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# Violence in the Workplace Policy

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Turas Training

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Approval date: October 2017

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Revision date: July 2019

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## 1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 requires all employers to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety and health of employees. In accordance with the Act and Regulations;
  - 1.1.1. TURAS accepts its responsibilities towards maintaining the health, safety and welfare of all its employees by providing a workplace free from violence.
  - 1.1.2. This policy should be read in conjunction with TURAS's Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy, Safety, Health and Welfare Policy and Safety Statement.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of this policy is to enable TURAS to meet its obligation to protect and support employees from violent, aggressive and abusive behaviours as far as is possible while they are at work.

## 3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy covers all staff members, locum workers, and volunteers within the organisation. It also includes people from other agencies conducting in-reach services in TURAS for the time they are on the premises.

## 4. Definitions

- 4.1. Aggression: any behaviour which is perceived by the staff member to be threatening or is aimed at causing harm.
- 4.2. Violence: the Health and Safety Authority have defined workplace violence as situations "where people, in the course of their employment, are aggressively verbally abused, threatened or physically assaulted." It can also be defined as behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt or damage someone or something.
- 4.3. De-escalation: an approach to conflict resolution and reducing tension during heated situations.

## 5. Responsibilities

- 5.1. Managers have a responsibility to:
  - 5.1.1. Ensure that all employees are aware of the policy
  - 5.1.2. Ensure service user risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly
  - 5.1.3. Ensure all employees have been given adequate training and information
  - 5.1.4. Ensuring employees who are involved in a violent or aggressive situation are given adequate support
- 5.2. All employees are responsible to:
  - 5.2.1. Adhere to the principles and procedures contained within this policy.
  - 5.2.2. Report any dangers identified or any concerns they may have about potentially violent situations.

## 6. Principles

- 6.1. The service will do everything it can to minimise the potential for violence in the workplace although also recognises that due to the nature of the work aggressive incidents may be an aspect of the work.
- 6.2. TURAS is committed, through this policy to the following aims;
  - 6.2.1. To increase employee's awareness of issues relating to violence, aggression and abuse in the workplace
  - 6.2.2. To ensure the risk of violence, aggression and abuse is assessed in a systematic and ongoing way, and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place and kept under regular review.
  - 6.2.3. To make available appropriate training to all employees which equip them to recognise risk and respond appropriately and the earliest possible point.

- 6.2.4. To ensure that appropriate supports are available to employees involved in violent, aggressive or abusive incidents.
- 6.2.5. To ensure full reporting and recording of all incidents of violence, aggression and abuse.
- 6.2.6. Staff should be skilled in the de-escalation of potentially abusive incidents or challenging behaviours.
- 6.2.7. It is the responsibility of management to ensure that these skills are reviewed and maintained within the framework of continuing professional development.

## 7. Assessing Risk

- 7.1. Service User Risk Assessment - Each service user regularly accessing the service / all service users will be asked to undertake a risk assessment as part of their induction to the programme; this will consider the following risks:
  - 7.1.1. Past experience or future risk of self harm / suicide
  - 7.1.2. Past experience or future risk of violence to others / violence to staff within services (including arson and sex offending)
  - 7.1.3. Risk of overdose
  - 7.1.4. Violence from others to the service user
- 7.2. Where there is a risk identified, this will be discussed with the service user as part of the same meeting. Where there are issues in relation to violence and any other aspect of the assessment these should be shared with the team through the team meeting.
- 7.3. The care plan issues in relation to identified risks will be monitored as part of the care plan, any issues with the care plan in relation to the identified risk will be brought discussed with the team / manager.
- 7.4. A supplementary risk assessment will be arrived at in the case of any aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour, where this is deemed appropriate (see Health and Safety Risk Assessment tool). In this instance a meeting will be held with the individual and will aim to arrive at an agreed care plan and goals which address service user behavioural issues.

## 8. Pre-emptive Action and De-escalation

(Where services regularly encounter challenging behaviour, the training of staff in techniques such as Therapeutic Crisis Intervention or other challenging behaviour models should be considered)

- 8.1. TURAS shall endeavour where possible to minimise the risk and potential for violence in the workplace. Where possible and if safe to do so staff should intervene at an early stage in order to pre-empt and de-escalate any potential situations of violence.
- 8.2. In responding to a potential situation of violence, the safety of employees involved, their colleagues and other service users is the first consideration. Where service users are violent or aggressive they will be asked to leave the project, this will be done in line with the guidelines for managing difficult behaviours that are outlined in the Inclusion Policy.
- 8.3. It is the responsibility of all workers to alert colleagues at the first signs of aggression and to act co-operatively to de-escalate the situation.
- 8.4. Employees should be aware of any potential weapons such as ashtrays, plates, cutlery, bottles, broken furniture, etc, which should be removed immediately where possible.
- 8.5. Workers should employ de-escalation techniques as soon as they sense there is a threat of aggression. The overall aim of de-escalation policies is to make the service user feel listened to, to calm and to reduce the threat of aggression.
- 8.6. The potential for aggression can be noted from a number of behaviours, such as: increasing colour to the face, raise in voice and change in tone, standing tall or flexing of muscles, narrowing of gaze.
- 8.7. It should be remembered that service users may become aggressive for a number of reasons, including: frustration, perceived unfairness, mental health problems, affected by drugs or alcohol, learned behaviour, defence mechanisms and a lack of other ways to respond to a given situation.
- 8.8. If staff feel they are able to safely engage with the service user to de-escalate a potentially aggressive situation they should proceed following the general guidelines below.

- 8.9. If staff members feel that there is a serious risk of violence they should leave the situation and contact a manager / garda immediately.
- 8.10. The following are de-escalation guidelines for workers:
  - 8.10.1. Stand to the side of the individual, not directly in front of them. Be aware of body language and speed of movement.
  - 8.10.2. Appear confident and display calmness, avoiding being overbearing or dismissive.
  - 8.10.3. Be aware of verbal communication; volume and tone of voice.
  - 8.10.4. Practice active listening skills so that the individual is aware that staff are attentive to their concerns and these are better able to be met.
  - 8.10.5. Acknowledge concerns or grievances, although avoid being patronising.
  - 8.10.6. Encourage reasoning by the use of open questions and enquire about the reason for the aggression.
  - 8.10.7. Provide options, highlighting the positive options first, a win/lose situation or ultimatums should be avoided.
  - 8.10.8. Ensure staff have clear access to exit routes where possible. It may be an option to move the interaction to a different space.
  - 8.10.9. If there is a violent incident or potential for one between two or more service users staff should attempt to isolate or separate the individuals as this may prevent the situation escalating further.

## 9. Responding to Aggressive or Violent Incidents

- 9.1. In the event of an act of violence occurring, staff should:
  - 9.1.1. Stay Calm
  - 9.1.2. Contact a Manager Immediately, if possible.
  - 9.1.3. Get people away from the scene as quickly as possible, ensuring the safety of themselves first and foremost.
  - 9.1.4. If violence is ongoing then contact the Garda and follow their instructions
  - 9.1.5. Secure the area as quickly as possible
  - 9.1.6. Provide supports to any one affected by the violent incident

## 10. Supports

- 10.1. TURAS will provide supports to all employees who are victims of violence, aggression or abuse while at work.
- 10.2. Managers are responsible for ensuring that:
  - 10.2.1. Adequate debriefing is offered to the staff person or persons involved as soon as possible after the incident (see Debriefing Policy)
  - 10.2.2. If the situation or its consequences are identified through supervision as resulting in a need for the staff member to access counselling, this will be offered along with necessary time off to receive it.
  - 10.2.3. The event will be recorded as an incident or near miss and strategies will be put in place to minimise the issue or situation occurring again.

## 11. Reporting and Recording

- 11.1. Employees should report all incidents of or concerns with violence, aggression and abuse to their line manager at the earliest opportunity.
- 11.2. Reports should be as detailed as possible and include input from all staff members present at the time of the incident. Any and all antecedent occurrences should be noted in order to understand the reason for the incident. This information should then be used in order to minimise the risk of future incidents.
- 11.3. The manager will determine how the episode will be dealt with, options include;
  - 11.3.1. Communicating with the service user and involving them in the agreed plan for the future.
  - 11.3.2. Discussing the issue at the team meeting and ensuring a collaboratively agreed plan for managing the situation
  - 11.3.3. Discussing the issue in supervision and informing relevant staff of any agreed plans/future actions

- 11.3.4. When the issue is serious and requires an investigation or written report the issue should be recorded on an Incident Reporting Form and an investigation conducted and report produced as described in the Incident Reporting Policy
- 11.4. Under certain circumstances, TURAS may be obliged to report an incident to an external organisation. External organisations may include: Child Protection Services, the Health and Safety Authority (under General Application Regulations 1993 – Part X – Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences), Gardaí Síochána, etc. For additional information see Child Protection Policy and Health and Safety Policy.

## **12. Criminal Proceedings**

- 12.1. In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to initiate criminal proceedings against those who carry out assault or where the abuse is considered to be motivated by hatred or prejudice.
- 12.2. All employees are encouraged to report all incidents to the Manager at the time of the event and will be supported by the organisation throughout the process.
- 12.3. Managers must make sure that employees cited to attend court to give evidence have access to ongoing support throughout this process. Other support may also be available to employees through Trade Unions/Professional Organisations.