in a safe location and be available for investigation until the investigation is complete.

- First aid and/or medical attention will be provided as required through a designated first aid attendant, local medical care facility or the individual's attending physician.
- Inform your supervisor and/or People Services of the incident.

A. Rights:

Everyone has the right to:

- a workplace that is free of the risk of violence or the threat of violence;
- file a complaint when the workplace is not free from violence;
- refuse to work where there is reason to believe workplace violence is likely to endanger them.

All workers upon hiring or engagement with the Society will be familiarized with this policy.

B. Obligations:

i. **Workers** are responsible for:

- **taking all threats of violence seriously;**
- ensuring as much as possible, the security of their workplace;
- being familiar with this policy and the process to follow for dealing with workplace threats and emergencies;
- attending mandatory training sessions regarding violence in the workplace;
- reporting all threats, physical or verbal, and/or any disruptive behaviour of any individual to the appropriate supervisor and/or a People Services representative;
- co-operate with any efforts to investigate and resolve matters arising under this Policy;
- reporting incidents of violence immediately to the supervisor or police, as the case may necessitate; and
- remain available to assist in an investigation, as required.

ii. **Supervisors** are responsible for:

- **taking all threats of violence seriously; and taking appropriate action**
- ensuring all workers in their area are aware of this policy and know the procedures for dealing with workplace violence threats and emergencies;
- facilitating worker attendance at training sessions provided on violence in the workplace and maintaining records of attendance;
- setting clear standards of conduct and performance, addressing worker problems promptly, and using the probationary period, performance counselling, disciplinary process, and dispute resolution practices conscientiously;

- assessing the risk of violence in their area, minimizing those risks where necessary or reasonably possible and informing employees of potential risks;
- responding to potential threats, escalating situations and incidents of violence immediately;
- utilizing proper resources including: first aid providers, local law enforcement and medical services, People Services representatives and the applicable Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC) where applicable;
- ensuring that workers do not continue to work in situations in which they are at risk of workplace violence and, where possible and permissible, reassigning the worker reasonable alternative work during the investigation of the situation and/or while the risk continues;
- documenting all incidents of violence in the workplace and reporting all threats and incidents to People Services and to the JOHSC;
- participating in investigations as required, and in consultation with People Services, determining whether sufficient evidence exists to justify implementing performance improvement and progressive disciplinary action or discharging the individual.

iii. **People Services** is responsible for:

- **taking all threats of violence seriously, and taking appropriate action**
- ensuring supervisors are aware of the policy and for providing the necessary tools required for supervisors to ensure a healthy and safe work environment for all workers;
- providing awareness and tools for workers;
- ensuring training is available to workers;
- providing technical expertise and consultation to help supervisors determine the appropriate course of investigative action to be taken in specific situations;
- determining whether sufficient evidence exists to justify implementing performance improvement and progressive disciplinary action once the investigation of any misconduct is complete; and
- assisting supervisors in determining reasonable accommodation for victims of workplace violence, as appropriate

iv. **The Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committees (JOHSC)** (as applicable) or designate is responsible for:

- conducting regular risk assessments within their facilities and developing location-specific procedures, in accordance with the applicable provincial Health & Safety Legislation;
- keeping management apprised of any risks of workplace violence and security gaps; and
- investigating, as required by People Services, where a worker has refused to work because of a risk of workplace violence or where serious injury has resulted from workplace violence.

v. **The Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** can be helpful in:

- providing short-term counselling and referral services to workers;
- providing on-site training, when requested;
- providing counselling for supervisors, management and People Services on strategies for dealing with potentially violent workers to promote early intervention and prevention; and
- providing critical incident stress debriefings.

C. Preventative Measures:

Prevention of workplace violence is the most important part of any program. At its core, it involves awareness by Society management, employees, volunteers and delegates on the potential of violence and identifying steps to be taken to control the risks of incidents that have been identified in assessments carried out under the policy.

i. Policies and procedures:

The Society has developed clear policies and procedures on workplace violence for which all workers receive training and education upon hiring and engagement with the Society.

ii. Pre-employment screening:

Proper screening of potential workers is essential in identifying those who may pose a risk of violence in the workplace prior to their hiring or engagement with the Society. Refer to policy; *5.5 - Screening* for further information.

iii. Code of Conduct:

All employees, volunteers, delegates, students, and third party service providers are required to read, sign and abide by policy; *2.1 - Code of Conduct*.

iv. Security:

Maintaining a safe workplace is part of any good prevention program. To ensure the safety of workers in the workplace, the Society has undertaken risk assessments and has identified and implemented the following security measures as required:

- employee identification badges and/or coded key access cards,
- physical barriers,
- guard services,
- video surveillance, and/or
- alarm buttons.

In all areas, workers should be aware of their surroundings and report any safety

concerns or suggestions to People Services and their supervisor.

v. Employee Assistance Program (EAP):

The EAP program is available to employees and their families and should be encouraged as the first line of support and intervention when an employee is distressed or in crisis. When a volunteer requires EAP services, the supervisor is required to contact People Services for access.

vi. Work and family life programs:

The Society encourages supervisors to be flexible with work arrangements when work and family balance issues are raised. Supervisors should refer to People Services to review possible leave options.

vii. Mutual respect:

All workers need to be aware of the fact that interpersonal behaviours can dramatically affect the possibility of a violent incident. Relations among all those in the Society family, including clients, should include mutual respect for one another and an awareness of the importance of human dignity.

D. Dispute resolution:

The Society's policy; *2.4 - Workplace Problem Resolution* and *Client Complaints* are critical to providing workers with a constructive outlet for their concerns to avoid any build up of frustrations. Where there is interpersonal conflict, People Services personnel can arrange for mediation, if appropriate. Where the situation involves a client, resolution should be referred to management within the applicable program.

E. Persons with a History of Violent Behaviour/Domestic Violence:

In the event the Society becomes aware, or ought reasonably to be aware, that domestic violence or that an individual with a history of violent behaviour will likely expose a worker to physical injury in the workplace, the Society will take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of workers at the Society.

i. Provision of Information:

The Society, is required to provide information, including personal information, to workers related to the risk of workplace violence from a person with a history of violent behaviour, if the worker can be expected to encounter that person in the course of their work AND the risk of workplace violence is likely to expose the worker to physical injury. Personal information provided will be limited to information that is reasonably necessary to protect worker(s) from physical injury.

ii. Domestic Violence:

A supervisor may become aware of domestic violence when an incident takes place at the workplace or when a concern is reported by a targeted worker, co-workers or someone else that domestic violence may enter the workplace. Supervisors, with assistance from People Services, must be prepared to investigate and deal with these concerns on a case-by-case basis. Even if a targeted worker does not want any steps taken, the employer is still required to take some action to protect all workers. The supervisor and the targeted worker can work together to develop reasonable precautions, like a safety plan, to address the situation.

F. Reporting Acts or Threats of Workplace Violence:

All workers have a duty to disclose any criminal activity in the workplace to the Society. All incidents must be reported, in writing, to management and People Services immediately. All incidents will be responded to and investigated to eliminate the risk of reoccurrence.

i. Where a threat of violence has occurred:

- Management personnel and People Services must be notified;
- if the individual who is uttering the threat is at the worksite, they will be removed prior to any further action;
- the police will be notified, as circumstances dictate;
- an investigation will be conducted by a trained workplace investigator, designated by People Services.

ii. Where an act of violence has occurred, workplace injury protocols will be followed:

- The police will be notified, as well as management personnel and People Services;
- the perpetrator must be removed (by police where there is an ongoing threat);
- the site must be secured;
- an investigation will be conducted by a trained workplace investigator designated by People Services, unless police procedures take precedence, as the circumstances dictate.

iii. Union involvement:

If an employee involved in the workplace violence incident is a member of a union, the union will be notified and apprised of the investigation process.

iv. Police involvement:

In the event of a serious incident in which the police are involved, police procedures will take precedence over this policy.

G. Investigating Incidents of Workplace Violence:

Once the alleged violent perpetrator has been removed and the area secured, People Services will order a formal investigation of the incident by a trained workplace investigator. The police may also conduct an investigation, depending upon the circumstances surrounding the incident.

H. Violence Incidents Involving Clients:

Where a violence incident includes a client, refer to policy, 3.9 – Protection of Vulnerable Clients for further information. Individual programs may also have further procedures regarding violence.

I. Investigation information:

No investigation information will be kept on an employee's personnel file with the exception of official disciplinary action taken and/or termination papers. Workplace violence investigation information will be kept indefinitely in a separate file.

J. Confidentiality:

Reports and complaints of workplace violence will be received and investigated in a confidential manner. All reports and complaints of workplace violence will be considered personal information *supplied in confidence*. In addition, refer to policy; 2.3 – *Integrity Protection* for more information as the Society provides a confidential third party, **Clearview Connects**, to receive reports in a variety of methods and language preferences.

The name of the complainant and the circumstances of the report or complaint will not be disclosed to any person except where disclosure is necessary for the purpose of investigating the report or complaint. The substance of investigative reports and meetings held by those in authoritative positions regardless of whether it is substantiated will be protected from disclosure to third parties, except where required for legal reasons.

Strict confidentiality cannot be guaranteed to anyone who files a report or makes a complaint of workplace violence. If a report or complaint goes through investigation, the respondent and other workers involved may be made aware of circumstances in the report or complaint, as may be necessary or on a “need-to-know” basis.

K. Work Refusal:

Workers have the right to refuse to work where they has reason to believe that workplace violence is likely to endanger them. Such workers must inform their supervisor if there is a risk of workplace violence, accept alternate work arrangements, and be available during the investigation process.

L. Legal Parameters:



Nothing in this policy shall be deemed to limit the right of an worker to report a threat or incident of workplace violence to the police or legal authority in their community.

M. Criminal Activity:

An act of violence committed or threatened by anyone at the Society is a serious offence and may be a violation of the *Criminal Code*. Where the conduct involves or may involve criminal activity, the Society reserves the right to invoke criminal charges as required.

**BREACH OF POLICY:**

If the act or threat of violence is substantiated, the offender will be subject to immediate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or engagement with the Society. The criteria in determining the level of disciplinary action will be based on fact, and will take into account harm to the worker, harm to the Society and its reputation, and whether or not there was an unequal power relationship.

This policy prohibits reprisals against workers who have made good faith complaints or provided information regarding a complaint or incident of workplace violence. Workers who engage in reprisals or threats of reprisals may be disciplined, up to and including termination of employment or engagement with the Society for just cause.

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- i. Employees, volunteers and delegates are responsible for compliance with policy, 2.2 - *Prevention of Harassment in the Workplace*, policy 2.1 - *Code of Conduct* and the Fundamental Principles to contribute to a safe work environment and the health and well being of all workers.
- ii. Supervisors/managers are responsible for holding employees, volunteers and delegates accountable for reviewing and signing the *Prevention of Violence in the Workplace* policy, **for taking all threats of violence seriously** and for dealing with non-compliance in collaboration with People Services.
- iii. The Chief of Staff is responsible for advising stakeholders, maintaining, monitoring, and revising this Policy, **for taking all threats of violence seriously**; and for maintaining a confidential record of workplace violence reports and complaints received, the nature of these reports and complaints, the outcome of the investigations, performance improvement and progressive disciplinary action taken, and reporting the results to the President and CEO.
- iv. Members of the Organizational Leadership Team (OLT) are responsible for **taking all threats of violence seriously**, applying and implementing this policy in each of their respective areas, ensuring that all workers are trained and aware of the procedures within the policy and the process to follow in the case of a workplace violence incident, ensuring the security of all buildings and offices and ensuring compliance with applicable provincial Health and Safety legislation.

**INQUIRIES:**

Questions regarding the application or interpretation of this policy are to be referred to People Services.