**WORKPLACE RISK FACTORS (VIOLENCE)**

Workplaces have, by the very nature of their business, factors which can increase the likelihood of violence occurring. These include:

* Handling large amounts of money or exchanging money
* Your worker having face-to-face contact with parents/guardians
* Opening in the evening or late at night
* Dealing with complaints or disputes
* Dealing with anger customers in disputes/complaints

Your business may also have specific risk factors that are associated with a higher risk of violence:

* You have lone workers or small numbers of worker
* You have drugs/medications at the workplace
* You have cash at the workplace
* Your workers are under pressure. Exceptional workloads or worker shortages may slow employee performance and lead to delays, impatience and hostility
* Your community has a history of violence or maybe under the influence of alcohol or other drugs
* Your school is in a high-crime area. Businesses with previous experience of robbery, assaults or threats are more at risk of repeat incidents
* Your school is quite isolated or you do not have many customers
* Your school has easy access/escape routes
* Your school's layout/lighting is poor. For example, tills are located near doors or there is poor visibility from outside the shop to inside
* You do not have any (obvious) security measures, which may suggest to potential assailants or criminals there is low risk of detection and minimum protection

**RISK CONTROL GUIDELINES**

**Physical environment – principles for selecting risk control measures**

The physical environment can affect the likelihood of violent incidents and the ease with which people can respond to them. Where new design, alteration or upgrading of work areas or equipment is planned, environmental factors should be taken into account.

**Physical environment – risk control measures include:**

* facility has safe glass only, eg: laminated, toughened, perspex (including picture frames, mirrors etc.)
* students do not have access to dangerous implements and/or objects that could be thrown
* there is no ready access to cash/drugs or valuables for members of the public
* signage directs and assists parents and visitors to find their way
* reception areas are pleasant
* lighting (both internal and external) assists visibility
* service areas have good visibility for workers
* public access is restricted
* there is a safe room/place to retreat for worker and other client safety
* communication/alarm systems and facilities – are adequate, regularly tested and maintained
* furniture and partitions are arranged to prevent people being trapped and allow good visibility of service areas

**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 (eg 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 eg: 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)

**Workers – prevention principles**

Issues in relation to worker exposure to violence at work need to be managed comprehensively. All categories of workers need to be considered, eg: reception and administrative; community based workers; direct care workers; home care workers; residential care workers; day care workers; volunteers; Officers and supervisors; agency workers, casuals and temps; students; and drivers, etc.

**Prevention measures include:**

* a process for determining staffing levels in ‘at risk’ areas
* ratio of workers to clients should be adequate for the level of care needed and take into account the range of activities undertaken (such as: peak periods; transfers; meal times, night work; sleep-overs; emergency responses; acute care/crisis; respite)
* skill level, training and experience of workers is appropriate for duties allocated to them
* where possible workers are permanent or regular workers who are known to the clients and workplace
* workers are rotated into alternate duties to reduce exposure
* procedures and back up are in place for workers working alone or in isolation
* workers receive regular support and supervision

**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
* restraint techniques (including legal issues)
* situational risk assessment (for workers visiting homes or working off site)
* communication skills