



# Violence in the Workplace: Prevention and Response Plan

October 2021

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# Violence in the Workplace Statement

Saint Mary's University is committed to its responsibility to ensure the health and safety of its employees. While violent acts are not pervasive at Saint Mary's, no university is immune from such behaviour. Saint Mary's University acknowledges that physical violence/threatening behaviour in the workplace is an occupational health and safety hazard that can cause physical and emotional harm. The University views any acts of violence or threats of violence in the workplace as unacceptable. As such, it is committed to working to prevent workplace violence/threatening behaviour and to responding in an appropriate manner if it occurs. All members of the University community, including faculty, staff, students and visitors, are responsible for the creation and maintenance of a safe environment.

## 1.1 Violence Definition

The NS *Violence in the Workplace Regulations* define violence in the following way:

“violence” means any of the following:

- (i) threats, including a threatening statement or threatening behaviour that gives an employee reasonable cause to believe that the employee is at risk of physical injury,
- (ii) conduct or attempted conduct of a person that endangers the physical health or physical safety of an employee.

Every reasonable effort will be taken to identify and reduce possible sources of violence and implement procedures to eliminate or reduce risks in all areas of the university.

Violence and or threatening behaviour covered by this legislation includes those behaviours that occur:

- when the target is a university employee and at work;
- when the behaviour occurs on Campus and/or;
- when the behaviour is related to a university activity.

Incivility, rudeness, passivity, and other forms of workplace violence



Results were coded and analyzed and have been compiled in summary format for the purpose of this report. A copy of this report may be found on the OHS website at: <http://www.smu.ca/about/ohs-resources.html>.

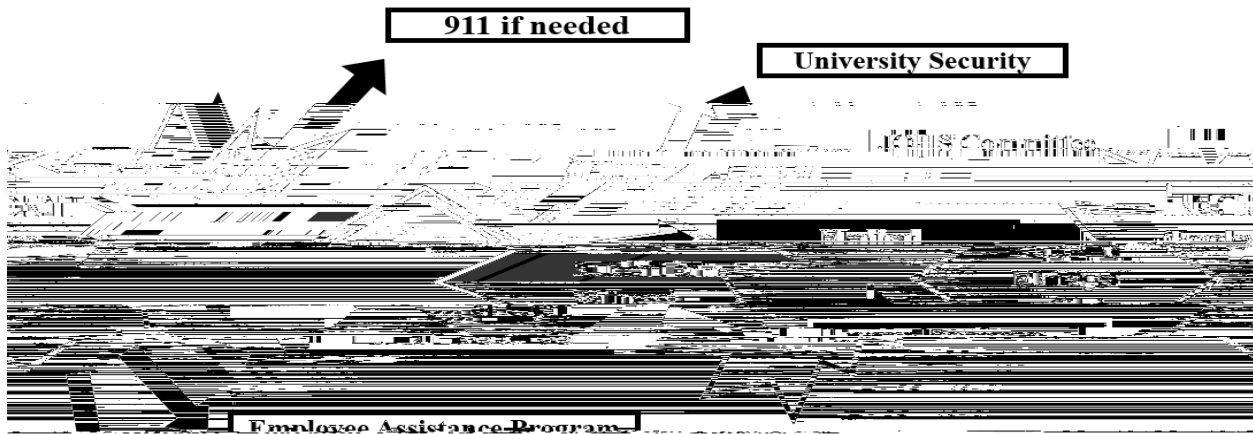
Additionally, all violence related incident reports were reviewed and various groups and employees across Campus were interviewed to determine their potential for violence in their daily activities.

#### **2.4 Ongoing Assessments**

All violence related incident reports are reviewed by the University's Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee, the Science Safety Sub-committee and the Administrative Units Sub-committee. These committees make recommendations to the employer regarding preventing violence on Campus, as required. The Security Manager and other Saint Mary's employees also review and monitor reports of violence or potential violence, participate in the investigation of these incidents and develop appropriate response and prevention plans, to address these incidents.

### **Violence Prevention Plan**

In response to the findings of the violence risk assessments and requirements of the Violence in the Workplace Regulations, this plan has been created and will be widely communicated to members of the Saint Mary's Community. This plan has been created in consultation with a Violence in the Workplace Working Group comprised of members of the Administrative Units Safety Sub-committee and the Science Safety Sub-committee. Training on creating a Violence Prevention Plan was provided to both sub-committees by the Worker's Compensation Board of Nova Scotia. A working group was then formed, representing both committees to develop and promote the e te te Workplace



the Chair or Manager is responsible to ensure that adequate follow up is undertaken, including providing all involved employees or students with the opportunity to seek help (e.g., EFAP, counselling);

the victim and Chair or Manager must fill out the Occupational Health and Safety Incident Report form to record the incident and begin an investigation;

the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee must be notified (may be involved in the investigation);

information about the incident must be made available to all employees, who may be affected by the incident, while protecting the privacy of the victim;

for more information on reporting concerns, see Chapter 8, Communication and Awareness, of the OHS Program, <http://www.smu.ca/webfiles/Chapter8-CommunicationandAwareness.pdf>;

for more information on investigating incidents, see Chapter 15, Incident Investigation and Analysis, of the OHS Program, <http://www.smu.ca/webfiles/Chapter15-IncidentInvestigationandAnalysis.pdf>;

if the incident is a new form of violence or a form of violence not anticipated for this situation, the Workplace Violence Prevention Plan should be reviewed and updated accordingly.

### **3.3 Employees Exposed to Violence**

All employees exposed to violent incidents will be debriefed and will be advised to consult a health professional of their choice. Eligible employees may access help for exposure to violent incidents through the EFAP program. All Managers and Chairs will offer EFAP to eligible employees affected by violence in the workplace.

Toll free services (Saint Mary's University Employee Group Benefit Program):

EFAP English Services: 1-800-387-4765

EFAP French Services: 1-800-361-5676

TTY Hearing Impaired: 1-877-338-0275

Faculty and Professional Librarians should contact the Union Office at [unionoffice@smufu.org](mailto:unionoffice@smufu.org) or 902-496-8090 to determine options available for counselling.

### **3.4 Students Exposed to Violence**

Students who have been involved directly or indirectly in an incident can contact the











## 1 – Preparing for a Potentially Negative Interaction

<b>Hazards Identified</b>	Potential for Personal Injury
<b>Hazard-Specific Personal Protective Equipment</b>	Alarm system, where required
<b>Hazard-Specific Training</b>	Familiarity with this Safe Work Practice and the Violence Prevention Plan
<b>Safe Work Practice</b>	

Over 20% of the employees who completed the Workplace Violence survey indicated they give bad news, deny requests and make decisions that can negatively impact others' lives. A plan will help to minimize risk and help to ensure safety for all concerned. These guidelines will also help in preparing for any meeting where there may be a potential for violence.

### **Practice:**

Be prepared. Think about your own safety:

- Have assistance nearby or have another person present
- Arrange seating so you cannot be trapped between the person and an exit. If your office or workspace cannot be arranged so that you have first exit, consider meeting elsewhere.
- Never turn your back on someone who is agitated or angry
- Prepare yourself mentally for possible blame, insult, and personal attack. Stay in control of your own behaviour and do not take the other person's behaviour personally
- Arrange to have Security nearby, but not visible.
- Set up a communication system to check on the interaction, e.g. have another employee bring you a file.

Pres'lle<sup>2</sup>

## 2 – Identifying a Potentially Violent Person

<b>Hazards Identified</b>	Potential for Personal Injury
<b>Hazard-Specific Personal Protective Equipment</b>	Alarm system, where required
<b>Hazard-Specific Training</b>	Familiarity with this Safe Work Practice and the Violence Prevention Plan
<b>Safe Work Practice</b>	

Saint Mary's promotes respect, service excellence and safety for all members of the Saint Mary's Community. The following information is being provided to help members of the community recognize behaviours that may lead to violence and to be able to respond in an appropriate manner. Please note that if you feel threatened, this is a violence in the workplace incident, as per the NS Violence in the Workplace Regulations, and must be treated as such.

Use caution if someone exhibits one or more of the following signs or body language:

- Red-faced or white-faced, Sweating
- Pacing, Restless or repetitive movement
- Trembling or shaking, facial grimacing
- Clenched jaws or fists, exaggerated or violent gestures
- Change in voice, loud talking or chanting
- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Scowling, sneering or use of abusive language
- Glaring or avoiding eye contact
- Violating your personal space (they get too close)

### Other Warning Signs

#### **History of Violence**

- Fascination with weapons, acts of violence or both
- Demonstrates violence towards inanimate objects
- Evidence of prior violent behaviour

#### **Threatening Behaviour**

- States intention to hurt someone
- Holds grudges
- Obsessive behaviour (phone calls, gift giving)
- Escalating threats with violence

#### **Intimidating Behaviour required**

**Increase in Personal Stress**

An unreciprocated, romantic obsession  
Serious family or financial problems  
Recently lost their job

**Negative Personality Traits**

Suspicious of others  
Believes he or she is entitled to something  
Cannot take criticism  
Feels victimized  
Shows a lack of concern for the safety and well-being of others  
Has low self esteem  
Blames others for his or her problems or mistakes

**Marked Changes in Mood or Behaviour**

Extreme or bizarre behaviour  
Irrational beliefs and ideas  
Appears depressed  
Expresses hopelessness or heightened anxiety  
Demonstrates a drastic change in belief systems  
Marked decline in performance

**Socially Isolated**

History of negative interpersonal relationships  
Few friends or family  
Sees the organization as family  
Has an obsessive involvement with his or her job

**Abuses Drugs or Alcohol**

The use of drugs and/or alcohol is interfering with the employee's job performance.

**Regulations, Standards and  
References**

NS Violence in the Workplace Regulations

### 3 – Dealing with a Potentially Violent Person

<b>Hazards Identified</b>	Potential for Personal Injury
<b>Hazard-Specific Personal Protective Equipment</b>	Alarm system, where required
<b>Hazard-Specific Training</b>	Familiarity with this Safe Work Practice and the Violence Prevention Plan
<b>Safe Work Practice</b>	

The following tips are provided to help deal with a potentially violent per

#### 4 – Responding to a Physical Attack

Hazards Identified	Potential for Personal Injury
<b>Hazard-Specific Personal Protective Equipment</b>	Alarm system, where required
<b>Hazard-Specific Training</b>	Familiarity with this Safe Work Practice and the Violence Prevention Plan



## **5 – Resolving Problem Behaviour**

**Hazards Identified**

Potential for Personal Injury

## 6 – Terminating Negative Interactions

<b>Hazards Identified</b>	Potential for Personal Injury
<b>Hazard-Specific Personal Protective Equipment</b>	Alarm system, where required
<b>Hazard-Specific Training</b>	Familiarity with this Safe Work Practice and the Violence Prevention Plan
<b>Safe Work Practice</b>	

The following guidelines have been provided to help terminate a negative interaction in a professional and respectful manner:

## 7– Responding to a Robbery

<b>Hazards Identified</b>	Potential for Personal Injury
<b>Hazard-Specific Personal Protective Equipment</b>	Alarm system, where required
<b>Hazard-Specific Training</b>	Familiarity with this Safe Work Practice and the Violence Prevention Plan
<b>Safe Work Practice</b>	

### **During a Robbery:**

- Remain calm. Obey the instructions of the robber. Do not argue.
- If you have a silent alarm, use them as instructed by Security.
- Try not to alarm or involve other persons if a robbery occurs, to reduce the chances that another person will become involved.
- Tell the robbers if someone else is on site, so they are not startled.
- Avoid quick, abrupt movements. Tell the robber if you have to reach for something or move in any way.
- Give only what the robber demands, no more.
- Do not, under any circumstances, attempt to apprehend or impede the robber. Do not use weapons. Do not jeopardize your own safety or others. Let the robber leave without interruptions.
- Note the robber's direction and means of travel, if safe to do so. Do not chase or follow robbery suspects.
- Focus on the robber's physical characteristics and clothing, as the robber leaves.
- Memorize any peculiarities and note details of any weapons.
- Watch what the robber touches.

### **After a Robbery:**

- Once the immediate danger has passed, call Security and 911.
- Secure the area by locking all entrances and exits to the robbery scene.
- Administer first aid to any victims, if required.
- Employees and any other persons who were present when the robbery took place should be requested to remain on site if possible. Record any personal particulars such as names and addresses, if a witness must leave.
- Protect the crime scene. Do not touch the evidence or touch any surfaces the robber may have touched, including any notes used.
- Provide assistance to the police. The police will be looking for information such as a description of the robber, the number of suspects, whether the suspect was armed, the time of the robbery and the direction and means of travel, if known.
- Provide support to the victims and debrief as soon as possible.
- Investigate the incident internally, involving the JOHSC.

## Appendix B - University Bomb Threat Checklist

Following is the university procedure when an employee receives a bomb threat. Today it is most likely that a bomb threat will be received by electronic media.

<p>1.1 <b>During a bomb threat call</b></p> <p>1.2 The person receiving the bomb threat call should remain calm and keep the caller on the phone to collect as much information as possible. Use the bomb threat checklist to record information about the caller and the bomb.</p>
<p>1.3 If the caller stays on the phone, try to signal to another person in the area to advise that there is a bomb threat and have this person call University Security (extension 5000).</p>
<p>1.4 When the caller hangs up, the person who received the call must call University Security immediately to give a full report. The University Security Dispatcher will then call HRM Police (911) and inform them of the bomb threat and all relevant information available. The University Security Dispatcher will complete the bomb threat checklist if it was not available to the person who received the bomb threat at the time of the call.</p>
<p>1.5 <b>If a bomb threat is received via social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.):</b></p> <p>1.5.1 Report it to Security at 902-420-5000</p> <p>1.5.2 Note the name of the person/user account of the person making the threat and also the application used.</p> <p>1.5.3 Write down the exact words used in the threat.</p> <p>1.5.4 If possible, take a screenshot of photograph.</p> <p>1.5.5 If it is a video, e.g. YouTube, write down the URL of the video and download a copy of the video (if possible) to provide to Security.</p>
<p>1.6 <b>If a bomb threat is received via e-mail, including by fax:</b></p> <p>1.6.1 Report it to Security at 902-420-5000.</p> <p>1.6.2 Print, take a photograph or copy down the message. Remember to include the e-mail header.</p> <p>1.6.3 If possible, save a copy of the e-mail. Do not delete the email.</p> <p>1.6.4 If possible, leave the email open until Security arrives.</p>
<p>1.7 <b>After a bomb threat call</b></p> <p>1.8 The University Security Dispatcher will contact the Manger of University Security, or designate, and provide all relevant information available. The Manager will contact the VP, Finance and Administration who may activate the Emergency Management Team (EMT) who will work in conjunction with the HRM Police to coordinate the appropriate response to the emergency.</p>
<p>1.9 The VP, Finance and Administration or Emergency Management Team will determine if an area/building should be evacuated and/or searched by using the following criteria:</p> <p>1.9.1 Was an area specified or was it a general threat?</p> <p>1.9.2 Was a specific time indicated?</p> <p>1.9.3 What activities are there in the affected areas</p> <p>1.9.4 What events are taking place</p> <p>1.9.5 Presence of suspicious objects or activities</p> <p>1.9.6 The recommendation of HRM police, if available. HRM Police do not have the authority in law or in their operational policy to order a building evacuated unless there is a clear and present danger.</p> <p>1.10 The Associate Vice President, External Affairs will coordinate any communications with internal and external sources, particularly the media.</p>

1.11	The call receiver will be offered counselling (Employee Assistance Program for employees, and counselling for students).
1.12	<b>For a search</b>
1.13	University Security will search all common areas in the identified building or area for suspicious items.
1.14	If a suspicious object is found during the course of a search, the area will be immediately evacuated and the object reported to the police
1.15	<b>For an evacuation:</b> Follow the evacuation procedure.
1.16	The Emergency Management Team will determine when the occupants may return to the building.

\_\_\_\_ Music                      \_\_\_\_ Static                      \_\_\_\_ Street Noises                      \_\_\_\_ Household  
\_\_\_\_ Motor                      \_\_\_\_ Voices                      \_\_\_\_ Animal Noises                      \_\_\_\_ Other

Phone number the call was received on: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number of caller: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Time call was received: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix C - Quick Reference Post Investigation Debriefing**

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### ***What is a debrief?***

Debriefing is focused on gaining understanding and insight regarding a specific incident and involving those people who were personally involved. This may involve sharing experiences and feelings, from our point of view. Debriefing includes both the facts and emotional responses, and invites feedback. Debriefing is an opportunity to share in depth recent experiences without judgment or criticism. Most debriefings are conducted by a person of authority or subject matter expert, and usually, but not always, without an agenda. Debriefings are typically short in duration, normally lasting from a few minutes to a few hours if many stakeholders are involved.

### ***Who is involved?***

1. Involve the employee(s) directly involved in the incident, if appropriate and if agreeable to being part of the debriefing process.  
Providing an opportunity for the employee(s) involved to put into words what they experienced, the process of relating the events provides an opportunity for reflection. Hearing the versions of other people involved also gives a more fulsome picture and a clearer picture of the entire sequence of events.

***When should it happen?***

Debriefing should take place as soon as practical, relative to when the incident actually occurred. This makes it easy to reconstruct details while the "event" is still fresh in the participants' minds.

***What should be discussed?***

A debrief is a straightforward analysis of how everyone performed and should be based structured on five things:

***1. What occurred?***