
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION
Sectoral Activities Programme

**Code of practice on workplace violence
in services sectors and measures to
combat this phenomenon**

**Meeting of Experts to Develop a Code of Practice
on Violence and Stress at Work in Services:
A Threat to Productivity and Decent Work
(8-15 October 2003)**

Geneva



Preface

The Governing Body of the ILO agreed at its 279th Session in November 2000 that a meeting of experts should be held in 2003 to develop a code of practice on violence and stress in services sectors. At the 284th Session of the Governing Body, in June 2002, it was agreed that the Meeting of Experts should be held from 8 to 15 October 2003, and that the Meeting would have the following composition: 12 experts nominated by Governments (Algeria, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, United Kingdom and United States), 12 experts nominated after consultations with the Employers' group of the Governing Body and 12 experts nominated after consultations with the Workers' group of the Governing Body. It was also decided that the purpose of the Meeting should be: to consider and review a draft and to adopt a code of practice on violence and stress at work in services sectors: A threat to productivity and decent work. A draft text was developed by the ILO for circulation to member States for comments in May 2003, before the Meeting of Experts, and those comments were collated and summarized for the experts in September 2003.

The present code of practice on workplace violence in services sectors and measures to combat this phenomenon was drawn up by a Meeting of Experts held in Geneva from 8 to 15 October 2003. In accordance with the aforementioned decision of June 2002, the Meeting was composed of 12 experts nominated by Governments, 12 experts nominated by the Employers and 12 experts nominated by the Workers.¹ On the authorization of the Governing Body, all other ILO member States were invited as observers, and the following countries attended: Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and Zimbabwe.²

This code is not a legally binding instrument and is not intended to replace national laws and regulations. The practical recommendations of this publication have been designed to provide guidance to ILO constituents and all those responsible for addressing workplace violence in services sectors. It is based on an analysis of the extent, nature and causes of workplace violence in public and private services. It identifies the roles and responsibilities of governments, employers and workers. The code promotes a proactive approach to prevention, based on occupational safety and health management systems.

It is intended that the provisions of the code will assist in reducing or eliminating violence at workplaces in services sectors.

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Madame Habiba ZAHY, Membre du bureau exécutif de la CDT, Confédération démocratique du Travail, Casablanca.

² In addition to the 36 experts, Government observers from eight member States, as well as 17 representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations attended.

Government observers – Representatives of member States:

Ireland – Ms. Patricia MURRAY, Psychologist/Inspector, Health & Safety Authority, Dublin.

Kuwait – Mr. Jamal M.-F. AL-DOUSARI, Director of Legal Department, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, Kuwait.

Luxembourg – M. Henri THEISEN, Attaché de direction, Inspection du travail et des mines, Luxembourg.

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Poland – Ms. Dorota ZOLNIERCZYK-ZREDA, Psychology Department, National Research Institute, Central Institute for Labour Protection, Warsaw.

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Meeting of Experts to Develop a Code of Practice on Violence and Stress at Work in Services: A Threat to Productivity and Decent Work

(8-15 October 2003)

Preamble

This code focuses on the prevention of workplace violence and its direct adverse consequences.

There are some consequences of workplace violence, which may include stress, although stress is a concept which, for some, is not clearly definable. For some parties, consideration of the prevention and aftermath of workplace violence is a human resources management issue, for others it is a safety and health issue. The Meeting has considered the complexity of the issues and recommends the adoption of a code of practice on workplace violence in services sectors and measures to combat this phenomenon.

The primary emphasis for governments, employers, workers and their representatives in dealing with these challenges is to establish and pursue a proactive approach taking into consideration the occupational safety and health management systems approach. Such systems seek to prevent problems through policy, organizing, planning, implementation, monitoring and review, with the aim of enhancing the work environment and organizational efficiency.

1. General provisions

1.1. Purpose and use of the code of practice

1.1.1. Purpose

The objective of this code of practice (hereinafter referred to as “the code”) is to provide general guidance in addressing the problem of workplace violence in services sectors. The code is intended to serve as a basic reference tool for stimulating the development of similar instruments at the regional, national, sectoral, enterprise, organization and workplace levels, specifically targeted at and adapted to different cultures, situations and needs.

The code covers such key areas of action on workplace violence as:

- policy;
- hazard identification;
- risk assessment;
- prevention and control;
- training;
- management and mitigation of the impact;
- care and support of workers affected;
- monitoring and evaluation.

1.1.2. Use

This code should be used to:

- develop practical responses at the workplace, enterprise, organization, sectoral, national, regional and international levels;
- promote processes of dialogue, consultation, negotiation and all forms of cooperation among governments, employers, workers and their representatives, as well as other concerned stakeholders as appropriate;
- give guidance in developing national laws, policies and programmes of action; in workplace, enterprise, organization and sectoral agreements; and in workplace policies and plans of action.

1.2. Scope

This code applies to all areas of economic activity in the public and private services sectors.

1.3. Definitions

For the purposes of this code the following definitions are used:

1.3.1. Workplace violence

Any action, incident or behaviour that departs from reasonable conduct in which a person is assaulted, threatened, harmed, injured in the course of, or as a direct result¹ of, his or her work.

- Internal workplace violence is that which takes place between workers, including managers and supervisors.
- External workplace violence is that which takes place between workers (and managers and supervisors) and any other person present at the workplace.

1.3.2. Services sectors

For the purposes of this code, the services sectors include: commerce; education; financial and professional services; health services; hotels, catering and tourism; media and entertainment industries; postal and telecommunications services; public service; transport; and utilities: primary and secondary industries are not included.

1.3.3. Other relevant defined terms

Client/customer

For the purpose of this code, the terms *client* and *customer* refer to an individual who receives a personalized service,² as opposed to the general public.

Competent authority

A minister, government department, or other public authority having the power to issue regulations, orders or other instructions having the force of law.

Employer

Any physical or legal person who employs one or more workers.

Perpetrator

Any person who engages in workplace violence.

Social dialogue

All types of negotiation, consultation or exchange of information between representatives of governments, employers and workers on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.

¹ The reference to “direct result” is understood to mean that there is a clear link with work, and that the action, incident or behaviour occurred within a reasonable period afterwards.

² For example, patients, passengers, users or audiences.

Victim

Any worker or employer who is the object of workplace violence.

Worker

Any person who performs work, either regularly or temporarily, for an employer.

Workers' representative

A person who is recognized as such by national law or practice, in accordance with the Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135).

Workplace

All places where workers need to be or to go by reason of their work and which are under the direct or indirect control of the employer.

1.4. Guiding principles

- A healthy and safe work environment, in accordance with the provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), facilitates optimal physical and mental health in relation to work, and can help to prevent workplace violence.
- Social dialogue between employers, workers and their representatives, and with government³ where appropriate, is a key element in the successful implementation of anti-violence policies and programmes. Such dialogue is enshrined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up.
- Policy or action against workplace violence should also be directed at promoting decent work and mutual respect, and combating discrimination at the workplace, in accordance with the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).
- Promoting gender equality could help to reduce workplace violence.

³ In this context, government includes the competent authority as defined in this code.

2. Policy against workplace violence

2.1. Policies

Governments, employers, workers and their representatives should, in so far as reasonably practicable, promote workplace practices that help to eliminate workplace violence. In fulfilling these objectives, cooperation between governments, employers, workers and their representatives is essential in developing and implementing appropriate policies and procedures to minimize the risk of workplace violence.

2.2. Policy values

Priority should be given to the development of a constructive workplace culture based on decent work, work ethics, safety, mutual respect, tolerance, equal opportunity, cooperation and quality of service. This should include:

- clear objectives as to the key role of human resources in achieving a quality service;
- an emphasis on the organization and all its people sharing common objectives;
- commitment to preventing workplace violence.

A clear policy statement of intent should be issued and communicated by the top management, recognizing the importance of efforts to eliminate workplace violence.

2.3. Core issues

The policy should address at least the following:

- the definition of workplace violence;
- a statement that no workplace violence would be tolerated, whether from within the workforce or from clients and customers;
- an engagement in support of any action targeted at creating an environment free from workplace violence and its direct adverse consequences;
- the provision of a fair complaints system that is free from retaliation and that protects against abusive or frivolous complaints;
- information, education, training and any other relevant programmes;
- measures to prevent, control and, as appropriate, eliminate workplace violence;
- measures relating to intervention and management of violent incidents;
- a commitment to effective communication of the policy;
- confidentiality.

2.4. Allocation of policy responsibilities

The policy should in particular include:

- a statement that supervisors and managers have a duty to implement the policy and to demonstrate leadership by example;
- an engagement to provide managers with the ability and the means necessary to carry out the policy at all levels within the organization;
- an assignment of responsibility to individuals or teams with appropriate training and skills for the implementation of the policy;
- an engagement that workers refrain from any acts of workplace violence; and
- a statement that workers support and encourage employers in creating and implementing personnel policies and practices that discourage workplace violence.

The policy should be communicated to all those concerned and should be accompanied by initiatives to raise awareness among employers, workers, the general public, clients and customers.

2.5. Social dialogue

The social partners should engage in social dialogue on violence in services sectors at various levels (national, sectoral, enterprise, workplace), in various forms (negotiation, consultation, exchanges of information) and ways (formal, informal), in accordance with national needs and labour relations systems.

Social dialogue on workplace violence should be developed as an ongoing process aimed at the protection of safety and health at the workplace and the improvement of services. The social partners should include workplace violence and its direct adverse consequences among the social and labour issues covered within the scope of social dialogue in services sectors. The social partners should together monitor and evaluate workplace violence.

3. Organizing

3.1. Roles and responsibilities

3.1.1. Governments

Governments should assume leadership in the development and application of preventive interventions, including:

- *Research.* In order to achieve coherence between countries, to mobilize the social partners, and to facilitate prevention, the competent authorities should encourage evidence-based policy development. Governments should fund and support research studies, as well as identifying and publicizing case studies of best practice. Data should be collected and be capable of being disaggregated in a manner that allows trends relating to particular sectors or groups of workers to be determined.
- *Guidelines.* Governments should offer guidelines to assist employers and workers in the implementation of preventive interventions at the national and sectoral levels. Governments should also ensure that prevention strategies and programmes apply to all workers in services sectors. Governments should also promote and implement measures in civil society to achieve a reduction in workplace violence.
- *Legislation.* In order to move towards a preventive orientation, governments, in consultation with relevant social partners might review, where appropriate, safety and health or labour legislation.
- *Financial resources.* Governments, where possible and in consultation with the social partners, should seek to mobilize government funding for the implementation of effective preventive interventions.
- *Regional and international collaboration.* Governments should promote and support collaboration at regional and international levels, and through intergovernmental agencies, to enlist international assistance where appropriate in support of national preventive programmes.

Governments should take measures to identify groups of workers who are especially vulnerable to workplace violence, adopt strategies to overcome the factors that make them vulnerable, and examine the sectoral aspects of this vulnerability.

3.1.2. Employers

3.1.2.1. Policies and procedures

Employers and their representatives should in so far as reasonably practicable promote workplace practices that help to eliminate workplace violence. In fulfilling these objectives, employers should consult with workers and their representatives to develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures to eliminate or minimize the risk of workplace violence. These policies and procedures should include:

- *Risk reduction and management.* Employers should ensure that appropriate risk assessment is conducted at their workplaces. Employers, workers and their representatives should also work together to develop appropriate strategies to assess

risks. Employers, in consultation with workers and their representatives, should take measures to ensure that the additional risks attached to working on high-risk tasks, in particular circumstances, or at specific times of the day or night, are mitigated by appropriate preventive interventions.

- *National, sectoral and workplace/enterprise agreements.* Employers should endeavour to include provisions on the prevention of workplace violence in national, sectoral, workplace and enterprise agreements.
- *Personnel policies.* Employers should adopt policies and practices to promote mutual respect and dignity at work.
- *Grievance and disciplinary procedures.* Employers should have procedures that can be used by workers and their representatives for grievances in relation to workplace violence. Allegations of workplace violence should, as far as possible, be kept confidential until such time as investigations have been completed.

3.1.2.2. Information and training

Employers, in consultation with workers and their representatives, should initiate and support programmes at their workplaces to inform, educate and train workers about the prevention of workplace violence, about the enterprise's policy and strategies in place, and about support for workers if workplace violence arises.

3.1.3. Workers

Workers and their representatives should take all reasonable care to prevent, reduce and eliminate the risks associated with workplace violence. In fulfilling this objective, they should:

- Cooperate with employers in occupational safety and health committees in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981 (No. 164).
- Cooperate with employers to develop appropriate risk assessment strategies and prevention policies. These policies and strategies should recognize the right of workers and their representatives to initiate grievance procedures in the case of workplace violence.
- Work with employers in developing and implementing workplace violence prevention policies.
- Endeavour to include provisions on the prevention and control of workplace violence in national, sectoral and workplace/enterprise agreements.
- Provide information on workplace violence prevention, including regularly updated information on workers' rights through appropriate structures.
- Cooperate with employers in the development of training courses for all workers on preventing workplace violence.
- Ensure that factors that increase the risk of workplace violence in particular workplaces or when carrying out specific activities are addressed by workers and their health and safety representatives in consultation with employers.

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- Report acts of workplace violence.

3.1.4. General public, customers and clients

Customers, clients and the general public are key stakeholders in the prevention of workplace violence in services sectors. Representatives of the major public, customer and client groups should be included, where appropriate, in the development of public policies and strategies to prevent workplace violence.

3.2. Competence, information and training

3.2.1. Training for workers

Training to address workplace violence in services sectors should be based on a set of policies and provided on a continuous or periodical basis, depending on specific needs. It should be provided, as appropriate, by the employer alone, or by the employer in cooperation with workers and their representatives, to all workers and their representatives, supervisors and managers. Employers should initiate and support programmes at their workplaces to inform, educate and train workers about the prevention of workplace violence, about the enterprise's policy and strategies in place, and about support for workers if violence arises.

Training to address workplace violence in services sectors could include:

- improving the ability to identify potentially violent situations;
- improving the capacity of event appraisal, active coping and problem-solving;
- instilling interpersonal and communication skills that could prevent and defuse a potentially violent situation;
- enhancing positive attitudes towards creating a supportive environment;
- assertiveness training, as required, according to risk assessment;
- self-defence training, as required, according to risk assessment.

Guidelines for specific sectors and occupations should further identify the special training needs and skills required for preventing or coping with workplace violence under particular circumstances.

3.2.2. Training for supervisors and managers

In addition to participating in the information and training programmes that are directed at all workers, supervisory and managerial personnel should receive appropriate training to enable them to:

- explain and respond to questions about the organization's policy regarding violence;
- identify changes in staff performance and behaviour that may indicate a risk of workplace violence;

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- assess the working environment and identify working methods or conditions that could be changed or improved to prevent, reduce and eliminate workplace violence;
 - support recovering workers, provide advice and help them with administrative procedures;
 - ensure that any information on workers exposed to or suffering because of workplace violence is kept confidential, in accordance with national laws and regulations;
 - manage staff and teams and create a work environment based on mutual respect.

3.2.3. Information

The competent authorities and employers, in collaboration with workers' representatives, should, as appropriate, make information on workplace violence available to all workers, supervisors and managers. That should include:

- information on the nature and causes of workplace violence in services sectors;
- information on the extent and areas of concentration of workplace violence in services sectors;
- suggested measures to prevent such problems from occurring and best practices for their reduction and elimination;
- information on gender, multicultural diversity and discrimination to develop sensitivity to such issues, as appropriate;
- information on the laws and regulations covering violence which have general application, as well as those which are specific to a given workplace or service;
- information on the services available to assist victims of workplace violence, including, as appropriate, information concerning assessment and referral, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation programmes.

3.3. Recording and notification at the workplace

According to the size of the organization and the nature of activity, the employer should establish, maintain and communicate workplace violence management system documentation, including:

- a health and safety policy on workplace violence;
- a system of recording patterns of different categories of workplace violence established in an accurate and timely manner. Proper documentation of all acts of workplace violence are important for an organization to learn by its experiences;
- arrangements, procedures and instructions and other internal documents within this framework, clearly written and presented in a way that is understood by those who have to use it;
- reasonable access to records relevant to workplace violence, taking into consideration the need for confidentiality;

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- records that include categories of workers' exposures, results of monitoring and of acts of workplace violence.

3.4. Communication

Communication between management and workers and among workers can be enhanced when:

- communication channels are established on an ongoing basis for sharing information and facilitating the solution of problems related to service delivery;
- special communication channels are established in periods of reform and organizational change;
- feedback procedures are put into operation;
- time is available for dialogue, sharing information and problem-solving.

4. Planning and implementation

4.1. Review

The organization's existing violence management system and relevant arrangements should be reviewed as appropriate. This should cover an informal understanding of the current state of affairs with regard to acts of violence.

4.1.1. Current situation

Employers and workers and their representatives should jointly assess the effects of violence in the workplace. The following indicators, among others, should provide useful information for identifying and assessing the nature and magnitude of the problem at a given workplace:

- national and local surveys on the extent of violence in the community where the service is carried out;
- surveys that have been carried out in similar workplaces/types of services;
- absenteeism;
- sick leave;
- accident rates;
- personnel turnover;
- opinions of supervisors and managers, workers and their representatives, safety personnel, occupational health and social services personnel.

4.1.2. Risk assessment

Risk assessment should be conducted with participation and support from employers and workers. The extent of the risk in particular areas, the circumstances under which it arises, and the risks related to vulnerable groups should be identified. Checklists of areas or aspects that should be considered for violence risk assessment at the workplace may be a useful tool, and should be developed jointly.

In conducting a risk assessment of workplace violence, account should be taken of the following possible signs of workplace tensions:

- physically injuring or assaulting a person, leading to actual harm;
- intense ongoing violent abuse, such as:
 - verbal abuse, including swearing, insults or condescending language;
 - aggressive body language indicating intimidation, contempt or disdain;
 - harassment, including mobbing, bullying, racial and sexual harassment;

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- expression of intent to cause harm, including threatening behaviour, verbal and written threats.

4.1.3. Recording acts of violence at the workplace level

Acts of workplace violence should be recorded as this is important for an organization to learn by its experiences. Employers should review this experience in order to identify patterns and trends, including:

- identifying sources of workplace violence as being internal or external, where possible;
- categories of severity;
- incidence of violence in particular area/task categories;
- perpetrator and victim characteristics;
- forms of violence;
- possible contributing factors, such as delays in service provision;
- situational contexts (home visits, “over-the-counter” services, conditions outside work premises);
- other risk factors such as time of day or night.

4.1.4. Recording at sectoral, national and international levels

At the sectoral, national and international levels, a comprehensive approach involving governments, employers, workers and their representatives is required, to collate and assess data from a range of sources on violence in services sectors, due regard being paid at the national level to issues of confidentiality and privacy, in accordance with national laws and regulations.

- Subsectors and occupations at major risk of violence should be identified in services sectors.
- Standardization of subcategories used in recording procedures, such as “abuse”, “threat” and “assault”, should be pursued.
- Statistics on workplace violence collated by those working in the criminal justice system should be integrated with those collected by the occupational health and safety authorities and harassment data from equality bodies, as well as with human resources data from individual organizations.
- When substantive national data are available, government authorities should chart trends and evaluate the effectiveness of different prevention initiatives.

4.2. Implementation

Arrangements should be made for adequate implementation of a management system dealing with workplace violence and, where appropriate, response to workplace violence.

4.3. Control measures: Strategies for preventing, reducing, managing and coping with violence

4.3.1. *Developing strategies to combat violence at the workplace*

In developing policy and strategies on workplace violence, special consideration should be given to the following:

- workplace violence is detrimental to the functioning of the workplace and the quality of services, and action taken against such problems is an integral part of organizational development and the promotion of decent work;
- analysis of the full range of causes that generates violence will be helpful in defining better prevention strategies;
- preventive measures have proved to be particularly effective and should be given priority whenever possible;
- short-, medium- and long-term objectives and strategies should be identified at the earliest stages so as to organize action towards realistically achievable goals within agreed time frames;
- action should be articulated in a series of fundamental steps that includes workplace violence recognition, risk assessment, intervention, monitoring and evaluation.

4.3.2. *Awareness-raising and cooperation on combating workplace violence*

Governments, employers, workers and their representatives should be actively engaged in giving the reduction of violence in services sectors an appropriate priority, including measures aimed at:

- enhancing recognition of workplace violence as a major threat to health and safety, service efficiency, productivity, equal treatment and decent work;
- disseminating information on workplace violence in services sectors;
- monitoring and examining workplace violence in services sectors and providing opinions, proposals and considerations to government, legislative institutions and the community.

Governments, employers, workers and their representatives should pursue local, regional and international cooperation in the endeavour to reduce workplace violence.

4.4. Organizational preventive measures

The following suggestions can be taken into account concerning communication and work practices.

4.4.1. Communication

Improved communication can reduce the risk of workplace violence. This should take the form of:

- timely and adequate information to the public and clients;
- opportunities given to the client to comment on the quality of service and consideration given to these comments;
- measures to deal with complaints.

4.4.2. Work practices

Preventive measures concerning work practices should include consideration of:

- staff levels;
- service capacity and resources;
- workload;
- scheduling;
- workplace location;
- security of the handling of valuables;
- proximity or contact possibility for isolated workers;
- specific needs of the service and expectations of the general public.

4.5. Improving the work environment

4.5.1. Physical environment

The physical features of a workplace may be factors in defusing workplace violence. Consideration should be given to the following: noise, lighting and temperature levels.

4.5.2. Workplace security issues

To minimize the risk of workplace violence in services sectors, the following should be taken into account:

- the identification of areas at special risk and the level of risk;
- access to and from the workplace, including parking areas and transport facilities;

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- the existence of security services;
 - the elimination of impediments to a clear view at the workplace;
 - the identification of restricted areas;
 - the installation of security systems in dangerous areas, after consultation with workers and their representatives;
 - the banning of weapons except as an inherent requirement of a specific job;
 - restrictions on alcohol and drugs in the workplace;¹
 - access control systems for workers and/or visitors, where appropriate (identification, reception desks, gates, etc.);
 - identity documents for workers, where appropriate;
 - identification of visitors, where appropriate;
 - cooperation among enterprises on collective security.

4.6. Incident preparedness and response

Violence prevention, preparedness and response arrangements should be established and maintained in all organizations. These arrangements should identify the potential for violent acts and situations at the workplace and address their prevention (see sections 4.1-4.5).

A response from an organization to a violent incident should include a plan of response to the various manifestations within the organization after a violent incident, both in terms of physical outcome and psychological outcomes, as far as is reasonably practicable.

4.6.1. Response plans

It would be useful to have management plans for handling situations of workplace violence and associated problems, and for helping individuals affected by workplace violence to deal with the after-effects of violent incidents or behaviour, both physically and emotionally; these should be made available and tested in advance. These plans should include measures to prevent severe psychological or medical problems at the level of post-traumatic stress disorder from developing, as far as reasonably practicable.

4.6.2. Management support

Management should provide support to all workers affected by workplace violence. In particular, management should:

- deal with the immediate aftermath of violence and associated problems;

¹ See Ch. 5 of *Management of alcohol- and drug-related issues in the workplace*, ILO code of practice (Geneva, ILO, 1996).

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- minimize the impact of workplace violence by facilitating or advising on provision of leave where appropriate;
 - provide information to the immediate families of the workers affected;
 - initiate a timely internal investigation if necessary.

4.7. Focusing on the individual: Medical and other interventions

In addition to training and enhanced communication, the following interventions should be developed to reinforce the capacity of individuals to contribute to the prevention of workplace violence.

4.7.1. Medical treatment

Appropriate medical treatment should be available, where required, to workers affected by workplace violence.

In the case of enterprises that have medical services, the employer should refer those who appear to have violence-related problems to those services, as appropriate, if this is within the competence of the professionals engaged in such services.

When companies do not have such services or the caseload exceeds the competence of in-house professionals, the employer should refer workers to appropriate treatment outside the enterprise.

4.7.2. Support

Support, by way of opportunities to discuss concerns or other support initiatives, in consultation with workers' representatives, may be beneficial to all those affected by workplace violence, directly or indirectly, for example, counselling and psychological treatment, if appropriate.

4.7.3. Debriefing

Debriefing as required should be made available by the employer, in consultation with workers' representatives, to workers affected by workplace violence. It could include:

- sharing personal experience with others, to defuse the impact of violence;
- helping those affected by workplace violence to understand and come to terms with what has happened;
- offering reassurance and support;
- focusing on the facts and giving information;
- explaining the help available.

4.7.4. Mitigation

Governments should promote care and support to the victims of workplace violence through public health-care programmes, access to treatment where appropriate, social security systems, occupational safety and health systems and other government initiatives. Rehabilitation should be made available, and its existence made known to all those affected by workplace violence.

The employer, in collaboration with workers and their representatives, should provide support to workers affected by workplace violence during the entire period and allow all necessary time to recover, within reason.

Whenever possible and convenient, workers should be encouraged to return to work, avoiding too much pressure at first, special working arrangements being made when necessary to facilitate reintegration.

4.8. Grievance and disciplinary procedures

Governments, employers, workers and their representatives should act in collaboration to develop grievance and disciplinary procedures to deal with complaints of workplace violence. These procedures should include a fair and equitable process for the investigation and resolution of complaints. This process should ensure that a worker who is the subject of a complaint knows the details of the allegations and who made them, has the opportunity to respond to the allegations and has the benefit of an impartial, independent and fair hearing by a decision-maker who has not prejudged the issue; that victimization is prevented; and that confidentiality and time limits are respected. Retaliation against victims or witnesses should not be tolerated.

4.9. Privacy and confidentiality

Governments and employers should ensure that any information relating to grievances and disciplinary procedures, medical treatment, debriefing, counselling and rehabilitation is kept confidential, in accordance with national laws and regulations.

5. Monitoring and review

Periodic reviews should be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the workplace violence management system in controlling and preventing workplace violence. The reviews should be conducted by competent persons, and the results of the reviews communicated to the affected parties.

5.1. Monitoring and evaluation of workplace violence prevention policies

The employer should, in cooperation with the workers and their representatives, evaluate the effectiveness of workplace violence prevention policies. This should include:

- regular monitoring of the results of measures introduced;
- developing criteria for evaluation and receiving regular feedback to check how well the policies and measures are working, and to make modifications as necessary;
- organizing periodical joint meetings of management and workers to discuss the measures put in place;
- reviewing the management plan on a regular basis, including the assessment of policy implementation.

5.2. Organizational learning on issues related to violence

The employer should, in cooperation with the workers and their representatives, develop a strategic learning process on issues relating to workplace violence that includes:

- learning from the lessons gained from the design, implementation and evaluation of workplace policies;
- reassessing the workplace culture, work organization and the quality of the work environment to effectively respond to workplace violence;
- activating a risk management cycle that makes the elimination of workplace violence and the improvement of the work environment an ongoing process within the organization.

Such an approach could also contribute to enhancing quality of service, productivity and decent work.