

Policy: Workplace Violence and Harassment

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Approved By:	Board of Directors, Management	Review Date: January 9, 2024
References:	General Personnel Policy # 2 Health and Safety Policy # 4	

Statement:

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is committed to working with its employees to provide a safe and secure working environment. The Society will not tolerate any acts of violence, harassment or sexual harassment and will take all reasonable measures to protect its employees.

Policy:

This policy applies to all employees, Vincentians, program volunteers and residents.

For the purpose of this policy, acts of workplace violence include, but are not limited to, the following:

- the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker;
- an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker;
- a statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker or that could cause physical injury to the worker.

For the purposes of this Policy, acts of workplace harassment and sexual harassment include, but are not limited to, the following:

- engaging in a course of vexatious comments or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome, derogatory or cause unnecessary discomfort;
- any actions, words or inferences that can be construed as sexual in nature; either challenging or degrading a person based on their sex or sexual orientation.

Some types of behaviours that may be defined as workplace harassment include, but are not limited to:

- teasing
- intimidating or offensive jokes or innuendos
- displaying or circulating offensive pictures or materials
- offensive, intimidating or derogatory comments or phone calls
- bullying
- comments or actions of a sexual nature
- unwanted physical contact

Procedures:

The following list of responsibilities, and the process for investigating reported and suspected incidents of violence or harassment will be implemented and followed at each worksite:

Responsibilities:

Employees:

- Are responsible for preventing and reporting acts of violence or harassment that threaten a safe working environment.
- Must not engage in behaviour that is violent, threatening or intimidating as defined in this policy.
- Must report promptly to their manager, any incident where an employee is subject to, witness to, or has knowledge of workplace violence or harassment.
- Must report to their manager any potential occurrences which may result from domestic violence incidents.
- Must follow all established procedures and policies with regard to safety in the workplace.
- Must call 911 should emergency assistance be required.

Management:

- Conduct workplace violence and harassment hazard assessments to determine if employees may be at risk due to the working environment and reviewed annually, in January, or more often as necessary.
- Work with the Health and Safety Committee to ensure hazards have been appropriately identified and controlled and take all reasonable precautions to reduce the risk.
- Respond immediately to all reports of violence and harassment, ensuring the immediate safety of the employee; contacting the police and emergency services as required and contacting the Executive Director for the purposes of initiating an investigation. Should the Executive Director be the alleged perpetrator, the Chair of the Board shall be contacted to manage the investigation.
- Persons who report incidents of domestic violence which may impact the workplace will be provided with the contact information for the Society's Violence Against Women (VAW) and Domestic Violence Program coordinator.

Investigation of incidents:

- The Executive Director will be responsible for the initial investigation. The Board of Directors and the Ministry of Labour will be notified as necessary.
- An investigation will be directed by the Executive Director who may request assistance from the program manager, VAW coordinator, or a senior member of the management team. Statements will be obtained from all witnesses and all evidence will be secured.
- A written report of the investigation will be prepared and will include all actions taken and the reasons for the actions and the resolution.
- During the course of the investigation, the alleged perpetrator or victim of the act may be asked to not attend the workplace.
- In the event that the act of violence or harassment is blatant, the perpetrator may be immediately suspended of duties pending a full investigation into their actions.
- A decision pending the outcome of the investigation will be made by the Executive Director; the Board Chair, or designate may be involved as necessary. In the event that an individual is proven to be responsible for acts of violence or harassment, consequences may range from verbal warnings to termination of service, position or employment.
- All incident reports and investigations relating to actions under this policy will be reviewed on an annual basis. This will be done in conjunction with the annual hazard assessment and will provide for the opportunity to make adjustments or improvements to ensure an optimal safe working environment.
- In the event that acts of workplace violence or harassment against employees are committed by others who are not Society employees such as service recipients, Vincentians, volunteers, family members or employees of other agencies, the process for investigating incidents will be followed as set out in this policy. Additional investigative assistance may be requested from funders, partner agency staff, or outside professionals as required. Persons who intimidate, threaten or harass employees may be barred from the workplace during the course of the investigation. Funded programs have established policies in place that detail reporting requirements for each division, such as MCCSS Serious Occurrence Reporting or the City of Toronto TSSS Serious Occurrence Notification; these procedures will be followed.