



Workplace Violence Prevention Strategies

Clinic Safety Toolkit

November 2022

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Introduction

The ESPCN Health and Safety Committee has developed this toolkit for our member clinics as a resource for community physicians and teams. This toolkit will provide your clinic with tools to help prepare for, prevent, and respond to violent incidents.

Workplace harassment and violence are potential hazards that may be encountered at work, and are more common in health care settings than in other industries. Protecting employees from harm requires ongoing effort to ensure controls are in place that reduce risks to safety. Some of these suggestions may trigger a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) adjustment.

[Alberta Occupational Health and Safety](#) requires employers to take measures to eliminate hazards where possible. If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the hazard, it is required to put controls in place to mitigate it.

The number one thing that can be done to prevent workplace violence is to have a plan. Throughout this toolkit you will find resources and services available to guide you in developing a plan to keep you, your staff, and your patients safe.

Training and Policies

Training

Staff training is an important aspect of workplace safety and violence prevention. Reception staff and MOAs are key observers of waiting room activity and are often the first point of contact for patients. Including them in training to identify and respond to potentially dangerous situations can benefit the safety of all clinic staff.

Staff Orientation

Orientation of all new staff on important safety topics is key. The ESPCN's [Clinic Safety Checklist](#) includes orientation details such as review of emergency exit location(s), emergency equipment (such as first aid kits, AEDs and oxygen), fire extinguishers, muster point location(s), and the emergency response plan and contacts. This should also include orientation to all policies and procedures related to safety, harassment and violence prevention.

Ongoing Education

In addition to training staff on safety procedures in clinic, further education in the following can help prepare staff to respond to potentially dangerous situations:

- Non-Violent Crisis Intervention and De-Escalation Training
 - The Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute (CTRI) has created an [on-demand workshop](#) designed to teach people to de-escalate potentially violent situations through assertiveness and interpersonal communication.
 - The Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) as a [five-part online course](#) specifically designed to expand workplace violence prevention skills to low-level risk health care employees.
- Workplace Violence Prevention Education
 - AHS Prevention of Harassment and Violence Program created a [Tabletop exercise](#) for preventing and responding to patient-to-worker harassment and violence. This includes a

facilitator's guide that will work you through a model of de-escalation with multidisciplinary teams.

- AHS Safer Care Together online modules: [Preventing and Responding to Patient-to-Worker Harassment and Violence](#) and [AHS Respectful Workplaces and Prevention of Harassment and Violence Policy course](#)
- [PROActive: Identifying and Managing Violence](#) in the workplace through the UofC offers online modules that focus on prevention and safe response to workplace violence.
- Trauma informed care can help with prevention. AHS has multiple [online modules](#) to help provide patient centred care for individuals impacted by trauma.

Policies and Procedures

Developing a variety of policies and procedures can ensure all staff are informed and supported in the area of workplace safety. Below are some important policies that can be developed. We have also included examples and templates that can be used.

Communication Regarding Safety Risks

- Create clear communication processes regarding staff presence at the clinic. For example, processes to identify staff on site each day in case of evacuation or emergency. This could be done with a check-in/check-out list of staff on site to facilitate attendance taking after an evacuation or emergency situation.
- If a staff member identifies a risk of violent behavior by a patient, this can be communicated with other team members within the EMR. Caution must be taken with wording to minimize clinician bias; it is important to avoid stigma or labelling that may negatively impact patient care, while ensuring staff safety. ESPCN EMR Consultants can help develop EMR tools to identify and communicate between team members, such as creating EMR flags to identify safety hazards or patients at risk of violence.

Personal or Removable Equipment

Personal equipment or use of EMR alerts.

- Personal panic alarm can be carried by each team member to alert others in case of emergency. Personal Panic Alarms can be purchased online.
- Team members must have clear understanding about expectations for when to use a panic alarm, as well as how to respond.
- EMR Considerations: Panic Alarms or instant messaging features may be available within your clinic's EMR. Contact your EMR vendor to inquire about safety features

More information

- ESPCN Policy: [Working Alone and Employee Personal Safety Policy](#)
- Additional Policy samples and templates:
 - [Workplace Harassment Prevention Policy and Workplace Violence Prevention Policy](#)
 - [Emergency Response Plan](#)

Clinic Set Up

Design and Layout of Clinic

When it comes to maintaining a safe clinic environment, there are steps you can take to keep everyone who enters safe. Consider having a [clinic safety plan](#) in place to protect yourself, your staff, patients and visitors.

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| Open view of waiting area and reception | Reception staff can see everyone entering the clinic, monitor for behaviours in waiting room and have the waiting or reception area visible to other staff so reception staff can be supported. |
| Lighting | Effective lighting near entrances and in parking lots |
| Security Cameras | Video surveillance may be considered as part of a clinic safety plan. Privacy considerations include not having cameras in exam rooms or washrooms, and no use of audio recording. For more details, please refer to the CPSA Guidance on Camera Usage and the OIPC Guidance on Camera Usage |
| Visibility | Intentional placement of features to maximize visibility, for example trees/shrubs trimmed for visibility, lighting, removing posters from windows, placement of chairs so staff can see them. |
| Medication Storage | Secure storage of medications in designated areas. Properly storing any controlled substances in a locked area |
| Secure Storage for patients/visitors | Secured area to ask patients to lock their bags/belongings to prevent a large bag with unknown contents being brought into an exam room with a health care provider. |
| Access Cards | Access cards or fob devices for access to certain areas. |
| Door Jammers | Devices to prevent doors from opening, such as a Door Jammer or Door Stopper. These can be used to prevent entry as needed. |
| Visibility of exits | Installing a door eye viewer on exit doors if there is no window so staff can view whether outside is clear before exiting. |
| Exam Room Set Up | Placement of furniture close to doors or exits, with the health care provider between the patient and the door allows for a rapid exit and prevents anyone from being cornered. |
| Signage | Ensure Exit signs and Fire Extinguishers are clearly marked |

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

[Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design](#) (CPTED) is a multidisciplinary approach of crime prevention that uses design and environmental strategies to reduce and deter crime. Having a CPTED assessment can provide clinics with an individual clinic assessment.

- If a property is a high crime target, EPS CPTED Coordinators can send an officer to conduct an assessment and recommend CPTED strategies for implementation. Contact information for EPS CPTED is CPTED@edmontonpolice.ca or 780-421-2860.
- If a property is not a high crime target but would like an assessment, there are private CPTED assessment companies or [courses available](#).

Visible Signage

Consider visible signage for your clinic that outlines your expectations for how staff are to be treated. While it is important to communicate clinic policies around expectations for treating staff with respect, certain language may be perceived as threatening or triggering.

To promote respect while reducing the risk of violence and harassment, consider changing the wording on signs. For example, instead of “Zero tolerance policy for harassment”, consider using “Welcome to our medical clinic, our relationship is built on mutual respect, we respect you, you respect us” or “We value positive relationships, please do your part in keeping interactions respectful and courteous”.

Here are examples of positive language posters on mutual respect: [Poster 1](#) and [Poster 2](#)

Know How to Respond

Do you know how to take care of yourself and staff during an incident?

- Call 911 and/or security staff, if available
- Ensure staff and patients have an exit or safe room if an exit is not possible
- Document as much information as possible
- Report the violent incident and any related injuries to the police
- Seek appropriate care for yourself and your staff in case of an injury

Follow Up

Additional Support after an incident

Debriefing allows teams to support each other, communicate, facilitate teamwork, process the incident, and continuously learn together and develop safe process and support better outcomes.

- [AHS Safe Care Together](#) has developed a template for leading a team debrief after a patient to worker harassment or violent incident.
- Access to additional supports: For ESPCN staff, this includes their Employee Assistance Program. For physicians, accessing supports through the AMA [Physician and Family Support Program](#) (PFSP).

- Discharging a patient from practice: CPSA members may [immediately discharge a patient](#) if they pose a safety risk to clinic staff, other patients, or the physician, or are abusive. More details can be found [here](#).

Additional Resources

For additional resources to help you and your clinic to promote a safe environment for your staff, your patients and yourselves, refer to www.edmontonsouthsidepcn.ca/clinic-safety.