

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Any violence, including domestic and sexual violence, will not be tolerated in the Library or its property. This program is intended to minimize the risk of workplace violence and outline the procedures in place to report and investigate incidents of workplace violence as well as the resources available to staff who might become a victim of workplace violence.

Plan for Maintaining Security in the Library

Staff will conduct a worksite assessment as often as necessary, but no less than annually to ensure measures for violence prevention are effective. Copies of these assessments, if they are in writing, shall be provided to the Health and Safety Committee. The assessment will consider:

- The nature of the workplace (i.e. lighting, lines of sight, entrances, etc.)
- Type of work (i.e. activities of staff members, people who staff interact with, etc.)
- Conditions of work (i.e. surrounding neighbourhood, working in isolation etc.)

The CEO, or Designate, will annually review the history of past incidents to identify patterns or trends. Past assessments will only be retained for a period of one year.

High Risk Areas

Recognized areas of higher risk in the FFPLTC include:

- Public or community contact
- Working alone or in small numbers
- Handling cash
- Working late nights
- Secondary entrances to the FFPLTC
- Working in an area of higher crime

Measures for Reducing Risks

Staff should keep all secondary entrance doors locked, so as to ensure there is only a single entrance that the public might use. The CEO shall ensure that all exterior lights are in good working order around the building. FFPLTC Staff will not work alone in the FFPLTC without prior consent of the CEO. If staff ever find themselves working alone in the FFPLTC, they should let the CEO and someone at home know the situation and tell both when they are expected to leave and when they get home safely. Staff have the right to refuse to work alone if they believe that doing so poses the risk of potential or actual violence.

Staff should be aware of their surroundings and report any unsafe or dangerous situation to the most senior FFPLTC Staff member. If staff feel uncomfortable about a person who has entered the FFPLTC, they should trust their instincts and relay their concerns to other staff members. If staff ever feel threatened, they should not be afraid to make a scene and draw the attention of other staff members or patrons.

If staff enter an area that they suspect is unsafe they should not call out. Instead, they should back out and go to a safe lockable place with a phone and call for help. The FFPLTC Staff Room and the CEO's office are designated safe rooms, as both lock and have access to a phone. If a staff member cannot get to either of those rooms, the family washroom in the children's library is a secondary safe area as it has a lock. Staff should always be aware of the nearest exit or room with a lock.

When answering the doorbell staff should check who is at the door by either looking through the peephole or through the staff breakroom window. Security cameras and signs describing their use have been installed and posted throughout the Library to discourage crime. Sharps disposal containers have been placed in the public washrooms. A code of conduct has been posted throughout the Library detailing expectations of patron behaviour. A sign outlining that there is a zero tolerance policy for violence has also been posted.

Additional measures for reducing risks are outlined within the Staff Procedures section of this Program.

Recognize the Potential for Violence

Early identification and prevention of violence in the workplace is encouraged. Potential threats of violence that should be reported could include the following:

- Reference to other incidents of violence
- Threatening statements to do harm to self or others
- Confrontational behaviour
- Major changes in personality, mood or behaviour
- Substance abuse

Domestic Violence

Any form of violence or harassment from a current or former partner shall not be tolerated. If any staff member becomes the victim of domestic violence steps shall be taken by the Library to ensure that both the staff member and co-workers are kept safe from workplace violence.

REPORTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

If a staff member believes that a co-worker is a victim of domestic violence they should report their concerns to the CEO or designate. If a staff member is a victim of domestic violence they should inform the CEO.

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE¹

The victim may:

- Try to cover bruises
- Be sad, lonely, withdrawn, and afraid
- Have trouble concentrating on a task
- Apologize for the abuser's behaviour

¹ Taken from Developing Workplace Violence and Harassment Policies and Programs: A Toolbox

- Be nervous when the abuser is in the workplace
- Use drugs or alcohol to cope
- Miss work frequently or more often than normal

The abuser may interfere with the victim while at work by:

- Repeatedly phoning or emailing the victim
- Stalking and/or watching the victim
- Showing up at the workplace and pestering co-workers with questions about the victim
- Displaying jealous or controlling behaviours
- Lying to co-workers
- Threatening co-workers
- Verbally abusing the victim or co-workers
- Destroying the victim's or the organization's property
- Physically harming the victim and/or co-workers

The abuser may attempt to prevent the victim from getting to work by:

- Interfering with transportation by hiding or stealing the victim's car keys or transportation money
- Hiding or stealing the victim's identification cards
- Threatening deportation in a situation where the victim was sponsored
- Failing to show up to care for children
- Physically restraining the victim

WORKPLACE SAFETY PLAN

If a staff member is a victim of domestic violence a safety plan will be created to minimize the risk of violence both inside and outside the workplace. Steps within this program may include:

- Having the staff member not answer external phone calls without a co-worker first screening the call.
- Advising other staff members of the potential risks.
- Issuing a no trespassing notice to the abuser, even if there is no restraining order in effect.
- Ensuring the staff member is not working within an isolated area without a locked door between them and the public.

This plan shall be created with the victim and shall be reviewed regularly to ensure that it continues to protect them and other staff members. This safety plan may be created with the assistance of an outside organization with experience in safety planning, which could include the Assaulted Women's Helpline, Sheltersnet, or a local shelter.

SUPPORT PROGRAMS

The Library will work with any staff member who is a victim of domestic violence to ensure that they receive the support they need. This may include:

- Establishing leave provisions that will allow a staff member to handle any legal, housing, or child care issues which arise – as well as time to heal

- Flexible working arrangements, as can be accommodated, including changes to their regular working schedule or reduced hours.
- A list of supports available to staff will be kept on the health and safety board.
- Staff can access the Employee Assistance Program by contacting the Town of Fort Frances Human Resources Manager at 807-274-5323 x 1220.

IF THE ABUSER AND VICTIM BELONG TO THE SAME WORKPLACE

In the event that the victim and abuser belong to the same workplace steps shall be taken to ensure that both the victim and co-workers are kept safe from potential or actual workplace violence. These steps may include:

- Disciplinary steps against the abuser
- Alternative work arrangements
- Calling the police

Staff Procedures

It is recognized that the FFPLTC is in an area of higher crime, as Fort Frances experiences above the Ontario average incidences of violent and non-violent crimes². A number of procedures have put in place to control the risks associated with the increased incidents of crime experienced within our community.

If possible and necessary, quietly remove patrons and fellow staff from a risky situation and/or the building. Staff members should not attempt to evacuate the building if doing so would put themselves at risk of potential or actual violence.

If a violent incident has taken place staff should secure the area where it has taken place. Once the individual has left the building, lock the front door and call the police to report the incident. If the CEO is not in the building, inform them as soon as possible of the situation.

CALLING FOR HELP

Staff members who work in public areas are within calling distance of one another. Should the need arise, staff members should not hesitate to call for help. Additionally, each work area has a phone which staff members can use to phone for help from other staff members or the police.

In a situation where staff members feel uneasy or that shouting for help or phoning and requesting help may escalate a situation, staff can discretely call for help by phoning or emailing another staff member and using the name “Anne”. For example, over the phone they can say “Can you please call Anne for me?” or “I think Anne needs a little bit of help in the computer lab.”

THREATENING BEHAVIOUR

If a patron is engaging in threatening behaviour staff should use their own judgement and consider the following guidelines:

- Do not argue with the patron
- Identify themselves as a FFPLTC Staff member and remain calm, keeping their voice low and firm
- Try and keep a distance of four feet, in order to keep themselves out of harm’s way.
- Be friendly but firm: look at the person while they speak, let them talk, clarify the problem and offer solutions

² CAN-SIM Table 252-0085: Crime severity index and weighted clearance rates, by police service, Ontario annual

- Get assistance from another FFPLTC Staff member
- Advise the patron that the police will be called if they do not stop
- Call the police at any point in the process including if the behaviour does not stop or immediately if the staff member feels it is necessary
- Notify the CEO or Designate

If any form of threatening behaviour is escalating to a degree that the staff member fears for their safety they should retreat to a secure area and phone the police immediately.

If a co-worker is engaging in threatening behaviour staff should remove themselves from the situation or de-escalate it as much as possible and notify the CEO. The CEO will then launch an investigation into the behaviour, the result of which shall include corrective measures as appropriate.

If the CEO is engaging in threatening behaviour a complaint can be brought against them to the FFPL Board Chair. The FFPL Board may conduct an investigation or designate an individual to investigate and issue a report. If a FFPL Board member is engaging in threatening behaviour, staff members should make a complaint to the CEO. Who will then hire a third party to investigate the complaint.

VIOLENCE AND ASSAULT

If staff members hear raised voices or sounds of a scuffle they should investigate as they feel comfortable. If staff members witness violence or an assault or suspect that either is taking place they should call the police and describe the situation. Staff should try and notice as many details as possible so that they can describe the situation to police. When feasible staff should notify the CEO or Designate.

The staff member should also recruit other FFPLTC Staff to move others out of the way to a safer location. Staff should not block exits to prevent a threatening or violent person from leaving the building. They should not get between two people fighting, or attempt to physically intervene in the situation. This includes instances of domestic violence.

If staff members feel that they might become the victim of violence or assault they should try and go to a secure area. If a staff member is physically assaulted in the workplace they should make a best effort to escape their attacker all while shouting for help from other staff members or patrons.

ROBBERY

In the event of an attempted robbery, give the individual the cash. Tell the robber everything you are doing before you do, so as not to surprise them at any time and do not make any sudden movements. Attempt to project a feeling of calm, robbers are often nervous or could be under the influence of something, the more you can do to keep the situation as calm as possible the better.

Once the individual has left the building, alert other staff members, secure the area, and call 9-1-1. If the CEO is not in the building, inform them as soon as possible of the situation.

PRESENCE OF A WEAPON

If an individual enters the building with a gun or other weapon, go to a secure area, inform other staff members of the threat, and call 9-1-1. If the CEO is not in the building, inform them as soon as possible of the situation.

LEAVING AT NIGHT

When leaving at night, staff should try and leave in pairs. If staff have a bag they should carry it in their hand and not slung over a shoulder or around their neck. Staff should carry their keys in their hand and be aware of their surroundings.

If a staff member is leaving alone they should check the parking lot and exit door by either using the surveillance camera or the staff breakroom window.

WORKING IN THE BACK ROOM

During times when minimal staff are working (evenings, weekends) and one staff member is working in the back room or on break while the other is at the circulation desk staff should keep an eye on the security camera linked to the front desk. If they witness threatening behaviour or violence they should follow the appropriate procedures and call police.

WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY

When working within the community staff should stay aware of their surroundings and trust their instincts. Staff should keep their cellphone on them at all times when out in the community, in order to be able to quickly call for help should the need arise.

If staff will be working in an area of increased risk or concern they should attempt to review the prevention of workplace violence policy for the agency they are working with. Staff should use town vehicles whenever feasible. When driving a personal vehicle for work purposes, staff should ensure that their vehicle is regularly maintained.

If a staff member will be working in the community they should add an event to the Google calendar that outlines when they are leaving, where they are going, and when they should get back.

HANDLING CASH

When handling cash staff should be aware of their surroundings and when possible cash should be counted in the back area. If staff feel there is a large volume of cash on hand they can deposit some of the cash in the deposit envelope for that day.

When opening the safe or counting money the staff room door should be closed and locked. When a deposit is being brought to Town Hall staff should put the deposit envelope inside an inconspicuous bag and they should be escorted to their vehicle by another staff member.

SECONDARY ENTRANCES

All secondary entrances to the FFPLTC should remain closed and locked. This includes the emergency doors, the delivery door, and the door to the break room.

Secure Areas

The back staff room, surveillance room, and CEO's office are designated secure areas as they have locking doors and a phone. Ideally, staff shall try and go to the back staff room as there is a mean of escape from that room. If a staff member cannot get to any of these locations the family washroom in the children's department is a backup safe area, as there is a locking door.

Reporting instances of actual or potential workplace violence

An informal, verbal report may be brought forward to the CEO. A written report should be made as soon as possible after an action or behaviour occurred, to the CEO or Designate. If the perpetrator is the CEO or Designate the report should be made to the Board Chair. If the perpetrator is a FFPL Board member the report should be made to the CEO, who will then hire a third party investigator.

If a formal complaint is requested, the employee must file a written incident report with the CEO. A blank copy of the incident report is available on the Staff drive. The report should include a brief statement of the incident, when it occurred, where it occurred, date and time it occurred, the person(s) involved and the names of any witnesses if any. When at all possible reports will be kept confidential.

Written reports of actual or potential violence will be kept for at least 7 years, though in some instances the CEO or Designate may deem it necessary to retain records for longer periods should the records be required to establish a pattern of ongoing incidents related to an individual.

Investigation and Follow-up Reports

After receiving a report, the CEO or Designate will complete an investigation as quickly as possible. Depending on the nature and severity of the issue the police may be involved. The investigation may include interviews with the employee, the alleged perpetrator, FFPLTC Staff member(s), and any witnesses.

The results of the investigation will be discussed with the employee and recommended preventative actions and/or resolutions presented. A separate meeting will be held with the alleged perpetrator, if a FFPLTC Staff member. The identity of the staff member who has made a complaint shall be kept confidential, unless keeping their identity confidential constitutes a safety hazard to other staff members or is required by law.

After the investigation has been concluded the investigator shall complete a report outlining their findings as well as a resolution intended to prevent further occurrences. A copy of the resolution shall be shared with the staff member and if possible, the perpetrator within 10 days of the conclusion of the investigation.

During Health and Safety Committee meetings the CEO will discuss with the worker representative aggregate trends which have been identified through review of previous quarters incident reports. Additionally, the CEO will bring forward and seek feedback on the results of any risk assessments performed in the last quarter. The committee shall discuss any necessary alterations to current risk reduction measures and procedures.

The results of an investigation will be retained for a period of 7 years.

Consequences of Potential or Actual Violence

Patrons which present the threat of potential or actual violence either through a pattern of a behaviour or through a stand-alone instance of concern shall be served a notice of trespass. Staff members who represent the threat of potential or actual violence will be subject to disciplinary action which may include termination.

PATRONS WHO POSE THE RISK OF POTENTIAL OR ACTUAL VIOLENCE

Staff shall be provided a list, which includes pictures, of those patrons who have no-trespassing notices in effect against them. This list shall also include records of patrons who pose an increased potential for violence but do not have a notice of trespass against them as well as those who pose a risk of harassment. It shall be indicated on each record whether the patron poses a risk of violence, harassment, or both.

NOTICE AFTER A CRITICAL INJURY OR DEATH DUE TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

A Ministry of Labour inspector and HSC members shall be notified by telephone immediately following an incident of workplace violence that results in a critical injury or death. Within 48 hours of that same incident a director of the Ministry of Labour shall be notified of the incident. This notice shall include details about the incident as well as:

- Name and address of the Library
- Time and place of the incident
- Name and address of the person who was critically injured or killed
- Names and addresses of all witnesses to the incident
- Name and address of the physician or surgeon, if any, who attended to the staff member
- Steps to prevent a reoccurrence

Additionally, the Ontario Provincial Policy and Workplace Safety Insurance Board will be notified.

Staff Training

Staff will receive training and education related to the specific risks associated with working in the Library, including but not limited to:

- Dealing with difficult patrons
- Calling for help
- Recognizing when the risk of potential or actual violence is present
- Working alone or in small numbers
- Handling cash and closing procedures
- Domestic violence awareness
- How to report incidents of workplace violence
- How incidents of workplace violence will be investigated

Staff shall be informed of any changes to the Workplace Violence Prevention Program or its related policy. They may be asked to undergo additional training should new or changing risks be identified.

HSC Roles and Responsibilities

Health and Safety Committee members have the same responsibilities and powers for workplace violence hazards as they do for other occupational health and safety hazards. They should be able to recognize the risks of workplace violence as a part of their regular functions, including workplace inspections. Should any staff member be killed, critically injured, disabled from performing their usual work, or require medical attention due to an incident of workplace violence the HSC shall be informed.

The HSC shall be consulted when developing the Prevention of Workplace Violence Policy and Program. They shall also be advised of the results of risk assessments or reassessments as a part of the regular HSC meetings.

Program Evaluation

Staff shall be surveyed annually to determine the effectiveness of the Prevention of Workplace Violence program. The CEO will review annually the incidents of the past year to identify areas for inclusion within this program. Additionally, the following circumstances may trigger a review of the program:

- A violent incident occurs which demonstrates that the program is inadequate
- The Library's response to a violent incident shows that the program is inadequate
- Employees or HSC members indicate that the program is inadequate or not being followed