

INTERNAL ONLY
ISLHD PROCEDURE
COVER SHEET



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FUNCTIONAL GROUP OR HUB	District Wide
NSQHS STANDARD	Standard One
SUMMARY	The purpose of this procedure is to establish and maintain a Zero Tolerance culture towards violence and aggression throughout ISLHD by implementing strategies to prevent violent incidents through a risk assessment process. In addition, it is to ensure that when any violent incident occurs, appropriate action is consistently taken to protect health service workers and property, patients and visitors from the effects of such behaviour.

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS DOCUMENT IS MANDATORY

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this procedure is to:

- Establish and maintain a Zero Tolerance culture towards violence and aggression throughout the organisation.
- Implement strategies to prevent violent incidents through the application of a risk assessment process.
- Ensure that when any violent incident occurs, appropriate action is consistently taken to protect health service workers and property, patients and visitors from the effects of such behaviour.

This policy includes all forms of violence, including: verbal abuse, physical violence, intimidation, bullying and threats.

2. BACKGROUND

ISLHD recognises its duty of care towards workers and those who are not workers but may be present at our workplaces. This Violence in the Workplace procedure and all ISLHD activities relating to Work Health and Safety (WHS) shall be directed towards ensuring the health and safety of workers and other persons where applicable.

Violence and aggression includes: verbal and emotional abuse or threats and physical attack to an individual or to property by another individual or group. The impact of violence on a victim depends on the severity of the violence, and his or her experiences, skills and personality.

Violent acts include:

- Verbal abuse, in person or over the telephone.
- Written abuse.
- Harassment.
- Threats.
- Ganging up, bullying and intimidation.
- Physical or sexual assault.
- Armed robbery.
- Malicious damage to the property of staff, customers or the business.

Workplace violence may not always be a critical or extreme situation from the outset. It sometimes follows a pattern of escalating behaviour - from agitation, expressed anger or frustration and intimidating body language, to verbal/written abuse and threats, physical threats, or assault

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Worker must:

- Comply with all instructions provided, including the information in this procedure.
- Inform their manager or supervisor if they are at risk of violence.

3.2 Line Managers must:

- Implement the ISLHD Violence in the Workplace procedure and ensure workplace violence risks are identified, assessed, and controlled by implementing the most effective control measures reasonably practicable in the circumstances.
- Consult with workers at each step of the risk management process, which encourages everyone to work together to identify workplace violence risk factors and implement effective control measures.
- Ensure workers receive the training and resources they need to carry out their WHS responsibilities competently.
- Resolve workplace violence issues brought to their attention in a timely and informed manner.

3.3 General Managers / Service Directors must:

- Apply due diligence by monitoring the implementation of the ISLHD Violence in the Workplace procedure.
- Ensure workers are consulted at each step of the risk management process.
- Ensure workers receive the training and resources they need to carry out their WHS responsibilities competently.
- Resolve workplace violence issues brought to their attention in a timely and informed manner

3.4 Chief Executive must:

- Ensure a process is in place to develop and implement the Workplace Violence program.
- Ensure resources, time, money, and technology are available to support the violence in the Workplace procedure and programs.

4. PROCEDURE

4.1 Workplace Violence:

- Verbal and physical abuse, intimidation, bullying and harassment and threats.

Internal Violence:

- Workers can be at risk of violence from co-workers, supervisors, managers or other staff. Common types of violence include harassment, bullying, peer pressure and verbal or physical abuse. Violence can also come from former workers seeking revenge on the business, its manager or other staff.

External Violence:

- This may be of two types:
 - Material gain: where offenders are motivated to seek money, drugs or valuable goods.
 - Non-material gain: this can include sexual assault, hostage taking and incidental violence to other people in the area immediately near the workplace.

Client-initiated violence

- This is where clients or customers of a service, their relatives or friends take violent or aggressive action against the workers who are trying to help them.

4.2. Underpinning Principles

- The organisation is committed to the principles and management of a violence free workplace, environment and culture. The provision of a violence free workplace is central to the values of organisation. Safety for consumers and workers stands as part of these core values.
- All LHD workers have the right to work in a violence free workplace.
- Patients and others have the right to visit, or receive health care, in a therapeutic environment free from risks to their personal safety.
- The organisation adopts a zero tolerance response to violence.
- The implementation of the Zero Tolerance Response to Violence is a planned risk management approach to violence elimination and management.
- Services, and external and internal stakeholders, shall collaborate through communication strategies to manage violence elimination as a key priority for continuous improvement.

4.3. Inclosed Land Protection Act 1901

- Under the Inclosed Land Protection Act 1901, the organisation may deny access to any person conducting themselves in an unacceptable, aggressive or offensive manner, unless in a medical emergency situation.
- Where appropriate, we will consult for legal input surrounding the application of this legislation in the development of local violence elimination and management policies. Policy Framework

All services shall have in place a violence prevention program that focuses on the elimination of violent behaviour. Where the risks cannot be eliminated, they must be reduced to the lowest possible level using control strategies developed in consultation with workers. These strategies will direct that:

- The whole of the organisation adopts and supports a Zero Tolerance response to violence environment and culture.
- Workers conduct their roles in a violence free workplace and that patients and others

are able to visit, or receive health care, in a therapeutic environment free from risks to their personal safety.

- Other persons present at our workplaces are not exposed to violence arising from the conduct of workers, patients or visitors and risks arising from the premises.
- A risk management approach to violence prevention is adopted, and in the event of a violent incident, workers and management will appropriately and consistently respond to the incident and provide support to the workers involved.
- All workers shall know and exercise their responsibilities in relation to preventing violence, bullying and harassment in the workplace, consistent with NSW Health Policy Directive [PD2015_001 Preventing and Managing Violence in the NSW Health Workplace - A Zero Tolerance Approach](#).
- In the event of all violent incidents, appropriate action will be taken by the organisation to protect and support workers, patients and visitors from the effects of such behaviour.
- All workers shall report all actual or potential violent incidents.
- The organisation shall ensure that all staff are appropriately trained and equipped to assist in the prevention and management of aggression in the workplace.
- Each service within the organisation shall develop a local Zero Tolerance Response to Violence procedure. Refer to Local Procedural Development.
- The organisation shall ensure that staffing levels and practices are implemented in accordance with a consultative risk assessment process.

4.4. Risk Management Principles

- In creating and maintaining a Zero Tolerance Response to Violence, safe systems of work shall be developed following the principles of hazard identification, risk assessment and risk elimination or control.
- All workers, and other persons as appropriate, are to be involved in the risk management process, with ongoing consultation and evaluation to ensure a violence free environment and culture.
- Risk shall be eliminated wherever practicable through the application of the full range of risk controls. Where elimination is not practicable, the risk control measures put in place shall follow the hierarchy of risk control as required by legislation.
- All workers have a responsibility to report all violence related incidents and near misses. Management shall investigate incidents in consultation with workers and provide and implement recommendations to prevent re-occurrence.
- Workers shall be supported to report and manage violence within the workplace, and in the event of violence, workers shall be supported by management, as appropriate.

4.5. Identifying Violence Hazards

There are a number of ways to identify workplace violence including:

- Check incident and injury reports, and Workers Compensation records to identify

- past injuries.
- Ensure you have an effective consultation process in place. Consult your workers, who can use their own experiences to highlight problem areas or procedures. Encourage them to express their feelings and concerns regarding workplace violence.
 - Consult with the local police about what is happening in your area.
 - Survey staff (in confidence if necessary). Ask about incidents that may have occurred or other matters that had the potential to become violent.
 - Collect information about incidents or situations in workplaces similar to yours.
 - Consult industry experts who have experience with workplace violence.
 - Conduct workplace inspections to assess potential for workplace violence.
 - Set up a system for the reporting of incidents and injuries and ensure all staff are aware of and encouraged to report all incidents.
 - Check procedures implementation, how staff deal with hazards and check that existing control measures are being followed.

4.6. Assessing the Risk

Once you have completed the hazard identification, the next step is to assess risk associated with each hazard. The purpose is to determine:

- Which of the identified hazards is most likely to occur.
- What are the likely injuries that may result.
- How severe the injuries are likely to be.
- How many workers and others are likely to be exposed or affected.

By focusing on all the issues in this manner you should be able to determine priorities. If a risk means violence is likely to occur and injure many workers, controlling the risk should be given a high priority. On the other hand, if a risk has been identified and then assessed as unlikely to occur or will not expose workers to an injury, it should be given a lower priority and dealt with in turn.

4.7. Eliminating hazards or controlling the risk

- There are a number of ways of reducing and/or managing workplace hazards. In some cases a combination of actions may be required to manage the hazard. On other occasions it may be necessary to employ both short and long term measures to reduce the risk to an acceptable level effectively.
- The preferred option is, of course, to eliminate the risk in total, and every effort must be made to achieve this goal. This may not always be possible and in these cases you will work through other options until agreed and acceptable alternatives are found.

4.8. Consultation

- Consultation between all levels of management, workers, consumers and external stakeholders is essential in the elimination of violence from the workplace.
- Effective communication strategies and management information systems shall be in place to appropriately address violence related issues, and monitor on a local and area level, the incidence of violence and the capacity of each service to control and eliminate violence within their service.
- All workers shall consistently reinforce the message that violence will not be tolerated in the workplace.

4.9. Workplace Violence – Practical Ways to Avoid Violent Situations

Managers should select the most suitable risk controls for your business. Having more than one control measure for a particular risk would be an effective way of preventing workplace violence, which may include:

- Provide a secure work environment:
 - Externally, buildings should be well lit, have ready means of access and egress, and be maintained free of possible hiding places for aggressors.
 - Remove or restrict access to equipment that could be used as a weapon.
 - Ensure that staff are not working alone or in isolated locations.
 - Restrict business hours to safe times and locations.
- Install and use physical barriers and security systems:
 - Provide a workplace that has service counters that act as a barrier to physical contact between clients and staff.
 - Lock doors to 'staff only' areas and ensure that only staff have (and use) keys.
 - Install security and access key/card/code systems.
 - Provide a 'safe area' for workers to retreat to in the event of an emergency.
- Remove the motivation or incentive for violence:
 - Reduce cash holdings by encouraging use of electronic payment methods.
 - Reduce stocks of valuable items to minimum levels.
 - Advertise that your business has security measures to detect aggressors.
 - Ensure that staff limit their personal valuables in the workplace.
- Ensure effective management, including:
 - Selecting the right people for the job, fair employment conditions, training, worker consultation and regular supervision.
 - Promote the fact that harassment and bullying will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action.
 - Provide effective management and supervision - know where your workers are and what is happening in the workplace, both immediately and in the longer term.
 - Develop and implement grievance procedures to allow reporting and action.

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- Change the method of contact between clients and workers to a 'remote' service - use telephone or correspondence instead of face-to-face interaction.
- Limit client interaction to times when there is 'safety in numbers' for your staff.
- Ensure that work systems and services do not provoke aggression from clients:
 - Provide reasonable waiting times and facilities.
 - Ensure staff are trained in violence detection and management including complaint and grievance handling.
 - Provide clients with information about rights and responsibilities, including their responsibilities to behave in an appropriate manner.
- Deter offenders by making it known that security measures are in place.
- Provide detection measures - security video cameras, mirrors, 'beepers' to announce customers' entry to certain areas, and duress alarms.
- Where staff must work alone or in isolated locations, keep in contact with them:
 - Provide an effective means of communication in case of emergency (mobile telephone, duress alarm).
 - Know where staff should be (movement notification, itinerary) and keep in contact regularly.
- Ensure that workers can get to and from work in safety:
 - Provide security or other staff to escort them to their car at night or provide a taxi.
 - Provide security staff internally and externally at night or during the day in high-risk industries or areas.
 - Provide personal alarms, or mobile telephones.
- Ensure that workers are not alone when dealing with potentially violent clients or when they have to raise and handle issues that may cause violence, such as collection of money or goods or dealing with disputes.
- Where it provides an additional, back-up safety measure, which is necessary and acceptable to workers, provide workers with training in self-defence. It is always preferable to withdraw from a violence situation. Self-defence should be used only when a person under attack believes it is life threatening. The self-defence response should only be of sufficient force to enable the victim to escape further harm.

4.10. Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace

- The active elimination of bullying and harassment within the workplace is equally as significant as the elimination of external violence.
- The CE, Directors and Service managers are required to implement [PD2018_016 Prevention and Management of Workplace Bullying in NSW Health](#)

4.11. Education and Training

- The Executive supports and implements training programs in accordance with [PD2018_013 Work Health and Safety: Better Practice Procedures](#).
- The role of the Health Education and Training Institute (HETI) is to deliver quality programs. It is the responsibility of each service manager to ensure that staff are released to complete the training programs appropriate for their position:

- Violence Prevention and Management - An Introduction to Legal and Ethical Issues.
- Violence Prevention and Management – Awareness.
- Violence Prevention and Management - Promoting Acceptable Behaviour in the Workplace.
- Violence Prevention and Management for Managers.

4.12. Accountability and Responsibility

- Violence towards workers is a significant WHS issue, and just like other aspects of WHS, all workers have a role in, and responsibility for, maintaining a safe workplace.
- Managers in particular are accountable for the health and safety of their workers to the level of their control and influence over the workplace and work procedures.
- The organisation shall determine appropriate accountability for the maintenance, review and improvement of WHS management systems, in particular, those related to the minimisation and management of violence against workers, clients, and visitors.

4.13. Local Procedural Development

- Each service shall develop a localised procedure for implementing Zero Tolerance Response to Violence in the Workplace.
- Services will utilise PD2018_013 to assist in the development of appropriate risk management practices.
- Services are required to incorporate where appropriate, the following aspects, into local zero tolerance to violence policy and procedures:
 - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) violence controls.
 - Administrative violence controls.
 - Access violence controls.
 - File Flagging Policies.
 - File Flagging management plans.
 - High-risk workers identification for training. Communication strategies within service, SESIAHS and the broader community (e.g. Police, Work Cover).
 - Duress alarm systems and response planning.
 - Immediate response options.
 - Longer term response options.
 - Post incident response.
 - Monitoring, review and continuous improvement.

5. DOCUMENTATION

- Reportable Incident Brief (RIB)
- Security Improvement Assessment Tool

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6. AUDIT

Compliance with this procedure will be audited through the Ministry of Health WHS Audit Tool in line with the audit cycle.

7. REFERENCES

- [PD2018_016 Prevention and Management of Workplace Bullying in NSW Health](#)
- [PD2015_001 Preventing and Managing Violence in the NSW Health Workplace - A Zero Tolerance Approach](#)
- [PD2018_013 Work Health and Safety: Better Practice Procedures](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 No 10](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017](#)
- [Code of Practice – How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks](#)
- [NSW Health Policy Directive Protecting People and Property: NSW Health Policy and Standards for Security Risk Management in NSW Health Agencies.](#)
- [Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901 No 33](#)

8. REVISION & APPROVAL HISTORY

Date	Revision No.	Author and Approval
September 2004	0	Former IAHS Working Party from the Zero Tolerance to Violence Steering Committee. Approved by the IAHS Area Policy and Procedure Committee for release 9th Sept 2004
September 2006	Draft 1	Review of above document by Manager Area Workforce Services
December 2006	1	Approved by Acting Executive Sponsor DCO and Area Executive Committee 12 Dec 2006
April 2011	2	WHS Officer, Health safety and Wellbeing. Amended to reflect change to Local Health Network and Cluster.
September 2015	3	Safety and Well-Being Manager ISLHD Safety Management System Review and Implementation Approved by Executive Management Committee April
March 2019	4	Safety Coordinator Document number, title and hyperlink updated Approved by Director Corporate Governance and Risk Management March 2019