

Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members

Role

Legislation under New Brunswick's *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act* is designed to ensure employees work in a safe environment free of hazards and liability. Directors must take all reasonable care to ensure the corporation complies with the legislation, applicable orders and requirements from government authorities.

Violence in the workplace falls under the *OHS Act*, and failure to include health and safety as a key business risk in board decisions can have catastrophic results. Health and safety law places duties on organizations. Employers and directors can be personally liable when these duties are breached. Members of the board have both a collective and individual responsibility for health and safety.

Board members should consider the following to assess if the care level in their organization is reasonable:

- The gravity and likelihood harm could result.
- The available alternatives to minimize a possible breach and the potential harm that could result.

The board should set the direction for effective health and safety management. Board members need to establish a health and safety policy that is much more than a document. It should be an integral part of your organization's culture, its values and performance standards.

Responsibilities

- Review health and safety performance at least once a year
 - Examine whether the health and safety policy reflects the organization's current priorities , plans and targets
 - Examine whether risk management and other health and safety systems have been effectively reported to the board
 - Consider immediate reviews after major shortcomings or incidents
 - Include health and safety and well-being performance in annual report
- Understand the key issues
- Put health and safety regularly on board meeting agendas . Information should include:
 - Performance data, injury reports,work-related absenteeism
 - Updates on targets to improve health and safety and the performance benchmark against others in your sector
- Make board decisions with the organization's health and safety policy in mind.
- Have systems to ensure your organization's risks are assessed and sensible control measures are established and maintained.

Be informed

Violence

It is any incident in which a person is threatened, abused or assaulted, including all forms of physical, verbal, psychological or sexual harassment, bullying, intimidation, threats, robbery or other uninvited disruptive behaviours. Violence can be perpetrated by residents, visitors, workers and individuals who hold no relationship to the nursing home, its residents or the workers. This definition includes violence that arises out of a person's medical condition.

- An international nursing review of workplace violence found that **health-care professionals** are at the **highest risk of being attacked at work**, even when compared to prison guards, police officers, bank personnel or transport workers (Kingma, 2001).
- Nationally, over one-quarter (29%) of nurses who provide direct care reported that they had been physically assaulted by a client in the previous year. Emotional abuse from a client was reported by 44% of nurses (Statistics Canada, 2005 National Survey of the Work and Health of Nurses).
- The **rates in New Brunswick are slightly higher** than the national average, with 30.4% of N.B. nurses reporting being physically assaulted by a client in the past 12 months. Emotional abuse by a patient was reported by 41% of N.B. nurses (Stats Can., 2005 National Survey on the Work and Health of Nurses).
- New Brunswick Nurses Union's (NBNU) recent data suggests nurses in the **long-term care sector experience even higher rates**. In a NBNU poll of 115 nursing home nurses conducted in March 2014, 65% reported they had experienced some form of physical abuse at work in their career and 78% had experienced verbal abuse. (NH telephone town hall, 2015).
- This serious risk to the **safety of nurses is closely linked to patient safety**. Violent experiences among nurses result in higher rates of nurse fatigue, burnout, injury, turnover and absenteeism, which are linked to negative client outcomes (Needleman et al, 2002).

Violence is not part of the job

Every board member in every nursing home has a duty to educate themselves about the level of violence occurring in their respective nursing homes. Ask questions, be informed and support your managers in putting processes in place to safeguard your workers. It starts with knowing the probability and severity in your home and realizing that violence can never be "just part of the job."

Conduct Agreement

I, _____, have read and understand the document above and agree to conduct myself according to these terms.

Signature: _____ Date: _____