CANADIAN INITIATIVE on WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board
2018 Institute
Regina, Saskatchewan

Today…

- The Evolution of Workplace Violence
- Core elements of a prevention program
- The anatomy of workplace violence
- Screening for workplace threats
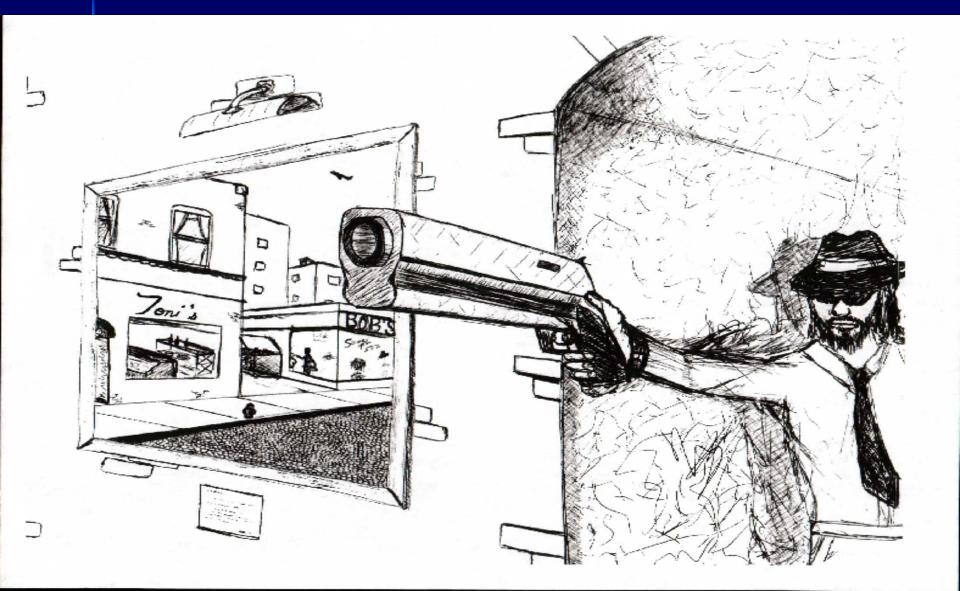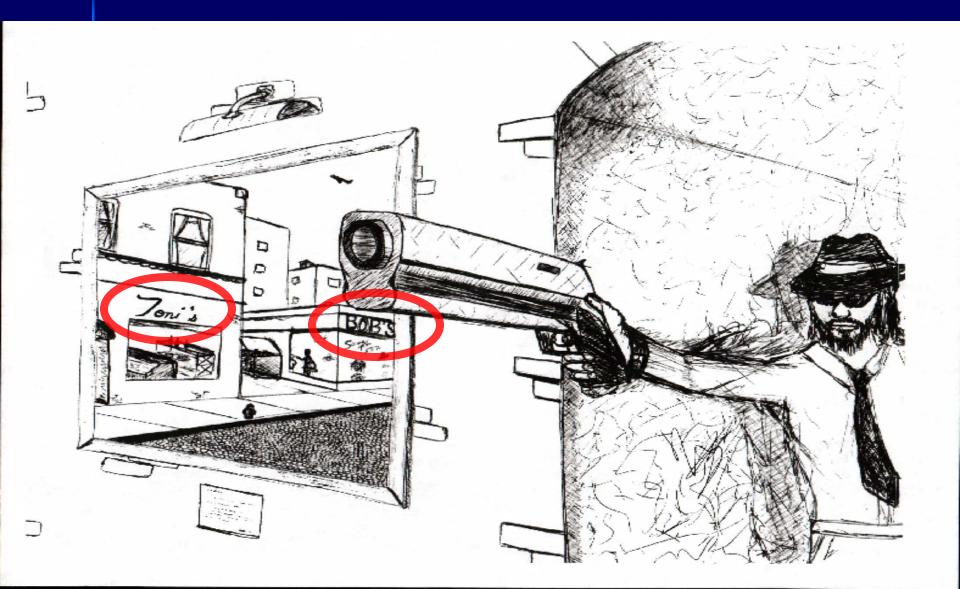- Where to from here…

Image of Concern

Image of Concern

How Legislation Evolves

- A devastating workplace incident occurs
- Public attention is focused
- "Moral Outrage" takes root, followed by a demand for action
- Politicians are pressed to enact legislation

The difficulty arises when legislation outpaces our ability to fully understand the issues, particularly matters of "psychological harassment"

Moral Outrage

An Evolving Conversation

- Since 1999, there has been a continuing disagreement regarding the definition and parameters of workplace violence
- Two competing arguments:
  - Physical versus non physical
  - Who is the perpetrator

Expanding the Definition of Violence

(OC Transpo Inquest – Recommandation #7)

We recommend that workplace violence be defined, not only as physical violence but also as psychological violence such as: bullying, mobbing, teasing, ridicule or any other act or words that could psychologically hurt or isolate a person in the workplace.

Expanding the Definition of Violence

Lori Dupont Coroner's Inquest – December 11, 2007

A Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act to examine the feasibility of including domestic violence, abuse and harassment as matters subject to Ministry of Labour Investigation and Action

Regulatory Shift

There has been a recognition across all jurisdictions that "indirect" forms of aggression, frequently referred to as "psychological harassment". Violence is no longer thought of a physical act.

Saskatchewan Violence Definition

"the attempted, threatened or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause injury, and includes any threatening statement or behaviour that gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that the worker is at risk of injury." (Regs, s. 37)

A Different Kind of "Accident"

After years of inaction or indifference, we have now arrived at the please where "violence" is viewed as an "accident". An event which is injurious to a worker and subject to the same rigorous assessment and remediation as would any other occupational hazard
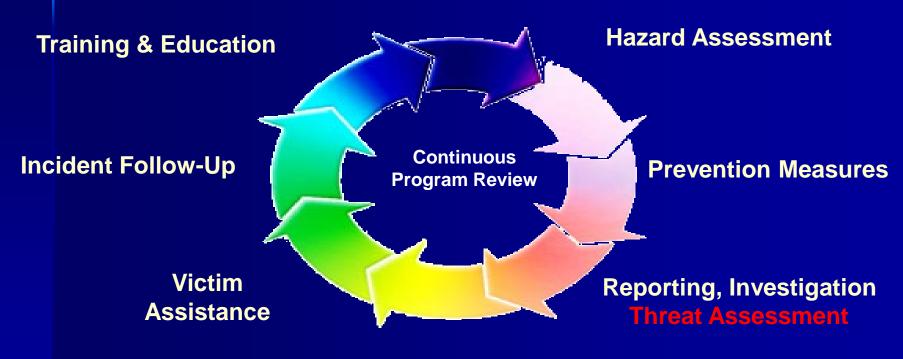
Behaviours of Concern

Psychological   **Physical**

Chronic Incivility | Harassment Bullying | Physical/Assaultive

The less "physical" the behaviour, the more care one must take in labeling the behaviour as "violence"

Your Road Map to Prevention

WPV Committee

Policy

Hazard Assessment

Training & Education

Continuous
Program Review

Prevention Measures

Incident Follow-Up

Victim
Assistance

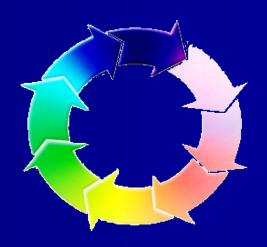Reporting, Investigation
Threat Assessment

Emergency
Response Planning

Violence Prevention Policy

Every organization should have a workplace violence prevention policy that is jointly developed by management and employees.

This document is the foundation of your violence prevention program.

Prevention Policy

Violence Prevention Policy
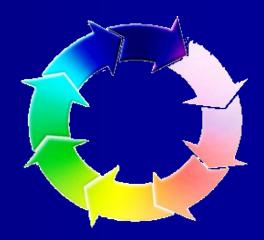
Violence Prevention Policy should

- Commitment to preventing workplace violence

- Provide an overview of your violence prevention program

- Establish clear standards of behaviour

- Apply to all employees, managers, contractors and clients (e.g. customers, patients, students)

Hazard/Risk Assessment

To effectively prevent workplace violence you need to have a good understanding of workplace violence risk factors.

Your workplace specific hazard assessment will build on this understanding and must include input from both management and employees.

Hazard Assessment

The Nature of "Risk"

Two components

- The risk associated with an individual who may be potentially aggressive
- The organizational risks relating to design, work processes, etc.

Developing Preventive Measures

Your hazard assessment will identify the most significant concerns for your organization

The next step is to develop specific measures that will eliminate or minimize these hazards.

Preventive measures include training and educating employees about workplace violence, as well as making improvements or changes to your workplace.

Prevention Measures

Reporting & Investigating

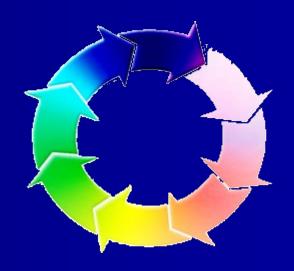Workplace violence is frequently under reported.

Every workplace should have a clearly defined system set up for the reporting, recording and investigating incidents or possible incidents of violence.

Reporting & Investigation

Emergency Response Planning

From an both an personal and organizational perspective, it is essential that you have specific plans in place ahead of time that clearly outline how to respond to a serious incident.

The plan should be thorough enough to deal with most incidents, but easy enough to understand and remember.

Emergency Response Planning

Emergency Response Planning

Employees in vulnerable positions should have personal plan

Your hazard assessment may identify some employees as being potentially exposed to the risk of workplace violence, for example when:

- Working alone
- Handling cash
- Working with unstable or volatile persons
- Working where alcohol is served
- Carrying out inspection or enforcement duties

Victim Assistance

In the aftermath of an incident of workplace violence, traumatized people may require emotional and medical support.

Victim Assistance

Incident Follow-up

Incident follow-up is part of your ongoing efforts to assess hazards and improve prevention and response strategies

Incident follow-up occurs some time after the incident has been investigated and after recommendations for prevention have been made. It involves taking a second look at the situation

Incident Follow-Up

Training & Education

Education and training are a very important part of any violence prevention program.

Training & Education

The exact content and type of training necessary will depend on the results of your workplace hazard assessment and your workplace-specific prevention program.

Training & Education

All employees should understand…

- Their rights and responsibilities under both the law and the company policy
- The scope of workplace violence and risk factors
- Your organization's prevention policy
- Your organization's procedures to minimize the risk of violence
- How they are to respond to an incident, including the correct procedures for reporting, investigating and documenting incidents
- That follow-up and support services that are available

Program Review

Program review should occur annually … and more often than that if any of the following situations apply:

- Your organization has experienced an increase in violent incidents

- Your organization has undergone a significant change (e.g. relocation, addition of new shifts, a significant change in business circumstances)

- There have been legislative changes

The Nature of "Risk"
The Individual

Two components

- The risk associated with an **individual** who may be potentially aggressive
- The organizational risks relating to design, work processes, etc.

Posting of Concern

Posted on a bulletin board during labour negotiations

"Every normal man must be tempted, at times to spit on his hands, hoist the black flag, and begin slitting throats..."

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H.L. Mencken, Prejudices
1880 - 1956

Current Thinking Regarding Individual Risk Assessment

- The Profiling of demographics should be approached with caution, in favour of "behavioural indicators".

- One-time assessments can be limited in value.

- Violence is both situational and a process.

- Each situation is different

The Balance

- The task for every employer, regardless of jurisdiction, is to balance the rights of both victim(s) and the perpetrator, while fulfilling their obligation to maintain a safe workplace.

- Surprisingly "termination" is not always an option.

- What about the duty to accommodate an individual with a mental health disorder?

Anatomy of Aggression

- Any number of psychiatric disorders, including dementia (pertinent to long term care, mental health units)
- Substance abuse (alcohol, poly drug, prescriptions)
- Goal directed violence (Robbery)
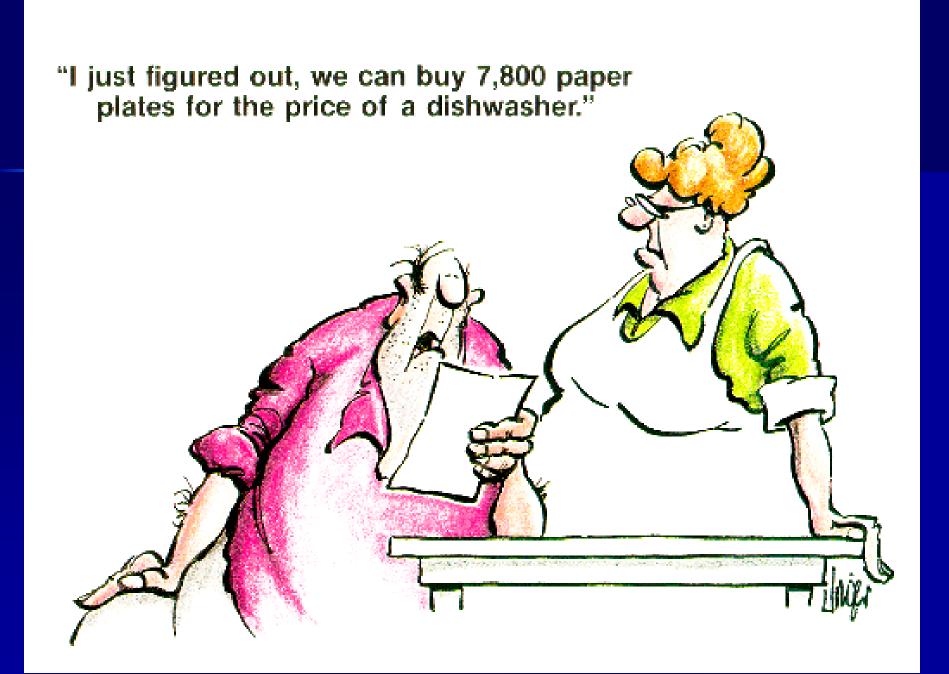- Perceived personal control (PPC)
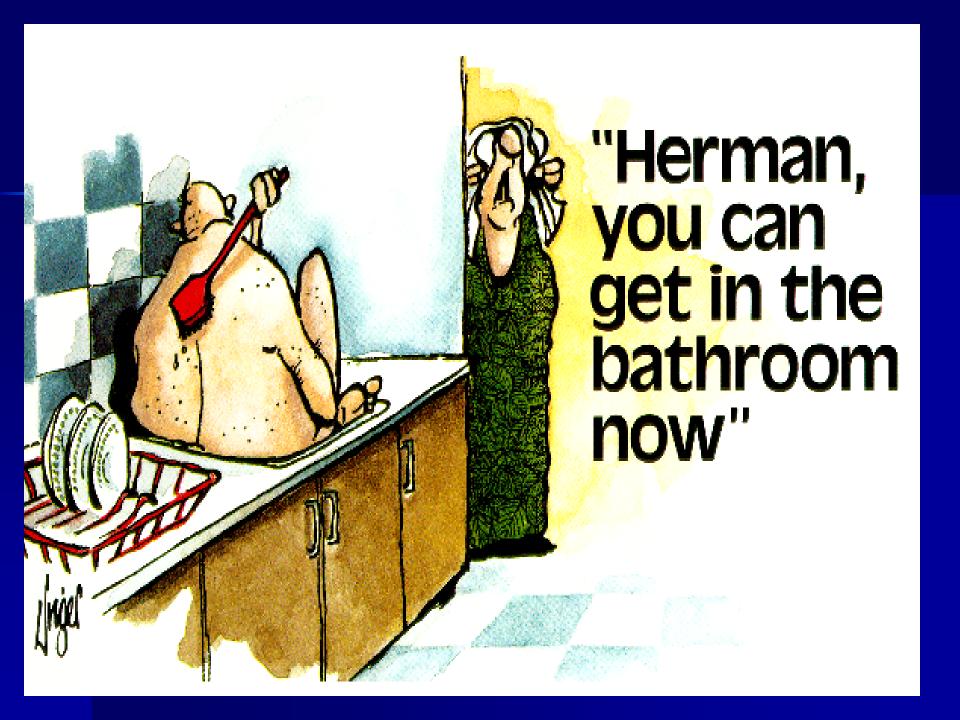
Perceived Personal Control
"Locus of Control"

PPC is an individual's belief, real or imagined, that they are in "control" of their situation, as gauged by:

- How they are treated
- Available options
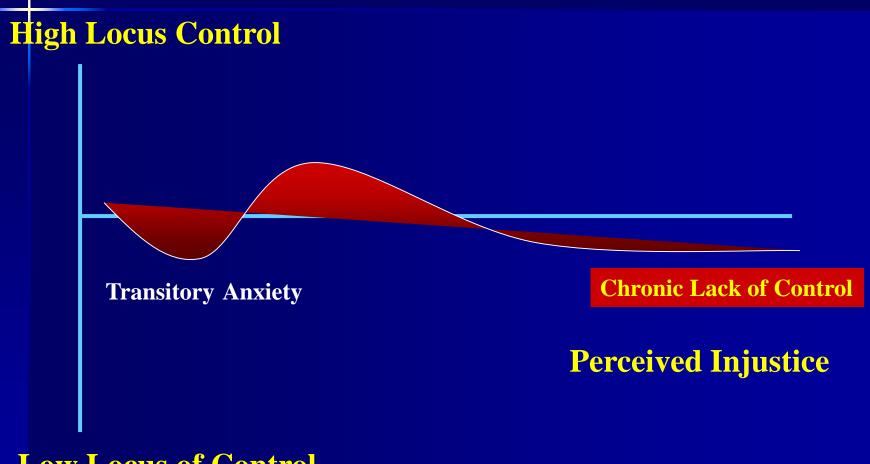- Duration

"impulsivity" increases the risk

"Herman, you can get in the bathroom now"

The Concept of "Control"

High Locus Control

Transitory Anxiety

Chronic Lack of Control
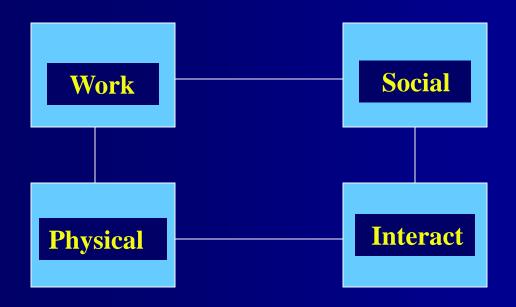
Perceived Injustice

Low Locus of Control

PTED
Subgroup of adjustment disorders (M. Linden, et al 2007)

- A single exceptional negative life event precipitates the onset of the illness;

- Repeated intrusive memories of the event;

- Emotional modulation is impaired, individuals can even smile when engaged in thoughts of revenge,

- No obvious other mental disorder that can explain the reaction.

Self-blame, rejection of help, suicidal ideation, aggression, seemingly melancholic depression, somatic complaints, loss of appetite, sleep disturbances, pain. Duration is longer than 3 months. Performance in daily activities and roles is impaired.

Control of What?

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Pierre LeBrun

The Letter

" …I'm going to commit an unforgivable act…I have no choice. I'm tired, exhausted and completely backed against the wall…They will never leave me alone. I can't go on living like this! They have destroyed my life, I will destroy their life…OC Transpo and the unions can't hide from what they do to me…They will pay dearly for what they've done to me. The people who I hold responsible are: (four names listed) along with many others …all I wanted was for them to leave me alone, not to bug me but it was too much to ask. They have spread lies, especially that I was a *rat* who denounced my own union members to try and have them stop laughing at me."

PPC Tool
Work Elements

- **Marked Job Dissatisfaction** multiple grievances, complaints and allegations of mistreatment, etc.
- **Performance Concerns** appraisals, attitude, behaviour, suspensions, discipline, work history.
- **Overwhelmed by work** complains of too much work, unfair work assignments, persecution.
- **Feared** by others and aware of impact, socially isolated in the workplace, history of conflict.
- **Over identification with work** to the exclusion of everything else.

PPC
Social Elements

- **Impending losses/stressors** divorce, separation, death, job loss, legal and/or financial concerns.
- **Socially isolated** outside the workplace. Described as a "loner", decreased personal support.
- **Anti-Social Behaviour** convictions, charges, stalking, fixations (violence/death/suicide), violence.

PPC
Health Elements

- **Substance abuse** alcohol, poly drug abuse, prescriptions.

- **Medical condition(s)** debilitating, changes in personality/self-care (pain, mental health).

PPC
Interpersonal Elements

- **Entitlement** self-centered, defensive, blames others.
- **Problem maintaining stability (impulsive)** affective, behavioural or cognitive impairment
- **Suspicious/fearful** ascribing to them sinister motives
- **Victim or Martyr** presents as being sacrificial

Assessing Individual "Threat"

What some people are asking...

- Is the assessment a precautionary measure?
- What is best practice for assessing individual threats (individually, TAT, IME, etc.)
- What are the main components of a "threat" assessment

Guides Available

- WAVR-21 (White & Meloy)
- HCR-20 (Hart, et al)
- Mosaic (DeBecker)
- SIVRA-35 (Van Brunt)
- VRAG (Quinsey et al)

Actuarial versus Structured Professional Judgment
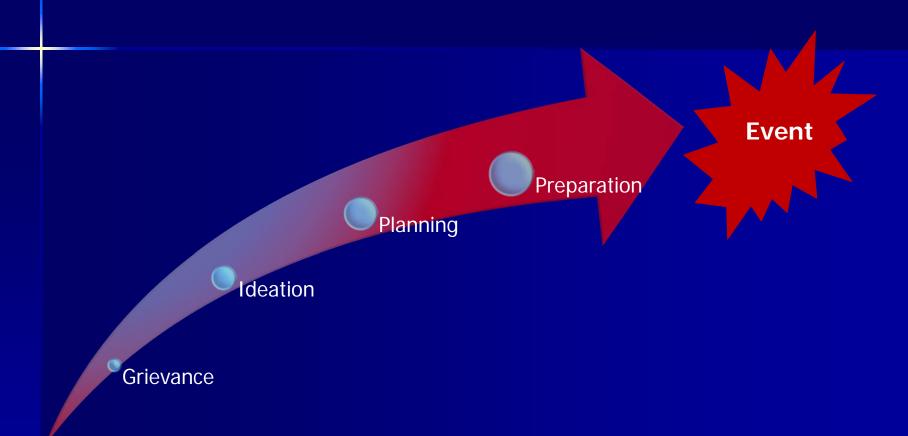
Pre-Incident Indicators

- Pattern of frustration (blaming, criticism)
- Abrupt changes in mood over time
- Evidence of depression, social withdrawal
- Unprovoked/inappropriate outbursts
- Significant/persistent change in work habits
- Refusal to follow reasonable directives
- Bizarre/outlandish behaviours
- Only 20% of perpetrators threaten their victims

M.D. Kelleher, Profiling the Lethal Employee, Westport CI, 1997

Offender and Offense Characteristics, J. American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, 27(2) 213-225, 1999
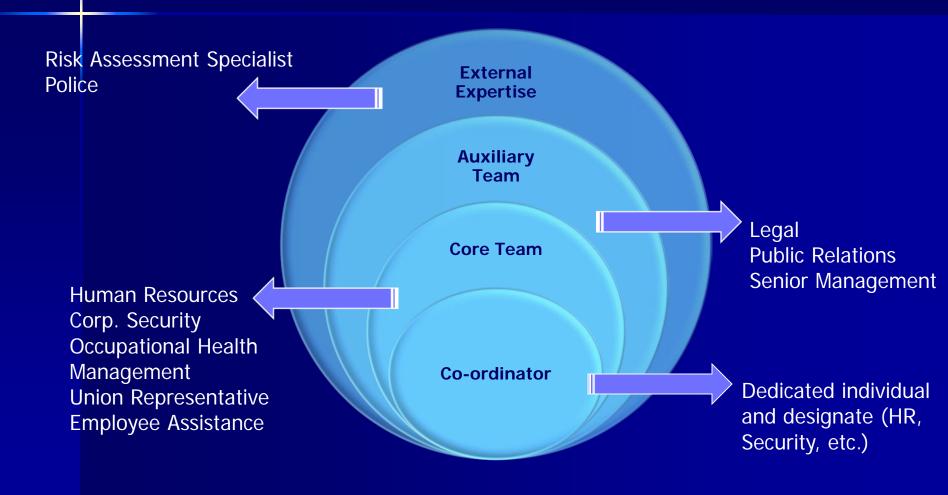
Path to Intended Violence

Calhoun and Weston 2003

Event

Preparation

Planning

Ideation

Grievance

"Violence is a process, as well as an act" - CPI

TAT Structure & Composition

Risk Assessment Specialist
Police

External
Expertise

Auxiliary
Team

Core Team

Co-ordinator

Legal
Public Relations
Senior Management

Human Resources
Corp. Security
Occupational Health
Management
Union Representative
Employee Assistance

Dedicated individual
and designate (HR,
Security, etc.)

For Further information

www.workplaceviolence.ca
Twitter @CIWV
info@workplaceviolence.ca
1-800-579-6739

Where to From Here…

- Violence in the Workplace: Prevention Guide – Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety – 1-800-668-4284
- Violence in the Workplace, Eric Roher, Carswell Publishing – 1-800-387-5164
- Human Resources Guide to Workplace Violence, Norman Keith, Canada Law Book
- Any of these overheads – info@workplaceviolence.ca