

FRONT OF YONGE TOWNSHIP

PREVENTION OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Preamble:

Effective June 2010 the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* was amended to address issues of workplace harassment and violence. As a result employers were required to develop written policies with respect to workplace violence and maintain a program to implement the policy and to deal with incidents and complaints. In addition the employers must assess the risk of workplace violence and the program must include procedures to control the risks identified in the assessment.

This policy addresses the prevention of workplace violence as part of Front of Yonge Township's responsibility for worker health and safety under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. This policy is for the mutual protection of staff and visitors from violence or threats of violence.

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

Definition:

1. Front of Yonge Township recognizes the definition of violence as set out in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. **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 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

2. **Violence** in the workplace may include:
 - 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,
 - f) Sexual violence against a worker.

3. Violence in township buildings or on township property may also include:
 - a) Intentional or reckless damaging of the property of another person without permission,
 - 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,
 - f) Wielding a weapon.

13.3 Responsibility and Response:

1. The Clerk or designate must develop and maintain a workplace violence program. See Appendix A.

The program 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
 - d) the process for dealing with, and investigating, violent incidents and complaints
2. In the event that there is a complaint against the Clerk or a conflict of interest, a complaint shall be filed with the Reeve and/or Council. All complaints, reports or advisements will be immediately and thoroughly investigated by the Clerk and/or Reeve or designate.
3. Physical or sexual assault or threat of physical violence will be reported to the police.
4. The Township will provide staff with information on the risk of violence in Township facilities and will provide training workshops on a periodic basis dealing with various issues of violence in the workplace such as “dealing with difficult people”.
5. Any one experiencing or witnessing imminent danger or actual violence involving weapons or personal injury must call the police.
6. Workplace violence must be reported immediately to the most senior staff member and/or Reeve.
7. Employees must report behaviour that they reasonably believe poses a potential for violence as described above.
8. Front of Yonge Township, 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 township property in cases where the employee suspects that an act of violence, will result from an encounter with said individual(s).

9. This policy will be:
 - a) Reviewed annually by the Clerk
 - b) Posted in each staffed Township Building, along with the Violence Prevention Program –
See Appendix A, B or C
 - c) Posted on the Township's website.

13.4 Confidentiality and False Reports

1. All investigation, interviews and deliberations shall be conducted in strict confidence to the extent possible. The documents will be stored in the personnel section of the township files 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.

APPENDIX A – Workplace Violence Program

Plans for Maintaining Security in the Township Office

1. The township 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 risks,
 - b) Identify high risk factors,
 - c) Conduct a physical workplace security audit,
 - d) Evaluate the effectiveness of existing security measures.
2. The Clerk, or designate, will annually review the history of past incidents to identify patterns or trends.

Recognized areas of higher risk in the Township Office include:

- a) Contact with the public,
- b) Working alone or in small numbers,
- c) The circulation desk where money is kept,
- d) Closing the Township Office at night.

Measures for reducing the risk:

1. General:
 - a) Designate the accessible washroom and rear exit as emergency safe areas.
 - b) Keep all secondary entrance doors locked.
 - c) Staff will not work alone in the building without prior consent of the Clerk.
 - d) The exterior lights around the building will be kept in good working order.
2. Recognize the Signs of Violence

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

- a) Threatening statements to do harm to self and others,
- b) Reference to other incidents of violence,
- c) Confrontational behaviour,
- d) Major change in personality, mood or behaviour,
- e) Substance abuse.

3. Steps to Increase Your 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 Township Office, trust your instincts. If you feel threatened, make a scene – YELL, call 9-1-1.
- c) When working alone at night, park near the front door.
- d) Know the nearest exit or room with a lock.

4. 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.

5. Staff Procedures

Threatening Behaviour:

- a) Do not argue with a threatening person. Identify yourself as a township staff member. Remain calm and keep your voice low and firm.
- b) Do not put yourself or others in danger. Keep a distance of four 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 person.
- e) Advise him/her that the police will be called if the abuse does not stop.
- f) **If the behaviour doesn't change call the police.**
- g) Notify the Clerk or designate and complete an incident report form.

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 other 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 go between two people fighting.
- g) Notice details so you can describe the situation to the authorities.
- h) Notify the Clerk or Reeve and complete an incident report.

How to Report:

- a) A report must be made as soon as possible after an action or behaviour occurred. See Appendix D.
- b) Any complaint must be written and brought forward to the Clerk and Reeve and/or Council member.
- c) The report must include a brief statement of the incident, when it occurred, where it occurred, date and time it occurred, the person(s) involved and the name of witnesses if any.
- d) In the event that there is a complaint against the Clerk or a conflict of interest, a complaint shall be filed with the Reeve and/or Council. The Council members may conduct an investigation or designate an individual to investigate and issue a report.

Investigation and Dealing with Incidents or Complaints Involving Staff

1. The Clerk may ask the Reeve or designate to help with the investigation.
2. Within 2 working days of receiving the report the Clerk or designate will complete an investigation. This will include interviews with the staff involved and any witnesses.
3. After the investigation, the injured party will be presented with the results and any recommended preventative actions and/or resolutions.
4. A separate meeting will be held with the alleged aggressor.
5. If the findings do not support the allegations, the Clerk or designate will recommend that no further action is necessary and that the matter be closed.
6. Should the investigation conclude that there is evidence of misconduct the Clerk will prescribe a resolution that may include police intervention.
7. Employees who are found to have made false or malicious complaints will be subject to disciplinary action.
8. The Clerk must keep Council informed of all investigations.

Appendix D

Report Form:

Type of Incident: **Discrimination** **Harassment** **Violence**

Name of person making the complaint: _____

Name(s) of aggressor(s): _____

Date and time of occurrence: _____

Where occurrence took place: _____

Details of occurrence:

Witnesses: _____

Investigated by: _____

Date: _____