



# STEP 4 – Reporting, Documenting and Investigating

*The Workplace Violence Prevention Resource “Steps” were developed to support workplaces in their efforts to reduce incidents of workplace violence. These resources are intended to assist Employers to ensure a comprehensive violence prevention plan is developed and to help share practices to minimize risk factors associated with workplace violence.*

## 1.0 Background

### Let’s Review What We Have Done To Date – Step 1, Step 2 and Step 3

“**Step 1**” includes the **Workplace Violence Prevention Program Review** to evaluate the organization’s compliance with Nova Scotia’s Violence in the Workplace Regulations. In addition, an **Employee Perception Survey** is available to assist in the assessment of an organization’s safety culture as it relates to workplace violence prevention. <http://bit.ly/MpAT6D>

“**Step 2**” outlines **leadership responsibilities** and includes a comprehensive **workplace violence hazard risk assessment tool** that permits employers to enter the assessment data and maintain the document as a component of due diligence compliance. <http://bit.ly/MpAT6D>

“**Step 3**” provides templates of policies and procedures to address the various elements of a comprehensive workplace violence prevention program commencing with those that are required by legislation. <http://bit.ly/MpAT6D>

## 2.0 Step 4: Reporting, Documenting and Investigating

In the event of workplace violence, Nova Scotia’s “[Violence in the Workplace Regulations](#)”, in particular Sections 12-14, specify the duty to **report, document and investigate** incidents of violence. In addition, there are requirements to prevent reoccurrence and appropriate debriefing with employees exposed to or affected by workplace violence. In **Step 4**, the requirements as prescribed by the legislation are outlined. **Step 4** also includes templates and forms to assist with the reporting and investigating of violent incidents, and determining the root cause of these incidents. These tools can help an Employer achieving compliance with the requirements of the regulations and identify actions to reduce the likelihood of violent incidents.

It should be noted that the general reporting and investigation requirements subsequent to an incident of violence are not any different than the requirements subsequent to other incident types (e.g. exposure, lifting). Consequently, organizations should follow available existing procedures for workplace incidents and incorporate other best practice resources to prevent reoccurrence.

## **2.1 Summoning Immediate Assistance**

In the event that workplace violence occurs or is likely to occur, employees should, where appropriate, go to a safe location and summon immediate assistance through the most available/appropriate communication system such as a colleague, walkie-talkie, telephone, or cell phone. The most appropriate communication method will depend on your location (onsite or offsite), time of day (working during or outside of regular hours), presence of co-workers, clients/residents, or members of the public, and the level of risk. Critical judgement should be applied when summoning assistance.

## **2.2 Reporting incidents or threats of workplace violence**

Reporting incidents of workplace violence (actual or potential) helps to better understand the nature of the problem/situation, evaluate methods of hazard control/mitigation strategies and to identify training needs. Employers should emphasize with staff that all incidents of violence must be reported, including threats or threatening statements where there is the potential for physical violence.

Once a workplace violence incident has been reported, the supervisor, or someone designated by the Employer, will then commence gathering and verifying the facts surrounding the incident. The supervisor will advise the employee(s) involved in the violent incident of the availability of support and counselling. If the employee is seeking health care or requires time off work, the requisite WCB paperwork must be completed.

## **2.3 Documenting incidents of violence**

Once the situation has been brought under control and the health and safety of the participants has been addressed, the incident must be documented using the forms appropriate for the workplace. These forms should include a complete written account of the events including information and statements from those persons who were present during the incident.

Documenting incidents of violence does not require the development of a separate or independent incident reporting or investigation form. All workplace incidents should be captured on the Employer's standard reporting and investigation forms regardless of the type of workplace hazard.

In the event that the incident of violence is a result of an interaction between a worker and resident/client then additional information will be required which may be recorded on a separate "resident/client incident" form or on the standard incident forms.

### 2.3.1 Documentation Form

Supplementary to this Step is a sample **incident Reporting form** available as a tool for workplaces to apply in its entirety, amend or use to augment existing forms. Any form(s) that is used by an organization should capture the following information:



See Toolkit

Information Categories	Specific Details
information about the employee(s) involved in the incident	Name, Department, Position, Contact Information
When the incident occurred	Date, Time
When the incident was reported	Date, Time, who reported the incident
Where the Incident Occurred	Location(s)
Who was present at the incident	Co-workers, family members, other
Type of incident	Physical Injury, Threatening Behaviour, Verbal Threat, Written Threat, Harassment, Domestic Violence
Nature of the Injury	Bruise, laceration, fracture, no injury
Incident Source	*Resident/Client, Intruder, 3rd-party, co-worker
Status of person(s) involved post incident	Apprehended by police, medical assistance
Contributing factors that led to incident	Human behaviour, tasks, materials/equipment, environment and organizational factors
Resident/Client (if the incident of violence involved a Resident/Client)	Theme of Incident: cognitive impairment, delivery of care, situational event
Relevant events before, during, after incident	Interaction or work activity
Other information or Stakeholders involved	Notifications required by legislation or agency policies

## 2.4 Investigation of incidents or threats of workplace violence

The extent to which an investigation is completed will vary depending on the severity of the incident and associated risk. The objective of every investigation is to determine **WHAT** happened, **WHEN** it happened, **WHO** was there, **WHERE** it happened, **WHY** it happened and **HOW** it happened to be able to establish the necessary actions required to prevent a similar occurrence.



See Toolkit

The Employer is responsible for ensuring an investigation is conducted. In many cases this responsibility is designated to the supervisor of the worker(s) involved in the incident. However, the Employer may designate another individual to complete the investigation. All investigations will occur as promptly as possible and within the designated timeframes as established by the organization. An Investigation Process reference sheet is available as a tool supplementary to this Step.

## 2.5 Preparing for the investigation

1. Determine if the incident needs to be referred to the police or any other regulatory or legislative body (e.g. the Department of Labour and Advanced Education). An external investigation does not preclude one conducted by the workplace but the workplace investigation must not impede or compromise the external investigation.
2. Determine who should be involved in the investigation. Persons who may be involved include: person(s) involved, supervisor, department manager and/or manager on call, Human Resources, Joint OHS committee member/representative, Occupational Health Nurse.
3. Review the incident form(s) to be completed to ensure the necessary information will be gathered.
4. If required, complete WCB injury/illness report forms.
5. Develop a plan to conduct the investigation that outlines all steps to be followed:
  - Prepare a summary of the information that needs to be collected
  - Determine which documents need to be gathered
  - Decide who to speak to and in what order
  - Decide when and where (and by what method) interviews will be conducted
  - Prepare open-ended questions in advance
6. Maintain accurate records of all the information that is collected.

## 2.6 Information Gathering

When gathering information, the investigator needs to be thorough and consider what was occurring before, during, and after the incident occurs. Generally the major potential cause factors to be assessed include: **Human Behaviour** (employees, residents, volunteers, contractors), **Tasks, Materials/Equipment, Environment** and **Organizational Factors** (policies, procedures). Each of these factors needs to be considered in order to identify the root cause(s) and to develop corrective action(s).

A comprehensive incident investigation seeks to identify all possible causes and not looking at single issues in isolation. As many factors may be identified it is recommended that the investigator ask “why” 5 times to look to identify the most important contributing factors. A case example is included in the toolkit.

An investigation matrix can be used to document the information gathered, conduct a root cause analysis, and answer the question of why an incident occurred. More information about **root case analysis** and a sample **investigation matrix** have been included in the toolkit.



See Toolkit

## 2.7 Conducting Interviews

1. Record information related to the interviews, such as:
  - Date, time, location/ and duration of the interview;
  - Names of people interviewed and names of anyone present at the interview (e.g. Union representation).
  - Assign another Manager to be present in the interviews and also be the scribe
2. Notes shall be:
  - Read carefully to ensure they are accurate and complete
  - Kept in a safe place
3. When interviewing witnesses:
  - Interview anyone who may have firsthand knowledge of the incident
  - Assure witnesses that there is no penalty for participation and that they are expected to cooperate; and
  - Encourage witnesses to recount only first-hand information. Rumour, innuendo or speculation should be given little weight unless independently confirmed.
4. When interviewing the people who may have perpetrated an incident of workplace violence, individuals are entitled to know the nature of the complaint in order to respond.
5. When interviewing the people who suffered as a result of an incident of workplace violence, be aware that discussing the incident may be difficult and traumatic for them. It may be necessary to involve treatment providers or individuals with specific training in how to interview victims of violence.



See Toolkit

An **Interview Tips** reference sheet is available as a tool supplementary to this Step.

## 2.8 Review and Analyze Evidence

1. An investigation is complete when root cause(s) have been identified and when the investigator can report on what happened.
2. The investigation must result in the identification of corrective actions to prevent reoccurrence of an incident of violence. The notice of actions must be provided to: any employee affected by the incident of violence, any JOH&S committee established at the workplace, and/or any OH&S representative selected at the workplace.
3. The incident (post investigation) must be **de-briefed** with employees, family members, visitors etc., as appropriate so that they can understand what went wrong and what actions are being taken to prevent a reoccurrence. The following should be included in the debriefing process:
  - Involve the employee(s) involved in the incident if appropriate and if agreeable to being part of the debrief
  - Review the particulars regarding the incident (what went wrong)
  - Review what went “right” in response to the incident (e.g. training, communication etc.)
  - Discuss what the action items will be to prevent a reoccurrence. Get input as to the effectiveness of the action taken and other possible improvement opportunities.



See Toolkit

**Note:** depending on the nature of the incident, it may be necessary to engage an external professional to facilitate the debriefing. A tip sheet for post investigation de-briefing is available as a tool supplementary to this Step.

## 2.9 Implement Corrective Action and Evaluate Effect

The recommended corrective action(s) to prevent a reoccurrence of violence may include addressing one or more of the following program elements:

- Policy/Procedures (e.g. amendments, updates or enhancements)
- Training (e.g. deliver new training, refresher)
- Equipment repair, maintenance or replacement
- Facility design and layout including alarm systems, communications equipment and protocols, etc.
- Staffing
- Supervisor availability and accountability
- Change to human behaviours
- Change to equipment/etc. etc. etc.

Recommendations should be:

- Specific for the safety problem/hazard
- Practical and Feasible
- Credible (can be trusted to work)
- Based on consultation with workers

After recommendations are in place, follow up to validate solutions. Reassess where necessary and monitor situation for continuous improvement.

## 3.0 Check out the Following “Tool Kit” Resources included in Step 4



See Toolkit

- Sample Incident Reporting Form
- Sample Investigation Matrix
- Case Example
- Tips for Interviews
- Tips for Post Investigation De-Briefing
- Quick Reference Root Cause Analysis
- Quick Reference Investigation Process

## 4.0 Coming Next

**STEP 5:** Worker Training/Education/Awareness