

Muskoka Lakes Township Public Library  
LIBRARY BOARD POLICY

Policy Type: Operational – Human Resources	Policy Number: OPHR-08
Policy Title: Prevention of Workplace Violence	Policy Approval Date: 11/12/24
Chairperson: V. Duke	Policy Review Date: 11/25

**Intent:**

Violent behaviour in the workplace is unacceptable from anyone including staff, Board members, volunteers, users, and others who do business with the Muskoka Lakes Public Library (herein after referred to as the Library). Individuals who violate this policy may be removed from Library property, and in the case of employees, are subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**Regulations:**

The prevention of workplace violence is part of the responsibility of the Muskoka Lakes Public Library Board (herein after referred to as the Board) for worker health and safety under the Ontario *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (herein after referred to as OHS/A).

**Definitions:**

1. The Library recognizes the definition of violence as set out in the *OHS/A*. Workplace violence means:
  - a) the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker,
  - b) an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker,
  - c) a statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.
  
2. Violence in the workplace may include:
  - a) verbally threatening to attack a worker
  - b) leaving threatening notes or sending threatening e-mails to the workplace
  - c) shaking a fist in a worker's face
  - d) hitting or trying to hit a worker
  - e) throwing or kicking an object
  - f) sexual aggression against a worker
  
3. Violence in the Library or on Library property also includes:
  - a) intentionally or recklessly damaging the property of another person
  - b) intentionally causing alarm
  - c) recklessly creating a risk by fighting
  - d) creating a hazardous condition or danger by recklessly engaging in conduct which creates a substantial risk of serious physical injury

- e) intentionally placing or attempting to place another person in fear of imminent serious physical injury
- f) wielding a weapon

## **Responsibilities and Response**

1. The CEO or designate must develop and maintain a Workplace Violence Program (Appendix A) which will set out:
  - a) a process for assessing the risk of violence in the workplace
  - b) measures to control risk including those from domestic violence
  - c) procedures for reporting incidents of violence
  - d) a process for dealing with and investigating violent incidents and complaints.
2. Employees are encouraged to report behaviour that they reasonably believe poses a potential for violence as described above.
3. Anyone experiencing or witnessing imminent danger or actual violence involving weapons or personal injury will push the panic button and/or call the police (911).
4. Workplace violence should be reported immediately to the most senior staff member available.
5. Physical or sexual assault or threat of physical violence will be reported to the police.
6. All reports will be thoroughly investigated by the CEO or designate who will advise the Board of the outcome.
7. The Board Chair or Vice-Chair will initiate an expeditious and confidential investigation into any complaint of apparent workplace violence brought forward by any employee where the alleged perpetrator is the CEO or member of the Board.
8. The Library will provide staff with information on the risk of violence in the Library and periodic training addressing concerns such as “dealing with difficult people.”
9. The Library, at the request of an employee, or at its own discretion, may prohibit members of the public, including family members, from seeing an employee on Library property in cases where the employee suspects that an act of violence will result from an encounter with said individual(s).
10. This policy and the Workplace Violence Program (Appendix A) will be:
  - a) reviewed annually by the Board and staff
  - b) posted in the staff room

## Confidentiality and False Reports

1. All investigations shall be conducted in strict confidence to the extent possible. Documents will be stored in the Human Resources cabinet and access to these records will be restricted.
2. Employees who are found to have made false or malicious complaints will be subject to disciplinary action.

## Related Documents:

*Occupational Health and Safety Act*, R.S.O. 1990, chapter O.1

*Bill 168: An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace and other matters.* (Statutes of Ontario, 2009, Chapter 23)

MLPL OP-17 Safety, Security and Emergencies in the Library

MLPL OPHR-06 Workplace Harassment and Discrimination

MLPL OPHR-07 Working Alone

## Appendix A – Workplace Violence Program

### Plan for Maintaining Security in the Library

1. The Library staff will conduct a worksite assessment as often as necessary to ensure measures for violence prevention are effective. The assessment will:
  - a) identify jobs or locations with the greatest risk
  - b) identify high risk factors
  - c) include a physical workplace security audit
  - d) evaluate the effectiveness of existing security measures
2. The CEO, or designate, will annually review the history of past incidents to identify patterns or trends.
3. The CEO, or designate will annually review the previously recognized higher risk factors in the Library including :
  - a) ongoing contact with the public
  - b) working alone or in small numbers
  - c) the circulation desk where money is kept
  - d) closing the Library building at night
  - e) secondary entrances to the Library

### Measures for Reducing the Risk of Workplace Violence

1. Learn to recognize the signs of violence
  - a) Early identification and prevention of violence in the workplace is encouraged. Potential threats of violence that should be reported could include the following:
    - i. threatening statements to do harm to self or others
    - ii. reference to other incidents of violence
    - iii. confrontational behaviour
    - iv. major change in personality, mood or behaviour
    - v. substance abuse
2. Institute general measures to reduce risk including:
  - a) designating emergency safe rooms.
    - In Port Carling for upstairs the CEO's office (with a lock, windows and a phone) or a washroom (with a lock and solid door) and for downstairs the community kitchen (with solid door and lock but no phone) or the workroom (with a lock, a telephone and access to the parking lot). The designated meeting spot for Port Carling is the Home Hardware parking lot.
    - In Bala, depending on the threat, the staff work area door can be closed and locked, or the entire branch can be locked down and used as a safe space. If safe to do so, exiting the branch and going into the community centre is also an option. Staff can take and use the portable phone. The designated safe meeting area for Bala is the Arena parking lot as indicated in the Bala Fire Safety Plan.
  - b) keeping all secondary entrance doors locked, but with 'crash bars'
  - c) keeping the exterior lights around the building in good working order
  - d) ensuring staff will not work alone in the Library without prior consent of the CEO

3. Staff procedures to increase personal safety
  - a) Notice your surroundings and report any unsafe or dangerous situation to the most senior staff member
  - b) If you feel uncomfortable about a person who has entered the Library, trust your instincts. If you feel threatened, make a scene - YELL, push the panic alarm or use the messaging application to contact other staff
  - c) Use a buddy system when leaving work
  - d) If you ever find you are working alone in the Library, let the CEO, or someone at home know the situation and tell him or her when you expect to leave
  - e) If you enter a room and suspect it is unsafe, do not call out. Back out, go to a safe, lockable place with telephone and call for help
  - f) Know the nearest exit or room with a lock
  
4. Staff procedures for threatening behaviour:
  - a) Do not argue with a threatening person. Identify yourself as a Library staff member. Remain calm and keep your voice low and firm and keep your distance from the threatening person.
  - b) Do not put yourself or others in danger.
  - c) Be friendly but firm, introduce yourself, look at the person while you talk to him/her, let the person talk, clarify the problem and offer solutions.
  - d) Press panic button, if escalating.
  - e) Get assistance from another staff person.
  - f) Advise him/her that the police will be called if the abuse does not stop.
  - g) If the behaviour does not change, call the police.
  - h) Notify the CEO or designate.
  
5. Staff procedures for dealing with violence/assault
  - a) If you hear raised voices or sounds of a scuffle, investigate.
  - b) If you witness violence or an assault, call the police and describe the situation.
  - c) Recruit other staff to move others out of the way to a safer location.
  - d) Do not block exits to prevent a threatening/violent person from leaving the building.
  - e) Do not invade the personal space of the threatening person.
  - f) Be prepared to defend yourself. Be aggressive and committed to your actions.
  - g) Do not get between two people fighting.
  - h) Have an exit plan.
  - i) Quickly move away from the threat, putting distance between you and the threat.
  - j) If threat continues, turn off the lights, hide quickly and silence your phone.
  - k) Notice details so you can describe the situation to the police.
  - l) Notify the CEO.
  
6. Domestic Violence: Steps to Increase Your Personal Safety
  - a) Advise the CEO or designate about your situation.
  - b) Make up a "code word" for co-workers so they know when to call for help.
  - c) Ask your co-workers to screen your calls and visitors.
  - d) Ask a co-worker to call the police if your abuser is bothering you.

### **How to Report a Situation**

1. A report should be made as soon as possible after an action or behaviour occurs.
2. An informal, verbal complaint may be brought forward to the CEO. However, it is in the best interest of all concerned that a report be written.
3. If a formal complaint is made, the employee must file a written report with the CEO.
4. The report should include a brief statement of the incident, when it occurred, where it occurred, date and time it occurred, the person(s) involved and the names of any witnesses.

### **Investigation and Dealing with Incidents or Complaints Involving Staff/User Safety**

1. After receiving a report, depending on the nature and severity of the issue, the CEO or designate will complete an investigation as quickly as possible. This will include interviews with those involved, if feasible.
2. The results of the investigation will be discussed with the employee and recommended preventative actions and/or resolutions presented.
3. A separate meeting will be held with the alleged perpetrator, if a staff member.
4. If the findings do not support the allegations, the CEO will recommend that no further action is necessary and that the matter be closed.
5. Should the investigation conclude that there is evidence of misconduct; the CEO will prescribe a resolution that may include police intervention.
6. Employees who are found to have made false or malicious complaints will be subject to disciplinary action.