



Policy

Policy Title:	Violence in the Workplace	
Applies To:	All Team Members	
Approved:	Effective:	Next Review:
March 21, 2023	April 19, 2023	March 21, 2027
Sponsor:	Director, Occupational Health Safety and Wellness	
Approval Authority:	VP, People, Culture and Belonging Executive Leadership Team	
Number: AD-OHS-010	Manual:	Administrative

Note: This policy is supplemented by the [Nova Scotia Health Violence in the Workplace Program](#), a component of the [Occupational Health Safety Management System](#).

This policy aligns with [Respectful Workplace - Policy and Procedure - NSHA AD-HR-020](#) to together address the full range of Disrespectful, Offensive and Violent Behaviours directed against Team Members (refer to [Appendix B: Healthy, Disrespectful, Offensive and Violent Behaviour Continuum](#)).

For Incidents involving acts of Violence towards Patients, refer to [Abuse Prevention and Response - Policy and Procedure - NSHA AD-QR-001](#).

PURPOSE

This policy provides an overview of how Nova Scotia Health implements the legislative requirements for the prevention and management of Violence in the Workplace.

Note: For situations where a person has a weapon with the intent of causing mass harm, use “run, hide, fight” for response. Refer to [Emergency Preparedness resources](#) for further information.

POLICY STATEMENTS

1. Nova Scotia Health takes every reasonable precaution in the circumstances to minimize and – to the extent possible – eliminate the risk of Violence in the Workplace.
2. The [Nova Scotia Health Workplace Violence Prevention Statement](#) must be posted in each department or unit in a prominent place(s) easily accessible by Team Members, and must remain posted.

This is a CONTROLLED document for internal use only. Any documents appearing in paper form are not controlled and should be checked against the electronic file version prior to use.

3. Nova Scotia Health provides a Workplace where Team Members:
 - 3.1. Are aware that Violence in the Workplace is not tolerated.
 - 3.2. Are aware of their [legal obligations](#) and responsibilities to prevent and manage Violence in the Workplace.
 - 3.3. Are made aware of the known potential Hazards in the Workplace as it relates to Violence.
 - 3.4. Are aware of policies, programs, procedures and supports available to help prevent and manage Violence in the Workplace.
 - 3.5. Are provided and participate in education and/or training to prevent and manage Violence in the Workplace.
 - 3.6. Work together to create a Workplace that is healthy and safe for all.
4. Any act of Violence, even Near Miss situations, directed against Team Members by any persons (e.g., patients, visitors, other Team Members) must be reported to the manager/delegate and via the Safety Management and Improvement System (SIMS), Safe Line or other reporting system used in a particular Nova Scotia Health geographic area.
 - 4.1. Reporting of Incidents of Violence in the Workplace must not be made in Bad Faith.
5. All Incidents of Violence in the Workplace must be investigated.
 - 5.1. All Team Members must fully cooperate during investigations and/or resolution processes and maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of those involved.
6. Any Team Member exposed to or affected by Violence in the Workplace must be provided with a [Post Incident Debrief](#) and advised to consult a health professional for counseling.
7. Each department or unit must have completed and posted [Workplace Violence Risk Assessment](#) and [Workplace Violence Prevention Plan](#).
8. This policy is not intended to discourage or prevent any person from:
 - 8.1. Pursuing a complaint under any applicable legislation, including the Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Act and Criminal Code of Canada,
 - 8.2. Filing a grievance under an applicable collective agreement,
 - 8.3. Pursuing a complaint under the provisions of any governing professional association, or
 - 8.4. Exercising any other legal rights under any other law.
9. Discipline, up to and including termination, may result if:
 - 9.1. A Team Member is found to be in violation of this Policy.
 - 9.2. A Team Member retaliates against a party involved in an Incident of alleged Violence in the Workplace.
 - This includes but is not limited to retaliation against a Team Member(s) who has or will be reporting an Incident or expressing an intention to report an Incident,

providing evidence, information, or assistance in relation to an Incident of Violence in the Workplace, participating in any process under this policy and being identified as the subject of any report or investigation of Violence in the Workplace.

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Nova Scotia Health is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and supportive working environment for Team Members, patients, and visitors.

Nova Scotia Health recognizes the direct and indirect effects of physical and psychological harm for Team Members as a result of Incidents of Violence in the Workplace.

Nova Scotia Health acknowledges that Violence is an occupational health and safety Hazard in the Workplace. Violence can cause physical and psychological harm, both direct and indirect, and have negative effects on patient care, health, as well as physical and psychological safety, morale, and productivity of Team Members.

Nova Scotia Health views any acts or threats of Violence in the Workplace as unacceptable and will be treated seriously.

Nova Scotia Health recognizes its obligation to provide health care services to those in need while ensuring the physical and psychological safety of Team Members, patients, and visitors.

Nova Scotia Health uses Violence in the Workplace Incident investigation to continuously improve the [Violence in the Workplace Program](#) and reduce the risk of future similar Incidents, see [Appendix C: Prevention and Management of Violence in the Workplace Cycle](#).

The Violence in the Workplace Program acknowledges the effects of indirect/secondary trauma and its guiding principles regarding debriefing of Team Members are based on low-impact debriefing with a goal of reducing Secondary Traumatic Stress.

REFERENCES

Legislative Acts

Criminal Code of Canada, Statutes of Canada. (1985, c. C-46). Retrieved from the Justice Laws website: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/PDF/C-46.pdf>

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Statutes of Nova Scotia. (1993, c. 5). Retrieved from the Nova Scotia Legislature website: <https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/freedom%20of%20information%20and%20protection%20of%20privacy.pdf>

Human Rights Act, Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia. (1989, c. 214). Retrieved from the Nova Scotia Legislature website: <https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/human%20rights.pdf>

Occupational Health and Safety Act, Statutes of Nova Scotia. (1996, c. 7). Retrieved from the Nova Scotia Legislature website: <https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/occupational%20health%20and%20safety.pdf>

This is a CONTROLLED document for internal use only. Any documents appearing in paper form are not controlled and should be checked against the electronic file version prior to use.

Protecting Access to Health Services Act, Statutes of Nova Scotia. (2021, c.24). Retrieved from the Nova Scotia Legislature website:

<https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/protecting%20access%20to%20health%20services.pdf>

Violence in the Workplace Regulations, made under Section 82 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. (1996, NS Reg. 209/2007). Retrieved from the Nova Scotia Office of the Registrar of Regulations website:

<https://novascotia.ca/just/regulations/regs/ohsviolence.htm>

Workers' Compensation Act, Statutes of Nova Scotia. (1994-95, c. 10). Retrieved from the Nova Scotia Legislature website:

<https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/workers%20compensation.pdf>

Other

Accreditation Canada. (2019). *Accreditation Canada Qmentum Standards: Leadership*. (Version 14).

Alberta Health Services. (2019). *Respectful workplace and the prevention of harassment and violence*. Policy 1115. <https://extranet.ahsnet.ca/teams/policydocuments/1/clp-ahs-pol-workplace-violence-prevention-response.pdf>

Aware NS. (2020). *Workplace violence prevention program*. <https://awarens.ca/workplace-violence-prevention/>

Dalhousie University. *Sexual assault*. <https://www.dal.ca/dept/vpei/hres/sexualized-violence/sexual-assault.html>

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Policies

[Abuse Prevention and Response – Policy and Procedure – NSHA AD-QR-001](#)

[Emergency Preparedness – Policy and Procedure – NSHA AD-EP-010](#)

[Managing Potential for Violence and Aggression in the Emergency Department – Protocol – NSHA CL-EC-070](#)

[Occupational Health and Safety Rights and Accountabilities – Policy and Procedure – AD-OHS-001](#)

[Respectful Workplace – Policy and Procedure – NSHA AD-HR-020](#)

Intranet Sites

[Violence in the Workplace Program](#)

[Plans and Emergency Colour Codes](#)

Other

[Nova Scotia Health Code of Conduct](#)

[Nova Scotia Health Workplace Violence Prevention Statement](#)

[Nova Scotia Health Violence in the Workplace Program Guide](#)

[Nova Scotia Health Code White Response Guidelines](#)

Forms

[Workplace Violence Risk Assessment Template](#)

[Workplace Violence Prevention Plan Template](#)

Education

[General OHSW Training](#) (LMS code 0177, automatically assigned as an annual mandatory course)

[Introduction to Respectful Workplace Policy](#) (LMS code 0231, automatically assigned as an annual mandatory course)

[Respectful Workplace Policy Library Guide](#)

[Workplace Violence Part 1](#) (LMS code 0236, automatically assigned as an annual mandatory course)

[Workplace Violence Part 2](#) (LMS code 0237, automatically assigned as an annual mandatory course)

[Verbal Intervention Training](#) (LMS code 1153)

[Non-violent Crisis Intervention](#) (LMS code 0572)

[Code Silver](#) (LMS code 0831, automatically assigned as an annual mandatory course)

Support

[Doctors Nova Scotia Professional Support Program](#)

[Employee and Family Assistance Program](#)

To connect with other 2SLGBTQIA+ employees and resources, contact pridenetwork@nshealth.ca or pridehealth@nshealth.ca

[Trans Lifeline](#)

Appendices

[Appendix A](#): Definitions

[Appendix B](#): Healthy, Disrespectful, Offensive and Violent Behaviour Continuum

[Appendix C](#): Prevention and Management of Violence in the Workplace Cycle

* * *

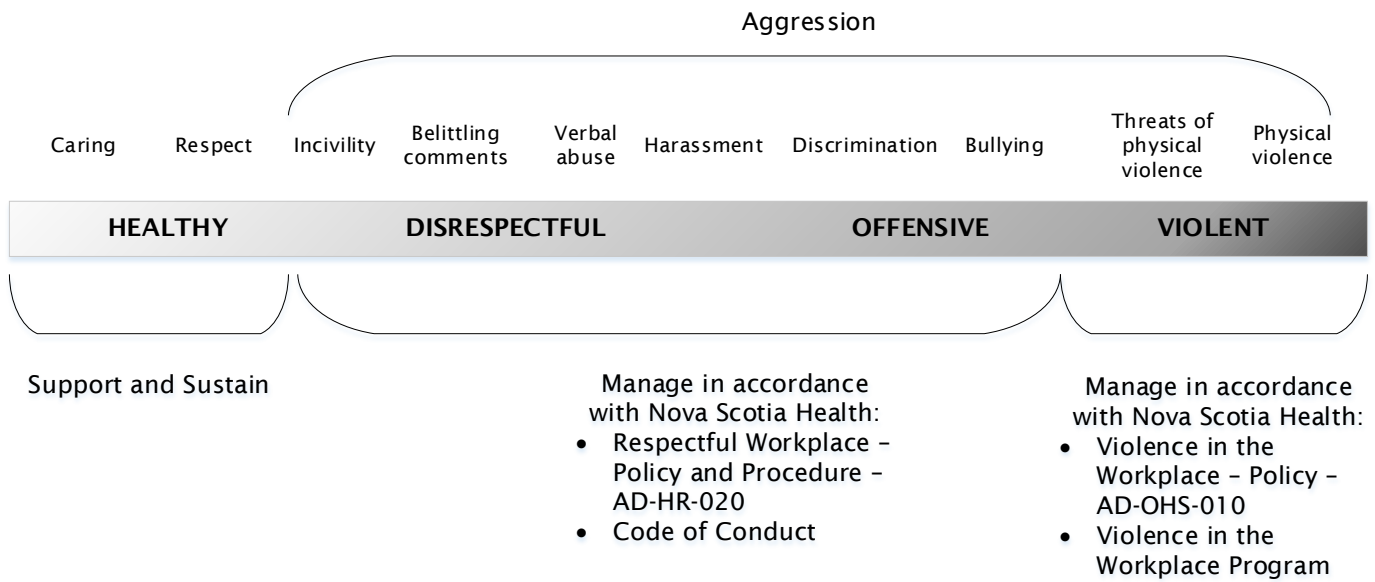
Appendix A: Definitions

Bad Faith	To report with a frivolous, vexatious, or malicious nature, or is knowingly false, and may result in discipline.
Code White	The approved Nova Scotia Health Emergency Colour code for “Violent Person(s)/Situation”. The emergency response code used to describe an emergency situation in which a person is behaving in a potentially violent manner, or in a potentially violent manner towards themselves or others and indicates a potential for escalation or is escalating beyond the abilities of the Team Members present, to control the situation.
Disrespectful Behaviour	<p>Behaviour toward others that is undesirable, inappropriate, Offensive, unsuitable, or improper which leads to an uncomfortable, hostile and/or intimidating work environment and which is not based on one or more of the protected grounds under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. The behaviour may be written, verbal or electronic. It can also be described as the assertion of power through aggression. Disrespectful behaviour that is repeated with intent to embarrass or humiliate may be considered bullying or harassment. Disrespectful behaviour can escalate into Violence (see Appendix B: Healthy, Disrespectful, Offensive and Violent Behaviour Continuum).</p> <p>Disrespectful Behavior is not addressed in this policy. Refer to Respectful Workplace – Policy and Procedure – NSHA AD-HR-020.</p>
Hazard	A condition or practice with a potential for harm to people, equipment, materials, property, or the environment.
Incident	An unplanned and unwanted event that causes, or has the potential to cause, physical and/or psychological injury to a person, damage to equipment, materials, property, or the environment, or has a high risk of doing so.
Near Miss	An Incident that had the potential for injury or damage, but where no injury or damage occurred.
Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS)	<p>Part of the overall management system of an organization that addresses OHS&W hazards and risks associated with its activities. Provides the methods by which Nova Scotia Health will comply with legislative requirements and provides the detailed responsibilities and accountabilities of all workplace parties with regards to occupational health, safety, and wellness.</p> <p>Refer to the Safety Management System for further details.</p>
Offensive Behaviour	Harassment, sexual harassment, or discrimination. Offensive behaviour can escalate into Violence (see Appendix B: Healthy, Disrespectful, Offensive and Violent Behaviour Continuum).

	Offensive Behaviour is not addressed in this policy. Refer to Respectful Workplace – Policy and Procedure – NSHA AD-HR-020 .
Post Incident Debrief	Discussion with all stakeholders to review and evaluate an incidence of Violence in the Workplace. This process involves, but is not limited to, identification of factors leading to the onset of Violence in the Workplace, de-escalation techniques utilized, and other response processes. Potential Hazards and corrective actions are often identified. Refer to the Violence in the Workplace Program Guide for further details.
Secondary Traumatic Stress	Emotional duress that results when a Team Member hears about the firsthand trauma experienced by another Team Member during a Post Incident Debrief.
Team Member	Unless specifically limited by a certain policy, refers to all employees, on-site medical staff, learners, volunteers, board members, contractors, contract workers, franchise employees, and those with affiliated appointments and other individuals performing activities within Nova Scotia Health.
Violence	<p>Threats, including a threatening statement or threatening behaviour, that give Team Members reasonable cause to believe that they – or someone else – are at risk of physical injury, and/or conduct or attempted conduct of a person that endangers the physical health or physical safety of Team Members.</p> <p>Violence includes, but is not limited to, physical conduct or threats of physical conduct that cause, or are likely to cause, physical or psychological injury or harm, which may be immediate or delayed.</p> <p>Examples of Violence include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats of physical harm delivered in person, through phone calls, or in writing via letters or electronically (including social media) • Intimidating or frightening gestures, such as shaking fists at another person, pounding a desk or counter, punching a wall, or screaming • Threatening to throw or strike objects • Stalking • Physical Violence such as kicking, hitting, biting, grabbing, pinching, scratching, spitting, etc. • Injuring a person by using an object such as a chair, cane, or a weapon such as a knife, gun, sharp or blunt instrument • Sexual assault (any form of unwanted, forced, or coerced sexual activity, including kissing, fondling, touching, and

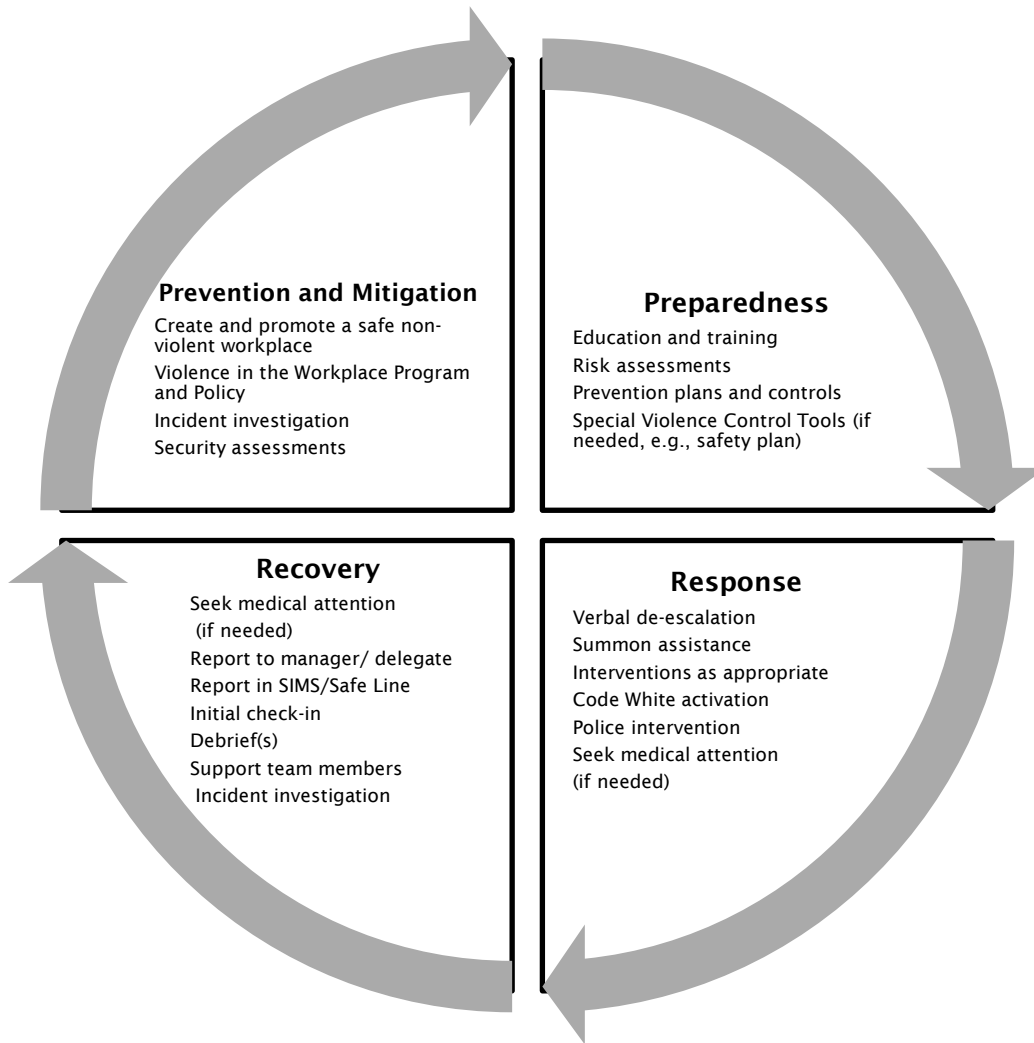
	<p>any kind of intercourse that is done onto Team Members without their consent)</p> <p>Any Violence in the Workplace is unacceptable no matter who initiates it (e.g., patient, visitor, fellow Team Member).</p> <p>Whether intentional or not, if these threatening or physically violent behaviours are encountered by Team Members in the performance of their work, they are considered Violence in the Workplace.</p>
Violence in the Workplace Program	<p>As required by the Nova Scotia Violence in the Workplace Regulations, the Violence in the Workplace Program is a program developed to assist management and Team Members to ensure a healthy and safe Workplace.</p>
Workplace	<p>Any place (physical or virtual) where Nova Scotia Health Team Members are likely to be engaged in any occupation and includes, but is not limited to: Nova Scotia Health facilities, including all leased properties, patients' residences, community meeting places, any vehicle used or likely to be used by Team Members in an occupation, washrooms, cafeterias, business travel, conferences, work related social functions, locker rooms, phone calls, faxes, emails, and any location, event or activity where actions of Team Member, on duty or not, will have serious repercussions on the work environment.</p>

Appendix B: Healthy, Disrespectful, Offensive and Violent Behaviour Continuum



Appendix C: Prevention and Management of Violence in the Workplace Cycle

This is a cycle of continuous quality improvement based on regular review of Incidents of Violence in the Workplace reports.



POLICIES BEING REPLACED

N/A

VERSION HISTORY

Version:	Effective:	Approved by:	What's changed:
Original	2017-09-18	VP, People and Organizational Development	N/A
Revised	2023-03-21	VP, People, Culture and Belonging ELT	Major revision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separated policy from procedure • Updated definitions and visuals • Aligned with legislation requirements for education, investigation, post-incident debrief, risk assessments and prevention planning • Added discipline
Revised	2023-04-11	Director, OHSW	Minor revision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added secondary traumatic stress to definitions and principles and values