

## 41. Violent or Threatening Situations

### **Definition:**

Any intentional act causing harm or injury to an individual or damage to property, or the communication of intent to carry out such an act.

### **Policy:**

- (a) Individuals who are known to become violent or threatening will have a documented risk management plan that identifies the specific risk factors and strategies for mitigating these risks. For more information, please refer to Policy #23: Risk Management.
- (b) Personnel who provide support to individuals who are known to become violent or threatening will be informed of the risks and trained in techniques to manage these behaviours and minimize risk to themselves and others. For more information, please refer to Policy #27: Behaviour Support and Safety Planning.
- (c) The Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that personnel are informed of any known risks and fully trained in any behavioural support and safety techniques prior to working with the individual(s).

### **Emergency drills:**

A mock drill of the procedure for dealing with violent or threatening situations will be conducted at least once a year, and documented on the Emergency Drills Record. See Policy #34: Emergency Preparedness.

### **Procedure for dealing with a violent or threatening situation:**

- (a) If someone engages in an abusive or threatening verbal interaction with you, or makes an abusive or threatening phone call to you:
  - (i) Interrupt the conversation and firmly but politely advise the person that you will terminate the conversation unless he or she IMMEDIATELY STOPS the abusive language.
  - (ii) If the abuse persists, terminate the conversation. You may ask the person to leave the premises, or you may leave yourself if you feel threatened.
  - (iii) Complete a Critical Incident Report. Write detailed notes on everything said and your observations about the threat: actual words, voice characteristics, etc.
  - (iv) If an abusive message or threat is left on voice mail, save the message and inform the supervisor.
  - (v) The supervisor will report the incident to the Executive Director. If the threat is deemed to be of a serious nature by the Executive Director, then a report will be made to the police / RCMP with possible charges being laid.

- (vi) If safe to do so, the supervisor will follow up with the person to address the concerns regarding the incident.
- (b) If a person acts violently toward you, or threatens to act violently toward you:
  - (i) If the individual has an approved behavior support plan or safety plan, staff should follow the established guidelines for dealing with the situation.
  - (ii) Your personal safety is paramount. Do not engage in a confrontation or attempt to overpower the person. Stay calm, maintain a non-threatening posture and tone of voice. If possible, de-escalate the situation by acknowledging the person's feelings and suggesting alternative behaviors (eg. suggest the person sit down, have a glass of water, take a break).
  - (iii) If you are unsure how to respond, remove yourself from the situation and call for help (call a co-worker, or phone the emergency cell). Maintain visual contact with the individual to ensure his or her safety. If immediate help is not available, and if the individual or yourself or others are at risk, call 911.
  - (iv) Once the situation is stabilized, complete a Critical Incident Report.
  - (v) The supervisor will report any unexpected acts of violence to the Executive Director.
  - (vi) Any act of violence or threat of violence committed by an employee against another employee or an individual in Spectrum's services will be considered grounds for immediate dismissal. The police / RCMP may be notified and charges may be laid.
  - (vii) Any act of violence or threat of violence committed by an individual in Spectrum's services against another individual or against an employee will be followed up by the supervisor and steps will be taken to minimize the likelihood of future incidents.

Spectrum's in-house Mandt trainer and/or HR will meet with the employee to debrief any acts of violence or threats of violence that they witnessed or were affected by. The debrief will be summarized in writing and will identify actions to mitigate future risks and ensure the employee's safety going forward.

- (c) Dealing with the police:

If the police are called to attend the scene of a violent or threatening situation involving an individual in Spectrum's services, it is important that staff remain calm and follow the directions of the police.

- (i) Staff will continue to provide practical and emotional support to the individual as long as it is safe to do so. This may include assisting with communication (eg. answering factual questions about what occurred), but should not involve making inferences or judgments about the person's behavior or advocating for or against a specific course of action. If staff are unsure how to respond, they should call the supervisor or the emergency cell (604) 644-1474.
- (ii) Staff are not permitted to accept responsibility on behalf of the Society for enforcing any restrictions on a person's movements or individual rights that the police may suggest. Spectrum's services are voluntary, meaning that individuals are free to accept or refuse our support. Staff should refer the police to the supervisor for further information or consultation.
- (iii) In the case of individuals with court ordered restrictions on their movements or individual rights, staff's role is to support the person to understand and uphold the conditions of the court order, but again, staff are not responsible for enforcing such orders. Staff do not have the authority to restrict an individual's movements or individual rights unless this is part of an approved behavior support plan or safety plan, or in an emergency if the individual or another person's safety is at risk. See Policy #27: Behaviour Support and Safety Planning.
- (iv) Any incident involving the police will be documented on a Critical Incident Report.
- (v) One person (generally the supervisor or coordinator) will be the fixed point of contact for police. All subsequent inquiries regarding the incident should be referred to this person.