



# OCCUPATIONAL VIOLENCE

## Policy

### AIM:

To provide a safe and supportive work environment where diversity is valued and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity. Discrimination, sexual and other forms of harassment, bullying, violence and threatening behaviour are unacceptable. All employees, students, parents and visitors are expected to act accordingly.

### GUIDELINES:

1. The Victorian WorkCover Authority defines occupational violence as:  
*“... any incident where an employee is physically attacked or threatened in the workplace. Within this definition: “threat” means a statement or behaviour that causes a person to believe they are in danger of being physically attacked: “physical attack” means the direct or indirect application of force by a person to the body of, or to clothing or equipment worn by, another person, where that application creates a risk to health and safety.”*
2. The term ‘occupational violence’ applies to all forms of physical attacks on employees, including:
  - Striking, kicking, scratching, biting, spitting or any other type of direct physical contact
  - Throwing objects
  - Attacking with knives, guns, clubs or any other type of weapon
  - Pushing, shoving, tripping
  - Any form of indecent (sexual) physical contact
3. Violent or threatening behaviour can include: physical acts, oral or written statements, harassing telephone calls, gestures and expressions or behaviours such as stalking, as well as the sending of threatening emails and SMS texting using mobile phones.
4. **Occupational violence is not:**  
verbal abuse unless it carries a threat of physical attack. Despite this verbal abuse is unacceptable behaviour in DEECD workplaces.
5. A wide range of injuries and illnesses can be caused by exposure to occupational violence. **Physical** injuries can include bruising, cuts, abrasions, fractures and sprains. **Psychological** injuries can include anxiety, depression, social phobia (withdrawal from usual social interaction), insomnia and stress conditions.
6. Occupational violence can occur in a number of settings, including
  - The usual workplace and
  - Off-site work situations, such as at school camps, excursions and social functions
  - At the staff member’s home or in public places or at community events as a result of a person’s role as a DEECD employee
7. If a DEECD workplace is exposed to the risk of occupational violence, the Principal / manager has a delegated duty under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* to institute measures to either eliminate the risk to employees or reduce that risk as far as is practicable i.e.
  - Identify hazards
  - Identify people at risk
  - Assess risks (low, medium or high)
  - Control the hazards

8. Appropriate information, instruction or training should be given to provide employees with the awareness, knowledge and skills to deal with:
  - Risk factors associated with occupational violence
  - Motivation for aggression/violence
  - Signs of impending violence
  - Prevention measures in place to control risks
  - Workplace policies and procedures
9. Any incident of occupational violence should be reported to your Principal / manager and your health and safety representative. You should also report any threats or 'near misses'. The Principal / Manager is then required to act in accordance with DEECD's policies and procedures in relation to critical incidents as set out in the Emergency and Security Management Branch's guidelines (see resources section).
10. **If you have been a victim of occupational violence or if you have just witnessed occupational violence**, you should report the matter to your Principal / Manager who is required to act in accordance with DEECD policies and procedures as follows:
  - Contact relevant Emergency Services e.g. Police/Ambulance on 000
  - **Then** contact DEECD's Emergency and Security Management (ESM) Branch on **9589-6266**
11. Following any form of occupational violence the Principal / manager should ensure that ESM is contacted immediately on **9589-6266**. ESM will assess the situation as to whether critical incident stress debriefing is necessary.
12. For specific advice in relation to allegations of sexual harassment refer to DEECD's *Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures*. See Resources section
13. The roles and responsibilities for occupational violence are the same as for Health, Safety and Wellbeing generally. For a comprehensive list of all roles and responsibilities for all aspects of health, safety and wellbeing, see DEECD's publication '*Everybody Has a Role*'. See Resources section.
14. **RESOURCES**
  - Victoria Police & Ambulance Emergency Telephone Number – 000
  - WorkSafe Victoria's *Prevention of Bullying and Violence at Work – Guidance Note 2003*  
<http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/resources/file/eb255b4ee66c908/preventbullying.pdf>
  - DEECD's Emergency and Security Management 24 Hour Emergency Phone No. – 9589 6266
  - DEECD's *Managing School Emergencies Manual*  
<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/emerg/emgmang/schlemrg.htm>
  - *Parent Concerns Handout* <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/parentcomplaint.htm#2>
  - Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures.  
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Docs/SexHarPolicy.doc>
  - DEECD's Roles and Responsibilities policy *Everybody Has A Role*  
[http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/ohs/HSW\\_R\\_R.pdf](http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/ohs/HSW_R_R.pdf)