

# Roles and Responsibilities of Workers

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## Role

Legislation under New Brunswick's *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act* is designed to ensure that employees work in a safe environment free of hazards and liability. Violence in the workplace is considered a workplace hazard under the *OHS Act*.

The role of employees is to:

- Follow workplace plans of action to address and deal with any potential workplace hazard, including workplace violence.
- Participate in training offered by the employer, including workplace violence prevention training.

Employees should follow the direction set by management for effective health and safety management. An effective health and safety policy is much more than a document. It should be an integral part of your organization's culture, its values and performance standards.

## Responsibilities

- Become familiar with workplace violence prevention policies and programs.
- Seek out and participate in any training/awareness opportunities in the workplace.
- Cultivate and promote a collaborative non-violent work place. Behave in a respectful and non-violent manner when interacting with residents, co-workers, management, family members and visitors.
- Identify, assess and report any actual or potential violent verbal or physical situations among residents, workers, management, volunteer, family members and visitors.
- Follow plans of action to address and deal with any potential psychological and/or physical violent situation. Include care plans and/or history of violence in a resident's file. Document and share any knowledge of such plans (for example, information regarding possible triggers of violence and de-escalation strategies) with other staff or volunteers working with residents.
- After a violent incident (in addition to reporting the incident), seek medical attention, Employee/Family Assistance Programs or other counseling if required. Provide non-judgmental support to co-workers, residents, volunteers, family members or other visitors involved. Remember, it is the violent behaviour that is the problem and not the person(s) involved.

# Be informed

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## Violence

It is any incident in which a person is threatened, abused or assaulted, including all forms of physical, verbal, psychological or sexual harassment, bullying, intimidation, threats, robbery or other uninvited disruptive behaviours. Violence can be perpetrated by residents, visitors, workers and individuals who hold no relationship to the nursing home, its residents or the workers. This definition includes violence that arises out of a person's medical condition.

- An international nursing review of workplace violence found that **health-care professionals** are at the **highest risk of being attacked at work**, even when compared to prison guards, police officers, bank personnel, or transport workers (Kingma, 2001).
- Nationally, over one-quarter (29%) of nurses who provide direct care reported that they had been physically assaulted by a client in the previous year. Emotional abuse from a client was reported by 44% of nurses (Statistics Canada, 2005 National Survey of the Work and Health of Nurses).
- The **rates in New Brunswick are slightly higher** than the national average with 30.4% of N.B. nurses reporting being physically assaulted by a client in the past 12 months. Emotional abuse by a patient was reported by 41% of N.B. nurses (Stats Can., 2005 National Survey on the Work and Health of Nurses).
- New Brunswick Nurses Union's (NBNU) recent data suggests **nurses in the long-term care sector experience even higher rates**. In a NBNU poll of 115 nursing home nurses conducted in March 2014, 65% reported they had experienced some form of physical abuse at work in the past year and 78% had experienced verbal abuse. (NH telephone town hall).
- This serious risk to the **safety of nurses is closely linked to patient safety**. Violent experiences among nurses result in higher rates of nurse fatigue, burnout, injury, turnover and absenteeism, which are linked to negative client outcomes (Needleman et al, 2002).

## Violence is not part of the job

Every worker in every nursing home has a duty to educate themselves about the level of violence occurring in their respective nursing homes. Ask questions, be informed and follow processes in place to safeguard yourself and others. It starts with knowing the probability and severity in your nursing home and realizing that violence can never be "just part of the job."

## Conduct Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the document above and agree to conduct myself according to these terms.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_