

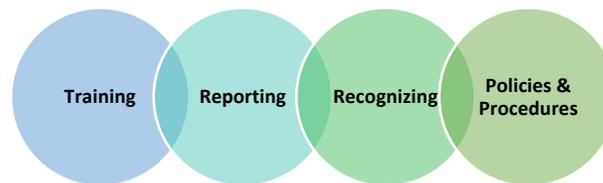
Changing Attitudes to Violence in Healthcare – Continuing Care Safety Association

Violence in the workplace is a topic that has been steadily gaining momentum over the years. Violence in healthcare, specifically, is getting national attention. Though statistical information is often dependent on many variables, evidence suggests that the risk to healthcare workers experiencing violent, aggressive or harassing behaviour is **nine times greater** than any other industry. In fact, in Alberta, WCB statistics show that claims resulting from violence within continuing care have increased by approximately 100% over the past four years. This statistic reflects only those incidents that get reported. But there can often exist a real disconnect between how caregivers view acts of violence or harassment on the job than workers in other industries which could be a significant factor in the underreporting of violent incidents. “It’s just how things are” and “she can’t help it, she has dementia” are phrases often heard from care staff in both seniors’ housing and long-term care centres across not only Alberta, but all of Canada. The way we have approached violence in healthcare needs an update.

If we wish to respond effectively to situations which expose care workers to verbal or physical abuse perpetrated by those in their care, the attitude of “it’s just how things are and have always been” needs to change. Incidents resulting from violence are no different than those resulting from equipment failure or poor body mechanics in that they all stem from a root cause. Often, the root cause of violence in continuing care is a result of responsive behaviours from residents with dementia. According to the Alzheimer’s Society of Canada, responsive behaviour is a term, preferred by persons with dementia, representing how their actions, words and gestures are a response, often intentional, that express something important about their personal, social or physical environment.¹ Once we recognize the cause of violent incidents, we can start to mitigate the risks.

¹ Learn more about responsive behaviours at [Alzheimer’s Society Canada](#)

Employers and workers alike must treat violence as a hazard and a risk resulting from a cause, for which there is an obligation to create safe work environments and protocols. Workplace hazards need to be managed through appropriate measures and understanding of best practices. Recognizing, reporting, developing procedures and policies and training for incidents of workplace violence are necessary to understanding and eliminating risk of violent incidents.²



In Alberta, the recent passing of Bill 30 brings about considerable changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, including how employers deal with violence and harassment in the workplace. Bill 30 explicitly states that employers will be responsible for the prevention of violence and harassment, will provide competent supervisors who are also responsible for preventing violence and harassment and will create a safety program where staff are not subjected to, or perpetrating violence or harassment.³

Across Canada, health care sectors, provincial governments and safety associations have been working together to tackle the complexity of workplace violence. The Continuing Care Safety Association (CCSA) is committed to sharing information, tools and resources to assist the continuing care sector in responding to the growing incidence of workplace violence and continue to foster safe work environments where harassment and violence are no longer considered part of the job for care workers.

² See the stats from [WorkSafeBC](#)

³ Learn more about the changes to Alberta's [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#).

About the Continuing Care Safety Association (CCSA)



The Continuing Care Safety Association (CCSA) is the safety association for the Long Term Care (LTC) and Seniors' Supportive Living (SSL) operators within the Continuing Care sector of Alberta. Taking an unbiased approach, we are able to give the industry and the public facts, data and safety alerts regarding employee health and safety. By assisting members in implementing health and safety programs and providing safety training, our mission is to lower incidents of workplace injury.



Works Cited

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