Work-related Violence Policy

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Version 1

Approval

Policy owner	Executive Director, People, Culture & Safety		
Approved by	Executive Leadership Team State Council		
Date approved	ELT 14/11/2024 State Council 29/11/2024	Review date	29/11/2027

Purpose

1. The Society of St Vincent de Paul (NSW) and the company titled the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW (together the Society) acknowledge that exposure to work-related violence is a risk that our members, volunteers and employees face when carrying out the work of the Society.

2. The policy outlines our commitment to eliminate work-related violence where possible and minimise the risk and impact of work-related violence when it does occur. It also outlines our general approach to preventing and responding to aggression and violent behaviour.

Scope

3. This policy applies to work-related aggression and violence:

   - experienced by members, volunteers, employees and contractors

   - at all sites managed by the Society

   - associated with all services and Society activities, including those undertaken off site

   - delivered directly by a person or via electronic communication including social media.

4. This policy does not include investigation and discipline procedures for managing situations where Society personnel are alleged to be responsible for aggressive or violent behaviour towards others in the workplace. *Refer to Counselling and Disciplinary Policy*

Related policies and procedures

5. This policy is supported by the Health and Safety Policy, our Code of Conduct and the Respectful Workplace Policy, and a range of safety related procedures available via the Safety Hub and the Member and Volunteer Portal.

6. Other related policies and procedures include:

   - Counselling and Disciplinary Policy

   - Feedback and Complaints Policy

   - Incident Response Policy

   - Open Disclosure Policy

   - Person-Centered Service Delivery Policy

   - Privacy Policy

   - Records Management Policy

   - Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

   - Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

   - Trauma Informed Practice Policy

Policy principles

7. The Society acknowledges the significant impact that work-related violence can have on individuals and is committed to building a culture and work environment that enables positive safety outcomes for all Society personnel, the people we assist, and others impacted by our work.

8. The prevention of work-related violence is our priority. We believe that some forms of aggression and work-related violence can be prevented by applying a person-centered and trauma informed approach to our service delivery.

9. We are committed to applying a risk-based approach and taking action to eliminate work-related violence where reasonably practicable and minimising the risk and impact of work-related violence when it does occur. This includes consulting with workers to:

   - identify the causes of aggression and work-related violence

   - assess the risk of aggression or violence in specific circumstances

   - implement controls measures to eliminate or minimise the risk

   - regularly review control measures to confirm they are in place and effective

   - establish protocols for the prevention and response to work-related violence

   - provide training and information to workers about control measures and related protocols.

Roles and responsibilities

10. Executive Directors and Directors must:

    - ensure that work-related violence hazards are identified

    - ensure that risks are assessed, and appropriate controls implemented

    - ensure Personnel have access to appropriate training

    - ensure incidents of work-related violence are internally reported and investigated

    - encourage and support impacted Society personnel to report work-related violence incidents to the NSW Police where appropriate

    - support investigation processes and allocated resources to implement corrective action

    - liaise with the Director, Safety and Emergency Management as required.

11. Managers and Supervisors must:

    - identify work-related violence hazards

    - assess the risk associated with work-related violence and implement control measures in consultation with affected Society personnel

- establish protocols for prevention and response to work-related violence, including arrangement for after-hours operations

- ensure that established protocols for the prevention and response to work-related aggression and violence are followed with their area of responsibility

- ensure incidents are reported using the Integrated Risk Management System

- investigate incidents involving work related violence and take action to reduce risk

- encourage and support impacted Society personnel to report work-related violence incidents to the NSW Police where appropriate.

12. The Director, Safety and Emergency Management must:

- support Executive Directors and Directors to establish processes to identify, understand and assess the risk of work-related violence

- work with Executive Directors and Directors to establish consistent and effective control measures for common work-related violence risks

- provide recommendations in relation to control measures in specific situations

- provide guidance on incident investigation processes

- ensure notifiable incidents are reported to SafeWork NSW.

13. Conference Presidents must:

- notify the Regional Director of all incidents of work-related violence

- check appropriate immediate actions have been taken

- support people impacted by or involved in the incident

- ensure incidents are reported using the Integrated Risk Management System.

14. Society Personnel must:

- take reasonable care of their own health and safety and those around them

- participate in the identification, assessment and determination of control measures for aggression and work-related violence

- follow established protocols for the prevention and response to work-related violence

- report incidents of aggression and work-related violence

- follow behavioral support and management plans for individual people we assist, where relevant.

- have access to, and complete, relevant & appropriate training.

15. Further information about our approach to preventing and responding to work-place violence, including the response to incidents is contained in Appendix 2 – Procedures.

Review

16. This policy will be reviewed every three years.

Further assistance

17. The Director, Safety and Emergency Management and the Senior Safety Partner, Security and Emergency Management can provide advice about the communication and implementation of the policy.

References

18. Legislation relevant to this policy include:

- Work Health & Safety Act 2011 (NSW)

- Work Health & Safety Regulation 2017 (NSW)

- Aged Care Act 1997 (Commonwealth)

- Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)

- Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 (NSW)

- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013

- Other documents relevant to this policy include:

- SafeWork NSW, Violence in the Workplace Guide

- SafeWork NSW Code of Practice, Managing Psychosocial Hazards at work (2021)

- Safe Work Australia Model Code of Practice, Managing Psychosocial Hazards at work (2022)

- SafeWork NSW, Managing risk of workplace violence in the disability sector.

Approval and amendment history

Version	Approval authority	Date	Amendment summary
Doc PO2024-066 *Version 1*	ELT State Council	14/11/2024 29/11/2024	Previous Policy was 7 years out of date. This document reflects relevant changes in legislation and regulatory environment and internal structural changes and therefore, ownership of the policy itself.

Appendix 1: Definitions

Person we assist	People receiving Society services, whether those services are financial or non-financial, and whether those services are delivered in the person's home, a formal setting or elsewhere.
Significant work-related violence incidents	Work-related violence resulting in medical treatment or the potential for serious injury and/or trauma.
Society Personnel	Any person (or group of people) engaged by the Society to assist in its works. This includes members, volunteers, employees, contractors, consultants, office holders and Directors. The Society considers all Society Personnel as workers of the Society.
Work-related violence	Work-related violence and aggression involved incidents where a person is abused, threatened, or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work. This definition covers a broad range of actions and behaviours that can create a risk to the health and safety of employees. Examples of work-related violence include: • biting, spitting, scratching, hitting, kicking • pushing, shoving, tripping, grabbing • throwing objects • verbal threats or abuse • threatening someone with an object or weapon • armed robbery • sexual harassment and assault • stalking • online harassment, threats, or abuse assault with a weapon.
Worker	Any person who carries out work for the Society, including: an employee, member, volunteer, contractor, subcontractor, self-employed person, outworker, apprentice or trainee, work experience student, and employee of a labour hire company placed with a 'host employer'.

Appendix 2: Procedures

Identifying hazards and assessing risk

19. The Society recognises that the following factors can increase the risk of Society personnel being exposed to aggression or work-related violence:

    - working with people we assist and retail customers who are distressed, confused, angry, afraid or unwell, which can result from a range of complex issues including mental health, cognitive disability, intoxication, addiction, trauma and perceived inequity.

    - working alone or in isolation

    - working offsite or at remote locations

    - working at a person's home where there is risk of interaction with people other than the person we assist (e.g. domestic partners, family member, friends).

20. The likelihood and consequence of aggression and work-related violence varies dependent on the context of the work including the work environment, the type of service being provided, and the people involved. The risk of aggression and work-related violence needs to be assessed separately for specific types of work.

Reasonably practicable controls

21. Where possible consistent control measures will be applied to Society activities. However, different risk controls may be applicable in specific settings.

22. Practical risk controls include the provision of a safe working environment, the establishment of safe systems of work, a good understanding of the people we assist and our retail customers and the training and supervision of Society personnel.

23. The Society recognises the following factors can contribute to a safe work environment:

    - access control within facilities (e.g. separation of service areas from Society personnel)

    - design and layout to maximise visibility and prevent entrapment

    - security measures including security alarms, closed circuit television (CCTV), duress alarm systems and external lighting.

    - maintenance and testing of communication and security systems

    - the provision of independent living in accommodation in (e.g. single rooms with individual bathrooms)

    - the use of physical barriers and refuge areas in higher risk environments.

24. The controls measures identified in Clause 23 above should be implemented with consideration for the experience of the people we assist. Service areas should be warm and inviting and avoid potentially triggering trauma.

25. The Society will put in place safe work systems, including:

- maintaining confidentiality and professional boundaries

- providing consistent support services and retail pricing to avoid anger associated with perceived inequity

- clearly communicating to the people we assist and retail customers that any form of violence or aggression will not be tolerated (e.g. Charter of Rights and Responsibilities for People We Assist, signage in retail stores)

- risk assessment of individuals to identify potential for aggression and violence prior to home visitation, intake to accommodation services and participation in programs

- development of individualised behaviour support and management plans for people we assist with a history of aggression or violence (developed in consultation with appropriately qualified people)

- arranging to see people we assist by appointment, where possible

- adjusting the location of meetings or activities to lower risk/controlled environments (e.g. a Society office or site) when there is an increased risk of violence

- working in teams or pairs (buddy system) where there is an increased risk of violence. *Note: All visitation by Members must be conducted in pairs as per The Rule.*

- use of monitored duress technology and effective communication systems (e.g. mobile phone, radio) with defined response procedures when working alone or in remote locations

- minimising the handling of cash and other valuables

- minimise people we assist, customer and public access to potentially dangerous items (e.g. knives in kitchens and retail stores)

- providing Society Personnel with regular breaks or alternate tasks in a separate secured space

- as a last resort, temporarily excluding or exiting individuals who are repeatedly aggressive or violent from access to our services and facilities (e.g. issue a Banning Notice). Whenever possible, referring the excluded or exited individual to alternate services that are more appropriate to their specific needs.

26. The Society will provide training to relevant personnel in how to prevent and respond to work-related violence. This may include:

- site specific inductions covering relevant control measures and protocols (e.g. the operation and testing of duress alarms)

- training in trauma informed and person-centered approaches aimed at preventing aggression and violence, and/or identifying the early indicators of potential escalation

- familiarisation of relevant personnel with the behaviour support and management plans for individuals we assist who have a history of aggression and violence

- training in responding to conflict and challenging behaviors

- instruction in how to report incidents and access available support

- training for managers and supervisors in responding to work-related violence incidents including debriefing processes, support for Society personnel and ongoing threat assessment.

Responding to incidents

Society Personnel

27. If any person is in immediate danger, Society personnel must call Triple Zero (000) and request Police attendance

28. If safe to do so, certain actions can be taken at the time of an incident, including:

- seeking support from other workers

- activating duress alarms

- using calm verbal and non-verbal communication, de-escalation and distraction techniques

- asking the aggressor to leave the premises or disconnecting the aggressor from the phone call

- retreating to a safe location or refuge area.

29. Immediately after an incident, personnel must inform a direct manager or supervisor.

30. Within 24 hours of an incident, personnel must ensure an incident report is submitted through the Integrated Risk Management System (IRMS).

Managers and Supervisors

31. Upon notification of an incident of workplace violence or threat, the managers or supervisors will:

- address immediate safety issues including organising first aid or medical treatment

- encourage and support the impacted personnel, where appropriate, to report the matter to NSW Police and assist in this process.

- provide individual support where required, including referral to the Employee Assistance Program or other counselling

- determine whether the impacted personnel can continue working or if alternative arrangements are required

- ensure active and visible management support including the provision of assistance or extra resourcing to deal with operational pressures that may result from an incident (e.g. impacted personnel not being available to work)

- lead a high level debrief with affected personnel aimed at identifying key learnings

- Where a critical or major violence incident or threat, as defined in the SDVP Incident Management Policy has taken place, contact the Senior Safety Partner, Security and Emergency Management to facilitate the debrief and/or undertake a Threat Assessment as soon as reasonably possible.

Reporting, investigation and corrective action

32. The Society will support its personnel who want to report a criminal act such as physical assault and/or a threat to harm, to NSW Police.

33. In the event of sexual assault, the Society will support its personnel to be linked to any additional services including but not limited to:

    o Sexual Violence Helpline or

    o 1800Respect

34. Incidents involving work-related violence must be reported through the Society's Integrated Risk Management System.

35. Incident reports should include:

    - a description of the incident

    - background information on any events that contributed to the incident

    - detail about people who witnessed or were affected by the incident

    - the immediate response provided (e.g., the need for medical treatment, counselling, repairs to a facility).

36. Incidents involving work-related violence will be managed and escalated in line with the Society's Incident Management Policy. Management will ensure regular monitoring of the effectiveness of these controls.

37. Under work health and safety legislation, notifiable incidents must be reported to SafeWork NSW. A notifiable incident relates to:

    - the death of a person

    - a serious injury or illness of a person

    - a potentially dangerous incident.

38. The Director, Safety and Emergency Management will ensure that notifiable incidents are reported to SafeWork NSW.

39. If a person we assist is involved in a violent incident there may be mandatory reporting requirements relating to aged care and/or NDIS legislation. This reporting will be managed by the relevant Director with support from the Clinical Governance and Quality Team.

40. In some case there will also be contractual reporting obligations that must be met by the relevant Division under the direction of the relevant Director and Executive Director.

41. If a vulnerable adult or child is involved in a violent incident, the reporting requirements of our safeguarding policy will apply.

42. Data and trends will be monitored by the Safety and Emergency Management Team and reported periodically to the Executive Leadership Team and Board.

43. An allegation of work-related violence by Society Personnel will be investigated and managed in accordance with the Counselling and Disciplinary Policy.