

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT**

# **OCCUPATIONAL VIOLENCE POLICY**

## **1.0 THE PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY IS TO:**

- State the Department's commitment to a workplace free from occupational violence
- Define and describe occupational violence
- Outline the framework for the prevention of occupational violence
- Outline the steps that employees should take if occupational violence has or is occurring.

## **2.0 DEPARTMENT PHILOSOPHY**

### **DIGNITY & RESPECT STATEMENT**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is committed to providing safe and supportive work environments 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 in schools and other DEECD workplaces are expected to act accordingly.

DEECD (which includes schools) and school councils, will act to ensure that the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other DEECD workplaces are protected.

## **OCCUPATIONAL VIOLENCE STATEMENT**

The DEECD considers occupational violence an unacceptable form of behaviour which will not be tolerated in the workplace under any circumstances.

If you report an incident of occupational violence it will be taken very seriously.

The Department will act when any incident of occupational violence occurs.

### **3.0 SCOPE**

This policy applies to all employees of DEECD. This policy also applies to consultants and contractors working for, or on behalf of the Department.

### **4.0 DEFINITIONS**

#### **Occupational Violence**

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.”

The term ‘occupational violence’ applies to all forms of physical attacks and threatening behaviour 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.

#### **Violent or threatening behaviour can include:**

- physical acts,
- verbal or written threats
- harassing telephone calls
- gestures and expressions
- behaviours such as stalking
- the sending of threatening emails, website postings and SMS texting using mobile phones.

## **Occupational violence is NOT:**

verbal abuse unless it carries a threat of physical attack. Despite this verbal abuse is unacceptable behaviour in DEECD workplaces which principals/managers must address.

## **5.0 THE EFFECT OF OCCUPATIONAL VIOLENCE ON THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF EMPLOYEES**

Occupational violence can result in both serious physical and psychological injuries.

## **6.0 WHERE OCCUPATIONAL VIOLENCE OCCURS**

Occupational violence can occur in a number of settings, including:

- the usual workplace
- off-site work situations, such as at school camps, excursions and social functions
- at the employees home or in public places or at community events as a result of a person's role as a DEECD employee
- in cyberspace e.g. threatening website postings and emails.

## **7.0 PREVENTING OCCUPATIONAL VIOLENCE**

**7.1** 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. This will involve:

- identifying hazards
- identifying people at risk
- assessing levels of risk (low, medium or high)
- taking action to control the hazards
- developing workplace policies and procedures.

**7.2** Appropriate information, instruction or training should be given to provide employees with the awareness, knowledge and skills to identify:

- risk factors associated with occupational violence
- motivation for aggression/violence
- signs of impending violence
- appropriate prevention measures to control risks

## 7.3 Physical Environment

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) measures should be put into place in all DEECD workplaces as a preventative measure (see Resources section).

## 7.4 Handling People's Concerns

The Department has a **Parent Complaints Information Sheet** (see Resources section) which provides parents with clear guidelines for raising complaints, suggestions and concerns.

## 8.0 RESPONDING TO OCCUPATIONAL VIOLENCE

### 8.1 What to do when occupational violence occurs

- Report the incident immediately to your Principal/Manager and your health and safety representative.
- The incident is to be documented as soon as possible.
- Threats or 'near misses' are to be reported as well.
- Your 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).
- Serious incidents must be reported to WorkSafe.

### 8.2 What to do if you have been a victim of occupational violence

Report the incident immediately to your Principal/Manager who is required to act in accordance with DEECD policies and procedures.

### 8.3 What to do if you have just witnessed occupational violence

Report the matter immediately to your Principal/Manager who is required to act in accordance with DEECD policies and procedures

Contact the relevant Emergency Services e.g. Police/Ambulance on 000 or a local contact number agreed upon by the school and the local police/ambulance that will provide the most rapid response

Then contact DEECD's Emergency and Security Management (ESM) Branch on 9589-6266

Ensure incidents are recorded and any serious incidents reported to WorkSafe.

## 8.4 Critical Incident Support

Following any form of occupational violence the principal/manager should ensure that Emergency and Security Management (ESM) is contacted immediately on 9589-6266. ESM will assess the situation as to whether critical incident support is necessary.

## 8.5 Sexual Harassment

For specific advice in relation to allegations of sexual harassment refer to DEECD's Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures. (see Resources section)

## 9.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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.)

## 10.0 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 (ESM) 24 Hour Emergency Telephone Number – 9589 6266
- DEECD's Managing School Emergencies Manual  
<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/emerg/emgmang/schlemrg.htm>
- Parent Complaints Information Sheet  
<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)
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design  
<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/emerg/secmang/CPTED.htm>



Prof. Peter Dawkins  
Secretary  
2008