



VIOLENCE PREVENTION POLICY 211

APPENDIX A

VCC Guide for the Protection of Employees from Violence in the Workplace

Introduction

VCC is committed to a safe and violence free environment. VCC does not tolerate threatening behavior or violence against employees.

It is the responsibility of every employee to familiarize themselves with the contents of this guide, which provides information on how employees can help maintain a safe work environment and protect themselves and others from potential violence.

Responsibilities

VCC, through the Director, Facilities, will:

- provide adequate direction and instruction to employees in the safe performance of their duties
- provide training to minimize the risk of violence to employees including specific training for supervisors in meeting their responsibilities under the Violence Prevention Policy;
- notify any employees who may be exposed to the risk of violence, of the nature and extent of the risk. This includes providing information about people who have demonstrated violent behavior;
- establish procedures and work environment arrangements, in consultation with supervisors, which will minimize or effectively control the risk of violence; and
- ensure that corrective actions are taken in response to incidents of violence.

All supervisors will ensure their employees are properly trained to perform their work without undue risk by:

- informing employees of the nature and extent of any known risks of violence;
- arranging scheduling to minimize the necessity to work alone. Where this is not possible, make arrangements for periodic checks on the well-being of the employee;
- ensuring that corrective actions are taken in response to incidents of violence;
- ensuring that the Violent Incident Report Form is completed and sent to appropriate people as indicated on the form, following an incident of violence;
- immediately notifying other departments and/or individuals of an abusive or threatening person who may also present an immediate threat to them;
- advising employees who have been injured in an incident of workplace violence to contact the Health and Safety Assistant and seek appropriate medical attention;

- advising employees that critical incident debriefing or counselling is available as outlined in the Post Emergency Intervention Policy A.3.4.
- All VCC employees must comply with the WCB Occupational Health and Safety Regulations by:
 - a. following departmental procedures and actively participating in making the College environment safe and violence free;
 - b. reporting any incidents of violence or threatening behaviour to their supervisor or security;
 - c. completing a **Violent Incident Report Form** and forwarding a copy of the form to their supervisor;
 - d. taking precautions necessary for their protection such as:
 - requesting security or a co-worker to provide a safe walk to car after work;
 - avoiding contact with any individual who appears threatening;
 - asking security or a co-worker to check on you if working alone, or with limited staff after hours.

Members of the Occupational Health and Safety committee will:

- conduct annual reviews and risk assessments;
- assist in the development and regular audit of Vancouver Community College's Workplace Violence Prevention Program;
- assist in incident investigations, with the area supervisor and the Director of Facilities;
- assist in conducting follow-up to ensure corrective action is taken.

The Health and Safety Assistant will:

- establish procedures for reporting, investigating and documenting incidents of violence in accordance with the Workers' Compensation Board Regulations;
- conduct an investigation, with area supervisor and Occupational Health and Safety Committee member, ensuring all pertinent details are recorded;
- co-ordinate investigation with police if applicable;
- take possession of any exhibit (weapon, etc).

If the offender is a student, the VCC *Student Code of Conduct (Non-Educational Matters)* Policy (D.4.3) provides for appropriate sanctions. Offences covered by the Criminal Code of Canada will be dealt with through the legal system.

Dealing with Abusive Language or Threatening Behaviour

- If you are comfortable doing so, in a polite, but firm manner, ask the aggressor to refrain from being rude, abusive, or aggressive, explaining it is the College's policy not to tolerate threatening behaviour.
- If the aggressor persists, advise them that you will have to terminate the interaction.
- While maintaining a firm, courteous manner, ask the aggressor to leave the room immediately and quietly. Alternately, you can quietly leave yourself.
- If the aggressor refuses to leave, call security, notify your supervisor, and monitor the situation if your safety is not in jeopardy.

- If the actions are such that others are disturbed and/or service is interrupted, but there appears to be no serious threat, notify your supervisor who will attempt to defuse the situation.
- If at any time you sense the situation has escalated to the point that you or anyone else is in danger, call 9-1-1 requesting police attendance. Then call security and notify your supervisor.
- Do not block the individual if he/she decides to leave. Be prepared to give police and security a description.
- If the abuse is over the telephone terminate the conversation. Advise your supervisor of all details. If you feel that someone who has been abusive or threatening might go directly to another office, notify that office and advise Security.
- Keep a detailed account of the incident on file. Fill out a Violent Incident Report form and forward copies as indicated on the form.

Preventing Robberies

- Do not count cash in public view.
- Rearrange work areas so that cash is hidden from public view.
- Vary routine when carrying cash deposits.
- Do not make deposits alone.

Weapons *

- If you observe a weapon and the situation warrants it, immediately call security or the policy.
- If you observe a person with a weapon but there is no immediate threat, contact your supervisor for follow-up.
- Always put your own needs first. Do not be a hero.

**Weapon as defined by the Criminal Code is:*

anything used, designed to be used or intended for use

- a. *in causing death or injury to any person, or*
- b. *for the purpose of threatening or intimidating any person.*

Working Alone

- Have someone contact you periodically at predetermined intervals, in person or by telephone.
- With another co-worker or security officer present, check that all doors are locked and make sure washrooms and storage rooms are empty.
- Prominently display notices indicating the premises are monitored and the emergency numbers for assistance.
- Do not open back doors or leave them opened and unattended.
- Try to vary your routine.

If you are Confronted

- A confident assertive person is a less likely target than someone who appears timid and lost.
- Many potential assaults are deterred by the assertive behaviour of an intended victim. An assailant, looking for compliance, may test a person's reaction to a simple touch on the arm or a question as to the time of day.

- If attacked, scream -- as loud and long as possible -- and run to the nearest well-lit area.
- If someone grabs your purse, deposit bag, or other personal property, **do not** resist and **do not** chase the thief.
- Call the police immediately after any incident and record appearance and mannerisms of the offender. Notify your supervisor and fill out a Violent Incident Report form.

Traveling to and From Work - After Hours or When You are Alone

- Use the main entrance as much as possible - avoid rear or secluded exits.
- As you enter or leave the parking area, scan the area for suspicious individuals. Have a back-up plan if there is danger.
- If possible, avoid walking to your vehicle alone. Go with other workers, or a security officer.
- If you must walk to your vehicle alone, if possible, have a co-worker watch you from a window, and wave to him or her on the way to your vehicle. If no one is available, fake it; pretend you are being watched and wave to an imaginary co-worker on the way to your vehicle. Once you are in your vehicle, ensure all doors are locked and windows are up.

Walking to Work

- Appear alert, scan your route, and proceed directly to work.
- Use the main entrance as much as possible -- avoid rear or secluded entrances.
- Stay on well lit streets, in the centre of the sidewalk, away from bushes, doorways and parked cars -- anywhere that an attacker could hide. Cross the road if necessary.
- If you think someone is following you, turn around and check. Let them know you are aware of their presence. Do not go to your car or your house. Cross the street and go to a safe place, such as a store or restaurant.

Public Transit

- Avoid isolated or poorly lit bus stops.
- Plan your arrival time at the bus stop to get you there just before your bus arrives.
- If you are alone or it is late at night, sit near the driver. If someone bothers you, tell the driver immediately.
- Try to sit where you can see your upcoming bus stop as you arrive. If you see suspicious or menacing individuals at your stop, get off at the next stop.
- If possible, plan to have someone meet you at your home bus stop.
- When stepping off the bus, check to see if you are being followed. If you are, walk directly and quickly to a service station or store and call police.

Don't dismiss any of your suspicions as paranoia. Since every assault situation is different, there is no one formula for successful resistance and escape. Put your own needs first. Refuse to sacrifice your safety for fear of being rude.