

Violence at Work

What is Workplace Violence?

Workplace violence includes any act in which a person is abused, threatened, intimidated or assaulted in his or her employment.

In the most serious cases, workplace violence can result in death. But more commonly workplace violence results in loss of sleep, fear, or depression. Victims of workplace violence have an increased risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Symptoms of PTSD include intrusive thoughts about the event, sleep disturbances and lack of concentration.

After a violent incident, some workers have difficulty returning to work. They may blame themselves or fear that others will blame them. Even the fear of violence or witnessing violence can affect workers. Violence also affects family members who may worry about their relative when they are at work.

There are different sources of violence in the workplace

- an outsider who commits a criminal act such as a robbery
- a customer, patient, or other person who receives services from the worker
- employers, supervisors, or co-workers

Are you at risk?

Any worker can be at risk from violence. But some workers face a higher risk. These include

- retail workers
- teachers
- social service workers
- health care workers
- public service workers
- corrections workers

The way the working environment is designed can also affect the risk of violence. A crowded, noisy environment can trigger violence when people are already under stress. Long waits when customers or patients need services can also prompt violence.

How can workplace violence be prevented?

Employers in Manitoba are legally responsible for addressing violence in the workplace. Their responsibilities are outlined in the Workplace Safety and Health Regulation on Violence in the Workplace (Part 11). Employers and workers should work together to develop a workplace violence policy and program. The workplace health and safety committee should be involved in identifying the risks for violence in the workplace, reviewing past violent incidents, and developing solutions.

Some ways employers can make the workplace safer are

Work Environment

- ✓ improve workplace design to **provide escape routes** for employees
- ✓ install **good lighting** inside and outside the workplace
- ✓ provide **comfortable waiting areas** and keep waiting times short for customers and clients
- ✓ install panic **alarms** and provide personal security alarms
- ✓ provide **cellular phones** for those who work in the community or in private homes

You are at risk for workplace violence if you work

- with the public
- with money, valuables or prescription drugs
- alone or in small numbers
- at night or early in the morning
- in a high crime area

Work Design

- ✓ **hire** extra workers to reduce isolation
- ✓ **ban** working alone
- ✓ **reduce stress** in the workplace and improve communication between workers and management

Education & Support

- ✓ **train workers** on how to recognize and respond to violent situations
- ✓ **provide counselling** or Employee Assistance Programs for victims of violence

For more information on the legal responsibilities of employers, contact the Workplace Safety and Health Branch.

What can you do?

- Ask your workplace health and safety committee or worker representative to identify the risks for violence in your workplace.
- Report workplace violence concerns to your employer, health and safety committee, or worker representative.

For more information contact

MFL Occupational Health Centre, Inc.
102-275 Broadway
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 4M6
Phone: 204-949-0811
Toll free: 1-888-843-1229 (Manitoba only)
Fax: 204-956-0848
Email: mflohc@mflohc.mb.ca
Website: www.mflohc.mb.ca

or

Workplace Safety and Health Branch
200 - 401 York Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0P8
Phone: 204-945-3446
Website: www.gov.mb.ca/labour/safety

What laws protect you?

Employer responsibilities are outlined in the following regulations

Violence in the Workplace (Part 11) requires employers to identify and assess the risk for violence in their workplace and develop a policy in consultation with the health and safety committee. The policy outlines procedures to report and investigate an incident and how to eliminate or minimize the risk of violence.

Working Alone or in Isolation (Part 9) requires employers to identify and assess the risks, develop and follow a plan when anyone works alone or in isolation.

Harassment (Part 10) requires employers to develop and implement a harassment prevention policy in consultation with the health and safety committee. The policy outlines procedures to deal with a complaint, corrective action and remedies, education and monitoring.

The **Manitoba Human Rights Code** prohibits harassment in employment and other situations. Harassment is abusive and unwelcome behaviour or comments toward individuals because of their

- ancestry, including colour
- ethnic background
- nationality
- religion
- age
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marital or family status
- source of income
- political beliefs
- disability

Harassment can also be unwelcome sexual advances. Sexual harassment includes unwanted physical and verbal attention. The employer is responsible for providing a harassment-free environment. For more information on harassment in the workplace, contact

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission

7th floor-175 Hargrave St.
Winnipeg, MB
Phone: 204-945-3007
Toll free: 1-888-884-8681
Website: www.gov.mb.ca/hrc

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