

# Violence Protection Program

## Purpose

School District 20 is committed to promoting a safe, healthy and violence-free workplace. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to identify, prevent and manage the risks to the personal safety of all employees, students and the public from violence in the workplace and that appropriate action is consistently taken to protect all persons from the effects of violent behaviour.

This Violence Prevention Program (VPP) focuses on the prevention of violent behaviour. Where the risks cannot be eliminated, they must be reduced to the lowest possible level using control measures developed in consultation with staff and the appropriate Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC).

## Policy

Refer to Policy 4.6: Violence in the workplace. Posted in employee area and at <http://www.sd20.bc.ca/section-1-student-programs/articles/section-4.html>

## Scope

This policy applies to all persons accessing the School District facilities, including employees, students, volunteers, suppliers, contractors and visitors.

### **Definition of Violence 4.27**

*violence" means the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker, and includes any threatening statement or behavior which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that he or she is at risk of injury and **improper activity or behaviour** includes: horseplay, practical jokes, unnecessary running or jumping or similar conduct.*

### **High Risk behaviours:**

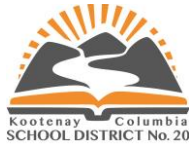
- Verbal/written threats
- Possession of weapons
- Bomb threats
- Intimidation, bullying and harassment
- Violent outbursts
- Fighting between students
- Substance abuse

### **Risk Factors:**

- Fatigue
- Lack of proper nutrition
- Constipation
- Fear
- Previous or existing abuse
- Difficulty communicating
- Medication and substance abuse
- Hormones
- Exposure to violence or challenging situations
- Loss
- Mental or physical illness or injury

**This program outlines violence prevention responsibilities for School District 20.**

The School District commits to minimizing the risk of violence by promoting:



## Violence Protection Program

- workplace safety for staff.
- policies that ensure staff are provided information and training on following safety practices and preventing and responding to violent incidents.
- the empowerment of staff to make and act on decisions regarding risk of violence.
- the establishment of written practices to identify and address risks for each worksite using input from all worksite staff.
- a Violence Prevention Program (VPP) that, as a minimum, complies with WorkSafeBC Occupational Health & Safety regulations, the Workers' Compensation Act and the applicable collective agreement(s)
- Safety for clients and the public in School District workplaces by developing appropriate programs in support of the broader mandate of the School District

### **Accountability**

All School District employees have responsibilities regarding the prevention of violence in the workplace.

#### **Senior Administration**

- Ensures the provision of a Violence Prevention Program (VPP) including policies, practice standards and procedures for dealing with workplace violence.
- Ensures that directors, managers and supervisors are aware of VPP requirements.
- Provides resources and support for the Violence Prevention Program
- Provides resources and support for personal, administrative and environmental controls, including education and training of employees and responders
- Supports broad and widespread communication related to the Violence Prevention Program.

#### **Managers & Supervisors**

- Ensure identification of risks for violence, risk assessment and controls are in place for their work area.
- Inform staff of any risks due to violence in their work area.
- Ensure that work area specific (as required) VPP procedures are developed and communicated to staff.
- Ensure staff are aware and understand that violence should not be accepted as "part of the job". • Ensure evidence-based training and education is provided to staff, including requirements for new staff.
- Ensure incidents of violence are reported, investigated and any necessary corrective measures are implemented and monitored for effectiveness.
- Ensure staff are informed of and able to access resources available to them after experiencing an incident of violence, including:
  - Instructing staff to seek First Aid services,
  - Advising staff to consult a physician for treatment and/or referral
  - Referring staff to the Employee and Family Assistance Plan (EFAP), if available.
- Provide support to staff who wish to pursue criminal charges against the perpetrator if they are injured/harmed as a result of incidents of violence.
- Regularly review the Violence Prevention Program (VPP) to ensure its effectiveness in eliminating and minimizing risks for their program areas.

#### **Employees**

- Follow policies and procedures created in accordance with the requirements of the Violence Prevention Program (VPP).



## Violence Protection Program

- Participate in training/education activities to ensure awareness and understanding of the Violence Prevention Program, including the recognition of risk factors, and the management of threats/incidents of violence.
- Report all acts of violence, including any activity that has a potential for violence, to the manager/supervisor and complete relevant documentation.
- Contact the Principal or Manager of Safety and Wellness to report injuries or incidents related to violence or aggressive behaviour
- Seek first aid if injured.
- Access Employee and Family Assistance (EFAP) services where appropriate.
- Participate and cooperate in accident/incident investigations.
- Provide input into the risk assessment process.
- Follow the work refusal process where work is perceived to create a risk of violence (WorkSafeBC, OHSR 3.12, refusal of unsafe work).

### Joint Occupational Health & Safety (JOHS) Committee Responsibilities

- Make written recommendations to the employer regarding violence prevention.
- Participate in the risk assessment process, including measures to protect staff.
- Review incident statistics on a regular basis and make recommendations and develop action plans as needed.
- Evaluate the ongoing effectiveness of the Violence Prevention Program (VPP) to include site/program specific policies and procedures and provide critical feedback to the appropriate employer representative.
- Participate in an annual evaluation of the VPP
- Advise managers and supervisors regarding local training needs.
- Participate as required, and ensure appropriate incident investigations and workplace inspections are carried out.

However, when a violent incident does occur, action must be taken to minimize its impact and prevent its recurrence as far as possible, regardless of its source.

The School District is committed to providing a safe environment for staff, clients, and the public and will support this commitment by developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating initiatives in support of this policy.

All staff, clients, and the public are expected to conduct themselves in a manner which respects the rights of others at all times.

### Responding to Violence

School District utilizes a non-violent crisis management system to prevent and manage violent behaviour. Restraint should be used only as a last resort where other interventions have been unsuccessful. Staff will respond to incidents of violence using one or more of the following intervention methods as appropriate:

- non-violent crisis management techniques, e.g., non-verbal/verbal de-escalation
- multidisciplinary team approach • support of site based contracted security services
- escalation to 911 or other local emergency response group if required
- All incidents of violence must be reported to the responsible manager/supervisor and be documented. Procedures will be developed at the site level to reflect its needs and circumstances.

### The Employer and Employer Representatives:



## Violence Protection Program

Any threat or act of violence against persons or staff, arising out of, or in the course of, their duties, is not acceptable and measures will be taken to hold persons accountable for their actions up to and including the pursuit of criminal charges. If the person committing the threatening or violent act is a staff member, appropriate progressive disciplinary actions could be taken, up to and including termination of employment or privileges. In circumstances where employees feel threatened by the immediate risk of workplace violence, they may invoke the right to refusal of unsafe work to initiate an investigation of the situation. The School District will support the work refusal process.

*Where employees work alone or in isolation, the School District shall implement the working alone program.*

### Reporting:

- Report to Principal, TIC, Operations, or Safety
- Witnesses-complete witness statement form
- All students, staff and parents will be made aware of their obligation to report any threat making behaviour to staff. Staff must report to team and employer.
- All knowledge of high risk behaviour must be reported promptly to principal

### Risk Assessment:

A risk assessment must be conducted of each reported occurrence to identify the types and probability of injury or mental stress caused by violent incidents. All Risk assessments must be documented, communicated and accessible to all employees that may be exposed to the risk.

#### Low:

- Threat is vague and indirect
- Unlikely to carry out threat
- Typical baseline behaviour

*Most low-med can be managed at school interventions*

#### Medium:

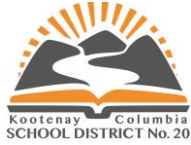
- Could be- but not very realistic
- Threat is not totally empty
- Increase in baseline behaviours

#### High:

- Threat is specific and plausible
  - Information suggests steps have been taken
  - Increase in baseline
- If imminent danger- call RCMP or 911 and follow lock down procedures  
Take steps to ensure the safety of all employees and students

### Behaviours:

- Worrisome behaviours: elated sensitivity
- Has the student shown evidence of intention?
- Have they sought out weapons?
- Has the student engaged suspicious behaviour?
- Is there evidence or forewarnings?
- Does the student have a history of violence or threats?
- Do they have a history of self-harm?
- Does the student have a history of depression? Substance abuse/use?
- Impulsive? Emotional? Extreme reactions?
- Engaged in Bullying or Harassment?



## Violence Protection Program

- History of fighting? Violence?
- Recent loss, trauma, rejection

### Student resources/Background:

- Does the student have Safe, healthy relationships with other students? Adults?
- Is the student overly interested in violence?
- Is there evidence that they are imitating or innovating themselves?
- What does the students home life look like? Where do they reside?
- Who do they live with?
- Is there a history of violence or threats of violence at home?
- Are caregivers/parents/family concerned for the students or their own safety?
- Are there variables in risk of violence? When do they feel safe?
- Does the student have a history of trauma?
- Has the student been diagnosed?
- Is there a history of mental health disorders in the family?
- Is there a history of substance abuse in the family?

### Intervention Strategies:

- Be Supportive-Empathetic-Anxiety
- Be Directive-Defensive
- Crisis intervention plan-acting out
- Therapeutic Rapport-Tension Reduction

### Things to request for intake:

- Current and previous school/discipline safety records
- Parent/ social support/worker Feedback

### Process for communication:

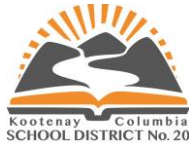
- Parents/ caregivers/guardians informed?
- Student contract to not harm others or self
- Notify parents.
- Detain student, follow school process for calling home
- Behaviour plan
- Safety plan review meeting if new info indicates that safety plan need review /update
- Discipline? What is the re- entry plan?

## Violence Procedures and Practices

### RESPONDING TO A THREAT OR THREAT MAKING BEHAVIOUR

#### *Prevention Strategies*

- Encourage the reporting of all threats that involve students, parents or staff.
- Inform your supervisor or administrator of any threats arising from your personal life that may compromise your safety or the safety of others while at school. Consider police involvement.
- Respond as soon as possible to all threats regardless of how minor they appear. The most serious threats frequently have roots in a prior small incident that created feelings of anger or frustration.
- Keep items that can be used as a weapon e.g. scissors, knives, other sharp or heavy objects out of sight.



## Violence Protection Program

- Individuals who make threats usually have a history of threatening or violent behaviour. Reporting incidents to the police may provide additional information that can assist in completing a risk assessment and response plan.

### **Response Strategies**

- Remember People will calm down when they feel safe.
- Set expectations and redirect
- Restraint is only used when the behaviour is an immediate threat of harm to self or others
- Threats may be made during a telephone conversation. Occasionally, a threat will be contained in a letter. These incidents do not usually require an immediate response. Time can be taken to assess the risk and establish a response plan.
- A letter containing a threat will already have been handled by several people when it is opened and its contents discerned, even so, avoid handling the letter and envelope as much as possible.
- Report verbal threats by completing a Violent Incident Report.

### **If threatened in person:**

- Remember **Your Personal Safety is the first Priority**
- Focus on the emotions first. Remain calm and think about what you we know about a student
- Avoid escalating the situation, remove yourself if necessary
- Contact the principal or teacher in charge, unless you feel that you may be exposed to Violence
- Create distance between you and the threat
- Move to create a barrier between you and the threat
- Speak in a calm, non-threatening tone.
- Make notes following the incident of: date and time, exact words, threats made, and any gestures/actions
- Complete *Violent Incident Report Form*
- Take care of yourself! Consider your possible need for debriefing and counselling- EFAP
- If medical attention is obtained, report this to your supervisor or administrator and complete a WCB Form 6A.
- All Incidents must be reported- If you are not sure please contact Manager of Safety and Wellness 250-304-8914

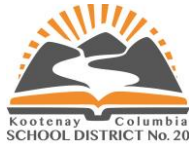
### **If threatened by phone:**

- Attempt to determine the identity of the caller.
- Immediately report the call to your administrator or supervisor.
- Complete the Violent Incident Report.
- Contact the police.

### **Things to consider:**

- *What was the specific language?*
- *Who was present?*
- *What where the conditions?*
- *Was the student made to feel unsafe?*
- *What was the perceived motivation/cause?*
- *Who was the target?*
- *What was the response of others?*

## **DEALING WITH HOSTILE OR ANGRY INDIVIDUALS**



## Violence Protection Program

Dealing with hostile or angry individuals causes all of us concern. The behaviour of hostile and angry people can be unpredictable. While each situation is different and will need to be handled differently, the following principles will assist in resolving such encounters with a non-violent conclusion.

### ***Recognize the Signs using your own senses and staying aware of the other person's actions and environment***

- Flushed or pale face
- Sweating
- Pacing, restless and or repetitive movements
- By keeping your emotions in check, you increase your chances of decreasing anger and emotional turmoil in others. This leads to an increased ability of the other person to respond to logic rather than emotion. If you lose your temper, the chances of the incident ending in violence are almost certain.

### ***Assess yourself, your colleagues and other person as you approach***

- Assess yourself first and think ahead. What is the plan? What is the worst thing that could happen and how will I address it. What is causing the other person to act out? Is there an emotional or mental background? Do they likely have proper nutrition? Do they likely have regulations skills? Are they aware or do they understand what is happening
- Approach openly and with confidence. Tell a crowd to disperse. When possible, assign tasks to bystanders. "Go to the office. Ask for a teacher to come here."
- Remain Calm and conscious of how your message is being delivered and portrayed
- Seek first to Understand, then be understood
- Listen, Use simple language. Express simple thoughts.

### ***Be aware of your surrounding***

- Keep your distance. Maintain a respectful distance, while consider if there is a visual or hearing impairment
- Be aware of anything that could be swung, thrown or used as a weapon. Watch for weapons and for other problem individuals. Weapons will often be passed to individuals standing away from the center of attention.

### ***Ensure you have a clear egress and support wherever possible***

- Before entering an area, be sure you can leave easily.
- Protect your access to an exit. Use it if access is going to be blocked.
- Stand at a right angle to the person rather than directly in front of them.

### ***Keep your hands free***

- Avoid carrying anything in your hands, other than a cell phone.
- It is difficult to appear in control when your hands are not free.
- Ensure you use non-threatening body language
- Do not put your hands on your hips, point your finger or wave your arms

### ***Let them "Save Face"***

- Everyone appreciates a way out. Think of providing choices as you listen.
- Be reassuring. Repeat back to confirm what you have heard.
- Break a problem into smaller pieces and offer step by step solutions.



## Violence Protection Program

- Be honest and do not offer what you can not deliver.
- Do not tell the person to calm down. Do not criticize.

### ***When possible, keep a barrier between you and the individual***

- Barriers decrease the chances of assault and increase the time needed to escape.

### ***Allow a clear exit for the person exhibiting potential aggressive behaviour***

- If the aggressor chooses to leave, allow them to go. Make sure they have a way out.
- Do not fight. Walk or run away, if necessary.

### ***If approaching a vehicle:***

- Note the license number and description of the vehicle.
- Do not approach the vehicle from the front or rear.
- Stay out of the door swing arc.
- Do not lean onto or into the vehicle.

## FIGHTS

Fights are one of the more common emergencies that occur in schools. If not handled carefully, these incidents expose staff to a significant risk of injury.

***Staff should be aware that their own safety is the first priority.***

### ***1. Prior to intervening:***

- Determine:
  - how many people are involved
  - if they are students
  - if weapons are involved
  - if any other staff are present
  - what caused the fight
  - if the police have been notified
- Notify administrator.
- Call the police if necessary.
- Assess your ability to intervene safely.

### ***2. When responding to a fight:***



# Violence Protection Program

## **DO:**

- Walk to the scene with another staff.
- Disperse crowd as you approach.
- Send students for additional staff assistance.
- Give simple, loud commands. **STOP!**
- Use combatants' names, if possible.
- Watch for weapons.
- Use cellular phone to contact police.

## **Do Not:**

- Intervene alone.
- Get between combatants.
- Physically restrain combatants.
- Prevent combatants from leaving.
- Chase combatants.

## ***Following the incident:***

- Ensure first aid and medical needs for both staff and students are communicated.
- Secure any weapons with a minimum of handling.
- Assign staff members to stay with any injured parties and accompany to hospital, if necessary.
- Designate staff persons to obtain names of witnesses (keep witnesses separate if police or WCB will be attending the scene). Have them complete the Witness Statement forms
- As soon as possible, make notes detailing: Date, Time, People, facts that you observed- please avoid what you heard

## **WEAPONS**

The definition of a weapon in the Criminal Code of Canada:

**weapon** means: *“anything used or intended for use in causing death or injury or not, or anything used or intended for use for the purpose of threatening or intimidating any person, and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, includes any firearm.”*

## ***Prevention Strategies***

Carrying a concealed weapon is contrary to the Criminal Code of Canada; police must be notified when this is known to have occurred.

Students, parents and staff should be advised that weapons of any kind, including replica toy weapons, are prohibited on school property and any person with a weapon in their possession, locker or work station will be subject to disciplinary action.

When replica toy weapons are needed as props for a school play or staged presentation, the school administrator must grant approval. The approval should contain information on when the weapon will be removed from secure storage and the teacher responsible for its safekeeping. Staff and students must be advised of this exception.

Laser pointers used outside of an education setting and animal repellent sprays should be regarded as weapons.

## ***Response Strategies for Situations Involving Students***

- If a student is rumoured to be carrying a weapon which hasn't been openly seen:

## Violence Protection Program

- Do not confront the student in front of others.
- Take the student to the office with another staff member.
- With the other staff member present, explain the concern to the student.
- Ask the student to place any weapons in their possession on a desk or table.
- Ask the student to step away from the weapon.
- Ensure access to the weapon is restricted.

### ➤ If a **student is openly carrying a weapon**

- Report the incident **immediately** to the school office to ensure police can be called without delay if this needs to be done.
- Ensure that school office staff is prepared to broadcast the intruder alarm over the PA without any delay if this needs to be done
- Approach the student with another staff member and ask the student to put the weapon down and to step away from it
- Assume the weapon is intended for use
- Do not attempt to take the weapon away

### **Response Strategies for All Other Situations**

#### ➤ If a **non-student is rumoured to be carrying a concealed weapon:**

- Get as much information as possible about the person(s), the weapon(s) and their location.
- Inform the school administrator.
- Ensure the intruder alert can be broadcast on the PA immediately, if necessary.
- Call police, if necessary.
- If the individual is approached, do not get closer than 7 meters.
- Withdraw immediately if you sense a potential for violence

#### ➤ If a **non-student is openly carrying a weapon:**

- Alert school occupants by broadcasting the Intruder Alert over the PA.
- Call the Police.
- **If the weapon is a gun or crossbow, do not approach the individual.**
- In other situations, do not get closer than 7 meters.
- Withdraw immediately if you sense a potential for violence.

#### **If a weapon was used:**

- Attend to victim(s), call for first aid, call for an ambulance if necessary.
- **Do not** attempt to apprehend the suspect(s).
- Allow suspects to leave but note: Suspect's Description, Direction of Travel, Vehicle Description
- If a weapon is left at the scene, secure it with minimum of handling
- Complete a Violent Incident Report
- Ensure WCB Form 6 is completed for staff injuries.
- Ensure Student Incident Reports are completed for student injuries.
- Take care of yourself! Consider your possible need for debriefing and counselling.
- If medical attention is obtained, report this to your supervisor or administrator and the incident book.
- Send the completed Violent Incident Report and the incident book to your supervisor, who will notify the Director of Instruction Katherine Shearer at [kshearer@sd20.bc.ca](mailto:kshearer@sd20.bc.ca) and Manager of Safety and Wellness at [jcole@sd20.bc.ca](mailto:jcole@sd20.bc.ca)

# Violence Protection Program

## ***Post Incident Procedures:***

- Seek first aid/medical aid
- Report Occurrence to Supervisor
- Reporting to the police if necessary
- Principal to determine if a debriefing is necessary and to send out an incident notification with facts surrounding the incident
- Provide staff contact information on EFAP and suggest they visit their Healthcare provider
- Make recommendations for improvement- update Risk registry
- Complete Violent Threat Incident Report Form ( includes Risk Assessment)
- Obtain first aid and complete WCB Report Form 6A for staff injuries and Incident investigation form
- Obtain first aid and complete Student Incident Report for student injuries
- Ensure follow up and support for all

## **WORKPLACE LAYOUT**

### ***Introduction***

Schools are public places occupied by staff, students and members of the public. Most of the interactions between these groups will be conducted without problems. However, there are situations that can expose staff to an increased risk of injury from a violent confrontation with a student, staff member or member of the public.

Consideration of workplace design issues can contribute to a reduction of opportunities for a confrontation to develop into a violent incident.

### ***Workplace Layout Checklist***

- Post “**ALL VISITORS MUST REPORT TO THE OFFICE**” signs by all entry doors
- Lock doors to unoccupied areas e.g. classrooms, administrative offices, school office work area, staff washrooms, custodial closets, storage areas and equipment rooms
- Be aware of public access areas e.g. hallways and areas reserved for employees e.g. staff room
- Restrict access by the public to work areas e.g. staff room, classrooms, washrooms, and offices.
  
- Provide a comfortable waiting area for the public and students that contain diversions such as general interest magazines. Do not provide professional journals or association publications.
- Use secure storage to put away personal belongings
- Place the outside garbage container close to the building entry doors.
- If a counter to separate the public area from the work area in the school office is not installed, arrange the furniture to provide a buffer or barrier between the two areas.
- For meetings in offices or classrooms that are anticipated to be potentially difficult e.g. student discipline or volatile parent:
  - Ensure area or office can provide enough personal space to avoid feeling of crowding.
  - Ensure that all participating employees can move away from an aggressor to an exit
  - Provide participants with stationary furniture; ensure employees use rolling furniture.
  - If you are meeting alone, place a barrier between you and the individual, e.g. a desk.
  - Leave doors open and schedule the meeting when others are nearby and can respond.
  - Remove small objects from the desk e.g. scissors, stapler, paper weight, etc
- Arrange teacher desks to allow two ways to move away from the desk to the exit. When this cannot be done, the meeting should be held in a meeting or staff room



# Violence Protection Program