



# Occupational violence prevention

## Audience

Version effective: 23/10/2018  
Version: 1.0

Department-wide

## Purpose

This procedure provides the minimum standard for the prevention and management of occupational violence risks across the department with the intent of protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of staff who have the potential to experience occupational violence.

The department recognises that occupational violence is a serious and complex matter requiring a measured and consistent procedure across the department. The department has the lowest appetite for risks associated with workplace health and safety of staff and the community.

As far as reasonably practicable, the department is not willing to accept or be exposed to risks that compromises its ability to meet our workplace health and safety commitments. The department has a zero tolerance stance towards occupational violence, and responses must be evidence based, measured and preventative.

## Overview

Occupational violence is any action, incident or behaviour that departs from reasonable conduct in which a person is, threatened, harmed, injured by another person in the course of, or as a direct result of his or her work.

Each workplace is to ensure that there are appropriate resources to identify, prevent, manage and respond to occupational violence. These resources are to be identified through a risk management approach that considers workplace activities, including but not limited to the size, location and access to essential and/or emergency services as well as the demographics of the workplace.

This procedure is in accordance with [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) (Qld) (Part 2) to ensure the health and safety of employees and others in the workplace. It also complies with Safe Work Australia's [How to manage work health and safety risks Code of Practice 2011](#).



## Responsibilities

### All employees, contractors, visitors and others

- Treat all others at the workplace respectfully, behave in a manner expected by the workplace and follow the [Code of Conduct for the Queensland public service](#).
- Identify and actively prevent occupational violence hazards in the workplace.
- Participate in the assessment of occupational violence risks.
- Take immediate reasonable action to control and prevent further exposure or escalation of identified occupational violence incidents.
- Report, manage and record all occupational violence incidents in accordance with the department's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Incident Management procedure.
- Participate in training identified by the department for the prevention and management of occupational violence.

### Principals, managers, supervisors

- Proactively identify, prevent, assess and manage occupational violence hazards and risks in the workplace.
  - Identify occupational violence hazards in the workplace, ensuring they are captured in the workplace hazard register.
  - Ensure the risks associated with identified hazards are assessed and controls determined and implemented to prevent and manage occupational violence.
- Where incidents occur, ensure early intervention and check immediately on the welfare of those involved.
- Implement actions to respond to any immediate risk associated with the incident.
- Ensure systems are in place to provide support to those affected by occupational violence and that incidents are recorded, investigated and managed.
- Ensure records of any training conducted for employees (and others) is kept for a minimum of 10 years. These records must contain all the relevant information about the delivered training including:
  - date of session
  - subjects covered
  - name of the instructor that conducted the session and the company they represent
  - names of the employees, contractors or others who attended the session.

### Regional Directors or Assistant Directors-General

- Provide appropriate support and resources to the workplace as required.

### Deputy Directors-General

- Ensure key learnings are shared, and that corrective and preventative actions are implemented in relevant workplaces.
- Provide appropriate support and resources to workplaces.



## Process

Principals, managers and supervisors in the workplace will implement the following process and provide resources to identify, prevent, assess and manage risks associated with occupational violence.

The process aligns with the department's [Enterprise risk management framework, policy and procedure](#), and also adheres to Safe Work Australia's Code of Practice: [How to manage work health and safety risks](#).

### 1. Establish the context and identification of occupational violence hazards/risks

In identifying and preventing occupational violence hazards/risks it is important to understand your operating environment and the wider departmental stance on occupational violence. The department's lowest appetite is for risks associated with the workplace health and safety of staff and the community which include occupational violence.

The Principal/manager/supervisor will identify hazards/risks present in the workplace (and those likely to be encountered through the course of undertaking work related activities) through:

- consultation with employees regarding possible occupational violence hazards, including but not limited to bullying, harassment, conflict and physically or verbally aggressive behaviour
- review of workplace hazards and incidents recorded in MyHR WHS to determine any trends
- review of forms and notices issued under the [Hostile people of school premises, wilful disturbance and trespass procedure](#)
- seek other sources of information such as school and workplace security information, the characteristics of the school and workplace community and the school/workplace environment to obtain an overall picture of the occupational violence risk within the workplace so that they can be addressed.

A workplace can include settings such as school excursions, areas beyond the work location, and work activities outside of school and work hours.

Identify workplace specific issues or environments that may impact on the occupational violence risk, such as:

- school/workplace size, layout and physical characteristics
- numbers and types of health and safety incidents
- high risk tasks that may attract violence (e.g. cash handling, working in isolation/alone, working with distressed/hostile people, family law matters, home visits)
- any other relevant information.

### 2. Assessment of the risk

Principals, managers and supervisors will manage occupational violence risks in accordance with the Code of Practice: [How to manage work health and safety risks](#).

### 3. Evaluate the risk - identify controls

Principals, managers and supervisors should consider how existing controls mitigate or reduce the hazards/risks. The risks should be assessed to determine which risks require immediate attention and prioritize these for attention.

Controls related to occupational violence include but are not limited to:

- training as determined through assessment
- education campaigns regarding appropriate behaviours (i.e. No excuse for abuse)
- the processes contained in the Hostile People of School Premises, Wilful disturbance and Trespass Procedure
- development of specific protocols locally and across the workplace
- use of appropriate personal protective equipment
- physical work facilities (e.g. access to and the amount of personal/fixed duress alarms, on-call support, CCTV, phone access and security measures)
- work systems for how activities are undertaken (e.g. cash handling, working alone, out of hours work (cleaners), access and egress, trigger points for at-risk individuals)
- reinforcing the department's lowest appetite for risks relating to workplace health and safety.

In schools, communication of expectations around behaviour can occur directly with families and with the student body.

Where existing controls do not adequately reduce the risk level, principals, managers and supervisors are to ensure that further actions are applied to mitigate the risk.

### 4. Treat the risk- Implement further controls/actions

Once the risk context has been established and the risks have been assessed, efficient and effective risk treatments must be determined. Most documented risk treatments reflect the controls and actions embedded in the department's policies, procedures and practices. If further controls or actions are needed to mitigate the risk a consultative method is to be used to determine what further risk treatments are needed. Subject matter experts and those directly impacted by the hazards are a useful source of information.

- In consultation with the employees at the workplace, implement and support the controls and actions to address occupational violence hazards and risks.
- Ensure controls and actions are communicated to relevant stakeholders and employee groups.
- Engage the assistance of your health, safety and wellbeing committee to assist with communication.
- Be prepared to adjust controls to suit the specific work environment.
- Reinforce the department's lowest appetite for risks impacting on workplace health and safety of staff and the community.

## 5. Review and improve

A copy of the completed risk assessment (e.g. in MyHR WHS or hard copy at the workplace) should be retained to support the decisions made to address identified risks.

The risk assessment and identified controls should be reviewed:

- when the control does not adequately mitigate the risk it was implemented to control
- before a change at the workplace which is likely to give rise to a new or different risk that the control measure may not effectively mitigate
- if a new hazard or risk is identified
- if the results of consultation indicate that a review is necessary
- if a health and safety representative requests a review and they reasonably believe that a circumstance referred to above affects or may affect the health and safety of a member of the work group they represent
- if an occupational violence incident occurs to determine what improvements are required to existing controls or what new controls are required.

If problems are found, go back through the risk management steps, review the relevant information and make further decisions about risk control.

## 6. Occupational violence incidents are to be recorded, reported and investigated in accordance with the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Incident Management procedure

Immediate response to an occupational violence incident.

- Report, classify, notify.
- Record and review.
- Investigate.
- Corrective and preventative actions.
- Communicate, evaluate and finalise.

## 7. Review of state wide occupational violence issues and response

The correct reporting, recording and investigation of occupational violence incidents provides the department with valuable information and the capacity to monitor hazard trends.

The department's Organisational Safety and Wellbeing Unit collects, analyses and reports on occupational violence incidents and trends to the department's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee to identify and action systematic issues.

Systemic issues identified at a school and regional level, as well as those issues that are unable to be managed at a local level, will be escalated through regional Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committees and the department's Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee.

## 8. Further actions

Occupational violence incidents may require additional assistance or referral to ensure the matter is resolved and controls are appropriately identified and implemented.

- Emergency plans are to incorporate occupational violence as a known scenario.
- If any person is in immediate danger contact emergency services on 000.
- Where an offence is suspected, contact the school based police officer or the police.
- Where required make use of the processes within the [Hostile people on school premises, willful disturbance and trespass procedure](#).
- Manage issues in accordance with [Safe, supportive and disciplined school environment procedure](#).
- Other support staff for schools may include student behaviour specialists, guidance officers, social workers, community welfare workers, youth workers, health care professionals and teacher aides as well as the employee assistance service (EAP).

For matters relating to conduct and complaints contact: [ConductandComplaints@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:ConductandComplaints@qed.qld.gov.au) or phone: 07 3055 2950. Electronic lodgment of employee misconduct that includes student protection matters involving employees can be undertaken via [iRefer](#).

Lodging a matter using this [iRefer](#) function will result in a matter being referred to the department's Investigations, Performance and Conduct Unit for assessment and consideration. This will determine the most appropriate intervention to address the complaints raised.

## Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Hazard</b>	An object or situation that has the potential to harm a person, the environment or cause damage to property. Hazards at work may include: aggressive intruders at the school or the workplace, or witnessing violence in the workplace.
<b>Occupational violence</b>	Any action, incident or behaviour that departs from reasonable conduct in which a person is, threatened, harmed, injured by another person in the course of, or as a direct result of his or her work. Examples of acts of aggression and/or violence includes, but is not limited to, workplace harassment/bullying (being more than one occasion - except sexual harassment), spitting, physical intimidation or harm, and verbal abuse.
<b>Others</b>	A person other than an employee or contractor as defined as a worker under the <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i> (Qld), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the person's business or undertaking</li> <li>• an outworker</li> <li>• an apprentice or trainee</li> <li>• a student gaining work experience</li> </ul>





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a volunteer</li> <li>• a visitor</li> <li>• a parent/carer</li> <li>• a pre-service teacher</li> <li>• a school student.</li> </ul>
<b>Reasonably practicable</b>	<p>Under section 18 of the <a href="#">Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)</a> reasonably practicable is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in relation to a duty to ensure health and safety, means that which is, or was at a particular time, reasonably able to be done in relation to ensuring health and safety, taking into account and weighing up all relevant matters including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the likelihood of the hazard or the risk concerned occurring; and</li> <li>(b) the degree of harm that might result from the hazard or the risk; and</li> <li>(c) what the person concerned knows, or ought reasonably to know, about— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the hazard or the risk; and</li> <li>(ii) ways of eliminating or minimising the risk; and</li> </ul> </li> <li>(d) the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk; and</li> <li>(e) after assessing the extent of the risk and the available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk, the cost associated with available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk, including whether the cost is grossly disproportionate to the risk.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Risk</b>	<p>In the context of occupational violence, risk is the possibility that something will go wrong such as harm (damage, death, injury or illness) might occur when exposed to a hazard. The risk in this context is the likelihood that a person will sustain an injury caused by aggressive intruders at the school or the workplace, or witnessing violence in the workplace.</p>
<b>Risk management</b>	<p>Coordinated activities to direct and control an organisation with regard to risk.</p> <p>Risk management is a proactive process that helps respond to change and facilitate continuous improvement. It should be planned, systematic and cover all reasonably foreseeable hazards and associated risks.</p>

## Legislation

- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Information Privacy Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#)

## Delegations/Authorisations

- Nil



## Related policies

- [Preventing workplace bullying, sexual harassment and unlawful discrimination](#)

## Related procedures

- [Health safety and wellbeing incident management](#)
- [Managing first aid in the workplace.](#)
- [School security](#)
- [Safe, supportive and disciplined school environment](#)
- [Hostile people on school premises, wilful disturbance and trespass](#)

## Guidelines

- Nil

## Further information/supporting websites

- Available at [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au):
  - [How to manage work health and safety risks - Code of practice 2011](#)
  - [Managing the work environment and facilities - Code of practice 2011](#)
  - [Work health and safety consultation, co-operation and co-ordination - Code of practice 2011](#)
  - [Incidents and notifications](#)
  - [Preventing and responding to work-related violence](#)
- [General Retention and Disposal Schedule \(GRDS\) Queensland - Work Health and Safety](#)
- [Risk assessment template](#)

## Contact

Organisational Safety and Wellbeing Unit.

[HSW@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:HSW@qed.qld.gov.au)

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23/10/2021

## Superseded versions

- Nil

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