

# Trent Lakes Public Library



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This policy addresses the prevention of workplace violence as part of the Trent Lakes Public Library Board's responsibility for worker health and safety under the Ontario **Occupational Health and Safety Act**.

Violent behaviour in the workplace is unacceptable from anyone including staff, members of the board, volunteers, clients, and others who do business with the library. Individuals who violate this policy may be removed from library property, and in the case of employees, are subject to disciplinary action including termination.

## Section 1: Definition

1. The library recognizes the definition of violence as set out in the **Occupational Health and Safety Act**, R.S.O. 1990, chapter O.1, s.1(1). 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 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. *Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter O.1, s.1 (1)*
  
2. Violence in the workplace may include (but is not limited to),
  - a) verbally threatening to attack a worker,
  - b) leaving threatening notes or sending threatening e-mails to the workplace,
  - c) shaking a fist in a worker's face,
  - d) hitting or trying to hit a worker,
  - e) throwing or kicking an object, or
  - f) sexual aggression against a worker.
  
3. Violence in the library or on library property also includes (but is not limited to),
  - a) intentionally or recklessly damaging of the property of another person,
  - b) intentionally causing alarm,
  - c) recklessly creating a risk by fighting,
  - d) creating a hazardous condition or danger by recklessly engaging in conduct which creates a substantial risk of serious physical injury,
  - e) intentionally placing or attempting to place another person in fear of imminent serious physical injury, or
  - f) wielding a weapon.

## HR-08 Prevention of Workplace Violence (continued)

### Section 2: Responsibility and Response

1. The CEO must develop and maintain a workplace violence program (see Appendix A) which will set out:
  - a) a process for assessing the risk of violence in the workplace,
  - b) measures to control risk including those from domestic violence,
  - c) procedures for reporting incidents of violence, and
  - d) the process for dealing with, and investigating, violent incidents and complaints. (See Appendix A which follows)
2. Employees are encouraged to report behaviour that they reasonably believe poses a potential for violence as described above.
3. Anyone experiencing or witnessing imminent danger or actual violence involving weapons or personal injury should call the police.
4. Workplace violence should be reported immediately to the most senior staff member available.
5. Physical or sexual assault or threat of physical violence will be reported to the police.
6. All reports will be thoroughly investigated by the CEO.
7. The library will provide staff with information on the risk of violence in the library and training workshops on a periodic basis addressing concerns such as “dealing with difficult people.”
8. The Trent Lakes Public Library, at the request of an employee, or at its own discretion, may prohibit members of the public, including family members, from seeing an employee on library property in cases where the employee suspects that an act of violence will result from an encounter with said individual(s).
9. This policy (HR-08) and the Workplace Violence Program (HR-08-Appendix A) will be:
  - a) reviewed annually by the library board, and
  - b) posted in the staff room.

### Section 3: Confidentiality and False Reports

1. All investigations shall be conducted in strict confidence to the extent possible. Documents will be stored in a locked cabinet and access to these records will be restricted.
2. Employees who are found to have made false or malicious complaints will be subject to disciplinary action.

### Related Documents:

**Occupational Health and Safety Act**, R.S.O. 1990, chapter O.1

**Bill 168: An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace and other matters.** (Statutes of Ontario, 2009, Chapter 23)

Trent Lakes Public Library Policy **HR-07: Workplace Harassment and Discrimination**

Trent Lakes Public Library Policy HR-09: **Health and Safety**

Trent Lakes Public Library Policy **OP- 02 Safety, Security and Emergency**

## HR-08 Prevention of Workplace Violence (continued)

### Appendix A – Workplace Violence Program

#### Plan for Maintaining Security in the Library

1. The library staff will conduct a worksite assessment as often as necessary to ensure measures for violence prevention are effective. The assessment will:
  - a) identify jobs or locations with the greatest risk,
  - b) identify high-risk factors,
  - c) include a physical workplace security audit, and
  - d) evaluate the effectiveness of existing security measures.
2. The CEO will annually review the history of past incidents to identify patterns or trends.
3. The CEO will annually review the previously recognized areas of higher risk in the library including:
  - a) ongoing contact with the public,
  - b) working alone or in small numbers,
  - c) the circulation desk where money is kept,
  - d) closing the library building at night, and
  - e) monitoring of secondary entrances to the library.

#### Measures for Reducing the Risk of Workplace Violence

1. Learn to recognize the signs of violence
  - a) Early identification and prevention of violence in the workplace is encouraged. Potential threats of violence that should be reported and could include the following:
    - i. threatening statements to do harm to self or others,
    - ii. reference to other incidents of violence,
    - iii. confrontational behaviour,
    - iv. major change in personality, mood, or behaviour, or
    - v. substance abuse.
2. Institute general measures to reduce risk including:
  - a) designate the CEO's office and staff room (rooms with doors that lock and telephone) as emergency safe rooms,
  - b) keep all secondary entrance doors locked, but with 'crash bars,'
  - c) keep the exterior lights around the building in good working order, and
  - d) ensure staff will not work alone in the library without prior consent of the CEO and employee.
3. Staff procedures to increase personal safety.
  - a) Notice your surroundings and report any unsafe or dangerous situation to the most senior staff member.
  - b) If you feel uncomfortable about a person who has entered the library, trust your instincts. If you feel threatened, make a scene - YELL!
  - c) Use a buddy system when leaving work.
  - d) If you ever find you are working alone in the library, let the CEO or someone at home, know the situation and tell him or her when you expect to leave.
  - e) If you enter a bathroom and suspect it is unsafe, do not call out. Back out, go to a safe, lockable place with telephone and call for help.
  - f) Know the nearest exit or room with a lock.

## HR-08 Prevention of Workplace Violence (continued)

### Measures for Reducing the Risk of Workplace Violence (continued)

4. Staff procedures for threatening behaviour.
  - a) Do not argue with a threatening person. Identify yourself as a library staff member. Remain calm and keep your voice low and firm.
  - b) Do not put yourself or others in danger. Keep a distance of at least six feet.
  - c) Be friendly but firm, introduce yourself, look at the person while you talk to him/her, let the person talk, clarify the problem, and offer solutions.
  - d) Get assistance from another staff member.
  - e) Advise him/her that the police will be called if the abuse does not stop.
  - f) If the behaviour does not change, call the police.**
  - g) Notify the CEO.
  
5. Staff procedures for dealing with violence/assault.
  - a) If you hear raised voices or sounds of a scuffle, investigate.
  - b) If you witness violence or an assault, call the police and describe the situation.**
  - c) Recruit staff to move others out of the way, to a safer location.
  - d) Do not block exits to prevent a threatening/violent person from leaving the building.
  - e) Do not invade the personal space of the threatening person.
  - f) Do not get between two people fighting.
  - g) Notice details so you can describe the situation to the police.
  - h) Notify the CEO.
  
6. Domestic Violence : Steps to Increase Your Personal Safety.
  - a) Tell someone at work about your situation.
  - b) Make up a "code word" for co-workers so they know when to call for help.
  - c) Ask your co-workers to screen your calls and visitors.
  - d) Ask a co-worker to call the police if your abuser is bothering you.

### How to report a situation

1. A report should be made as soon as possible after an action or behaviour has occurred.
2. An informal, verbal complaint may be brought forward to the CEO; however, it is in the best interest of all concerned that a report be written.
3. If a formal complaint is requested, the employee must file a written report with the CEO.
4. 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.

### Investigation and Dealing with Incidents or Complaints

1. After receiving a report, the CEO will complete an investigation as quickly as possible, depending on the nature and severity of the issue. This will include interviews with the employee, the alleged perpetrator, if a staff member, and any witnesses.
2. The results of the investigation will be discussed with the employee and recommended preventative actions and/or resolutions presented.
3. A separate meeting will be held with the alleged perpetrator, if a staff member.
4. If the findings do not support the allegations, the CEO will recommend that no further action is necessary and that the matter be closed.
5. Should the investigation conclude that there is evidence of misconduct, the CEO will prescribe a resolution that may include police intervention.
6. Employees who are found to have made false or malicious complaints will be subject to disciplinary action.