**Occupational Violence Information**

**WORKPLACE RISK FACTORS**

**Risk Management – Identifying hazards and assessing risks**

Work related violence hazards generally arise as a result of:

* The work environment
* The work tasks and how they are carried out
* The way work is designed and managed

Typical hazards that could give rise to work related violence include:

* Handling cash, drugs or valuables
* Working alone, working in isolation, working in the community and working at night
* Providing services to distressed, angry or incarcerated people
* Enforcement activities.

Sometimes, a worker may be deterred from reporting a violent incident because:

* It is thought to be “part of the job” and nothing can be done about it
* The worker believes that only “serious incidents” are to be reported
* There is a perception that nothing will happen if the incident is reported
* The worker believes they will be blamed for the incident
* The reporting process is time consuming and complex
* They just want to forget about it.

To determine if violence is a potential hazard in the workplace:

* Talk with HSR’s, WHS Committee, workers, customers and clients
* Walk through and inspect the workplace
* Review workers compensation claims
* Refer to industry standards and guidelines
* Review the hazard and incident reports

**Controlling the Risks**

Risk control measures should be selected on the basis of highest protection and most reliability.

Physical Environment – multiple control measures should be used:

* Ensure the building is secure, maintained and fit for purpose
* Use security measures such as CCTV, anti-jump screens and timber safes
* Separate workers from the public where possible, for example with protective barriers or screens
* Control access to the site and vulnerable areas
* Prevent public access to the site when people work alone or at night
* Ensure workers can see who is coming into the site and can restrict access if necessary
* Fit communication and alarm systems and ensure they are regularly maintained and tested
* Limit the amount of cash, valuables and drugs held on the site
* Store cash, valuables and drugs securely
* Develop and implement cash handling procedures, for example, electronic funds transfer only, locked drop safes, carry small amounts of cash, vary banking times and display “limited cash held” signs
* Prevent access to dangerous implements of objects that could be thrown or used to inure someone
* Use internal and external lighting to assist visibility
* Provide a safe retreat for workers and others so they can avoid violent situations
* Arrange furniture and partitions to allow good visibility of services and avoid restrictive movement
* Use appropriate signage to direct clients and visitors

**Operational procedures and work systems – prevention measures include:**

* Documented process for client compatibility and suitability assessment – (this may include where appropriate, criteria for clients not to be accepted)
* Method/s for intake assessment of client which include screening for aggression
* Protocols for regular handover and information exchange with workers, other agencies, carers and service providers
* Reporting system records incidents and near misses, and incidents are investigated/reviewed
* Workplace policy outlining that appropriate action will be taken to protect workers, clients, visitors and others from violence at work
* Work practices are evaluated to see if service delivery methods contribute to aggression
* Responsible serving of alcohol policy and practices
* Operational procedures for work performed in uncontrolled environments
* Operational procedures for working in isolation
* Cash handling procedures
* Operational procedures for opening and closing the business
* Workers are monitored when working in uncontrolled environments (e.g. the community)
* Behaviours and what triggers them are identified and strategies to avoid/address them are implemented
* Planned and structured activities for clients
* Procedures to review behaviour and treatment programs
* Where client is known to have history of aggression, a management plan is in place that has been developed in consultation with appropriately qualified people
* There is a policy on the ongoing treatment of clients considered aggressive or abusive e.g.: behavioural or treatment contracts (a statement developed by the treatment facility signed by representatives of the facility and the patient. It sets out the basis on which the client will be treated or continue to receive treatment)

**Training – prevention principles**

The organisation should consider the training needs of all workers, and undertake training needs assessment /analysis and review. Organisations need to identify appropriate levels of training in relation to violence for all workers. Retraining and reinforcement should be included in the Organisation’s training plan/schedule.

Training that may be relevant includes:

* induction in all aspects of violence prevention prior to commencement of placement
* the workplace policy and procedures (including emergency response)
* understanding client condition/disability/triggers/care and behaviour management plans
* de-escalating aggression
* positive behaviour strategies and managing behaviours of concern
* breakaway techniques

**RISK CONTROL GUIDELINES**

**Reviewing risk control measures**

A review of risk control measures should be undertaken after a work-related violence incident. This could include:

* The physical work environment and security measures
* Work systems and procedures
* Worker training and information
* Workplace consultation processes

**RESPONDING TO WORK – RELATED VIOLENCE**

Responses to work related violence will vary depending on the nature and severity of the incident. Systems should be in place that document what to do at the time of, and immediately after an incident.

**At the time of the incident**

During a violent incident;

* Set off a duress alarm if available otherwise communicate the need for help
* Follow workplace procedures for responding to violence
* Use calm verbal and non-verbal communication
* Use verbal de-escalation and distraction techniques
* Seek support from other staff
* Ask the aggressor to leave the premises
* Retreat to a safe location.

Immediately after an incident;

* Ensure that everyone is safe
* Provide first aid or urgent medical attention where necessary
* Provide individual support where required, including practical, emotional and social support
* Report what happened, who was affected and who was involved
* Providing individual support where required, including practical and emotional support
* Reporting what happened, who was affected, and who was involved
* Calling the police

You must notify CSHWSA if the incident results in:

* A fatality
* Someone requiring immediate hospital attention
* Amputation
* A serious head or eye injury
* A serious burn
* De-gloving or scalping
* A spinal injury
* Loss of bodily function – loss of consciousness, limb, sense of smell, taste, hearing etc.
* Serious lacerations.