

FACT SHEET

Sunday, 28 May 2023 | Industrial | FSMA21108.2

Occupational violence

Occupational violence can have significant short and long-term impacts on a person's psychological and physical health. It can harm both the person to whom it is directed and witnesses.

What is occupational violence?

Occupational violence is any action, incident or behaviour that departs from reasonable conduct in which a person is threatened, harmed, or injured by another person in the course of, or as a direct result of, their work.

Examples of occupational violence are:

- physical or verbal abuse;
- intimidating and threatening behaviour, including bullying;
- spitting, biting, hitting, kicking or punching;
- malicious damage to an individual's property;
- gendered violence;
- online/virtual harassment.

Occupational violence in schools can be from an external source (general public phone calls or threats), service related (parents/guardians, contractors etc), or internal (co-workers, students etc).

Duty of care

Employers have a duty of care to all employees to provide and maintain a working environment that is without risk to physical and psychological health and safety, and to monitor the health of workers and the conditions of the workplace for the purpose of preventing illness or injury.

Reporting

Occupational violence is a work health and safety matter and must be reported. While it is never planned for, members should ensure that, when injury does occur, both the medical and industrial circumstances that arise from these matters are dealt with properly, and as soon as practically possible after the event.

KEY POINTS

- Employers have a duty of care to employees to provide a safe working environment.
- Occupational violence can have significant short and long-term impacts on a person.

ACTION

- Report violence as a WHS issues and follow your school's policy and procedures to report any occupational violence incidences to senior staff.
- Seek medical assistance.
- If appropriate report the incident to the police.

CONTACT OUR UNION FOR SUPPORT

Email: Industrial@ieugnt.org.au

Freecall: 1800 177 937

Phone: (07) 3839 7020

Online: www.ieugnt.org.au

Disclaimer: This document is issued for general guidance only and does not constitute professional advice.

Do not rely solely on this document. All financial IEUA-QNT members can contact our union for advice about their personal circumstances. We cannot accept responsibility for the consequences should any person act in reliance on this document without obtaining appropriate advice from our union.

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Members should follow their school's procedures for reporting occupational violence, including reporting it as a WHS incident. This should include reporting to their principal, in writing, the incident that occurred. They should also seek medical advice as soon as possible after the event.

If an assault/incident has occurred, reports may be made directly to the police. Members have the right to report an assault to the police. Please contact the IEU Industrial team for further advice.

The correct reporting, recording, and investigation of occupational violence incidents provides the employer with valuable information and a greater capacity to monitor hazard trends. Members should not be discouraged from reporting occupational violence.

Work, Health and Safety (WHS)

Under WHS laws, organisations must manage the physical and psychological health and safety risks of occupational violence and aggression, as they would any workplace hazard; by adopting measures to eliminate or minimise the risk of violence and aggression as much as reasonably possible. This includes violence and aggression between workers and other people at the workplace, (eg. parents and students).

WHS legislation now explicitly covers the psychological effects of occupational violence and aggression, including the Qld *Managing the risk of psychosocial hazards at work* Code of Practice. For further information please refer to Fact Sheet FSMA 23123

WorkCover

- For information on lodging Physical Injury Claims for Workers' Compensation in Queensland please refer to Fact Sheet FSMA19041.
- For information on lodging Stress Related Claims for Workers' Compensation in Queensland, please refer to Fact Sheet FSMA19036.

What to do if occupational violence is not being addressed in your workplace?

If a member has lodged an incident through the appropriate reporting methods with their employer, and has not received a follow up, they should raise this in the first instance with their principal, their elected Health and Safety Representative and/or their school-based workplace health and safety committee. If members need further assistance, please contact the IEU Industrial Team on (07) 3839 7020.

Collective action

To prevent further instances of occupational violence, and to ensure risk is minimised, we encourage School Chapters to discuss these issues. In collaboration with their Organiser, Chapters can determine how to raise evidence of occupational violence through your School Consultative Committee, WHS Committee and/or through the Chapter. This can occur through member surveys and resolutions, and/or by raising matters directly with the leadership of the school.

Source

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/workplace-violence-and-aggression-advice-workers>

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