

# SISTERING

<b>Policy: Workplace Anti-Violence and Anti-Harassment Policy</b>	<b>Policy #:</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>Date approved:</b>

## **Purpose:**

Sistering is committed to the prevention of violence and harassment in the workplace. Although some incidents or situations involving workplace violence and harassment may be the result of larger societal problems outside our control, Sistering firmly believes that by working together with our Employees, the risk of workplace violence and harassment can be minimized.

## **Policy:**

Workplace violence, workplace harassment or threats of violence will not be tolerated at Sistering and engaging in behaviour defined as violence or harassment, in accordance with this policy, is strictly prohibited in the workplace.

## **Scope:**

This policy applies to all employees, participant employees, volunteers, contractors and vendors.

## **Definitions:**

Violence includes any act in which a person is abused, threatened, intimidated or assaulted in the workplace. For example:

- **Physical attacks** – actions causing physical harm to another person
- **Threatening behaviour** – any expression of intent to inflict harm such as; shaking fists, destroying property, threatening gestures. Threats could also be express verbally, in writing or electronically
- **Verbal abuse** – actions causing emotional duress and may include; swearing, insults or condescending language
- **Bullying** – behaviour that is designed to, or has the impact of, intimidating, worrying, degrading or humiliating (Source: Canadian Centre for Occupational health and Safe

**Harassment is defined as “Engaging in a course of vexatious comments or conduct against a worker that is known, or ought to reasonably be known, to be unwelcomed.”** These may include:

- Displaying or circulating offensive pictures or materials in print or electronic form;
- Bullying;
- Repeated offensive or intimidating phone calls or emails;

- Inappropriate sexual touching, advances, suggestions or requests;
- Making remarks, jokes or innuendos that demean, ridicule, intimidate, or offend;

(Source: Ministry of Labour, occupational Health and Safety branch-: “Workplace Violence and Harassment: Understanding the Law” publications, March 2010)

## **APPLICATION**

This policy covers violence and harassment in the workplace or during working hours. It also extends to violence and harassment outside the workplace and working hours in the event the occurrences are connected to the workplace. The workplace includes all locations where business or social activities of Sistering are conducted.

***Due to the nature of the services provided, Sistering recognizes that participants may occasionally engage in behaviour that may fall within the definitions of violence and harassment. It is understood therefore such behaviour by participants will be addressed through established Drop-In and Participants’ policies and may include services restrictions up to and including withdrawal of services.***

***Managers and Supervisors exercising their managerial responsibilities such as: meeting with employees for the purpose of addressing conduct/ performance related matters; formal supervision meeting, performance appraisals; and discipline are not considered workplace violence or harassment under this policy.***

## **Security Measures**

**Sistering has instituted these security measures to minimize the risk of violence on our premises.**

- Sistering property shall be accessed only by employees, participant employees, participants, volunteers, vendors, contractors and visitors conducting legitimate business activities.
- All persons permitted entry to Sistering Drop-Ins and studios are screened by employees and then permitted access through the Drop-In or Administrative office doors
- Sistering shall be allowed to conduct searches and inspection of the Drop-Ins and Studios without prior notice given.

## **For Immediate Emergency Assistance**

If an employee is physically assaulted or is in imminent danger of being physically assaulted, they should immediately remove themselves from the unsafe situation, secure themselves in a safe space (locked office) and call for assistance of a co-worker if possible. Contact Emergency Services (911) immediately.

Telephones are located throughout all worksites and mobile phones are available for use when out in the community.

## Employee Safety Measures

Sistering endeavors to ensure the safety of all its employees, participant employees, volunteers and participants. Employees are asked to take the following measures to ensure their safety:

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- Remove yourself from immediate danger.
- In the event of an altercation between participants, do not physically place yourself between them; stay out of harm's way.
- Follow all safety and security rules and practices.
- Always let your coworkers know of your whereabouts in the Drop-In, Studio and Community.
- Inform you Manager and Supervisor of your whereabouts when working in the community and at unfamiliar locations.
- Report any concerns regarding unsafe conditions in the course of duties involving community and home visits.
- Always ensure you have an escape route when dealing with volatile situations.
- Use non-violent crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques when dealing with volatile participants.
- Report any safety hazards or breaches of security in the workplace to your manager or supervisor immediately.
- If you see an unaccompanied stranger or suspicious person on the premises, follow emergency protocols.
- Familiarize yourself with the location of all exits
- Use common sense. Be alert to your surroundings at all times.

## Violence or Harassment Reporting Procedures

- In the event that an employee is directly affected by, or has knowledge of incidents or threats of workplace violence or harassment, they are required to immediately report the incident to the Manager or Supervisor.
- Report an incident involving workplace violence immediately to your Manager or Supervisor, using the Incident Report Form refer to Appendix A) and using Director or Executive Director calling unit if appropriate.
- Report an incident involving workplace harassment to your Manager or Supervisor, using a Harassment Complaint Form (refer to Appendix B).
- Incidents or reported workplace violence or harassment will be reported to the Joint health and Safety Committee by the Management Co-Chair.

Reprisals or threats of reprisals against any employee for reporting an incident of workplace violence or harassment, or by providing information regarding a report or complaint, are strictly prohibited, will not be tolerated and re subject to disciplinary action up to, and including dismissal.

Frivolous and vexatious complaints will be subjected to disciplinary action up to, and including termination.

## **Post – Incident Procedures**

As soon as possible following the incident, where appropriated, and based on the severity of the incident, victims will be offered:

- Medical attention
- Informal de-briefing, allowing the victim to talk through their experience with co-workers and Managers and Supervisors
- Access to the Employee Assistance Programme.
- Voluntary confidential trauma counseling with a skilled Counsellor
- Time off work, depending on the severity of the incident and medical documentation supporting the need for time off.

## **Investigating Violence and Harassment in the Workplace**

A report of workplace violence and harassment shall be coordinated by management and dealt with appropriately. All investigations into allegations of workplace violence and harassment will be dealt with in a timely manner.

- Investigations into reported incidents alleging an employee, volunteer, contactor or vendor of engaging in violent or harassing behaviour towards an employee will be coordinated by the Coordinator or Unit Director
- Investigation of reported incidents alleging a participant of engaging in violent or harassing behaviour towards an employee will be coordinated by the Coordinator or Unit Director.
- Investigations of reported incidents alleging an employee of engaging in violent or harassing behaviour towards a participant will be coordinated by the Coordinator or Unit Director
- The status of investigations involving workplace violence and harassment, including the resulting actions taken, will be reported to the Health and Safety Committee by the Management Member.

An incident or complaint will be investigated in a manner appropriate to the circumstances. This may include an internal investigation or the use of external resources. The investigators may undertake some, or all the following procedures as deemed appropriate in the circumstances:

- Review the allegations
- Conduct interview(s) of the complainant, the subject of the complaint, potential witnesses, or anyone with relevant information
- Collect and review documents
- Review the workplace or sites of the incidents

Although management of Sistering will make every effort to keep the incident or complaint as confidential as possible, it is not always possible to do so in the course of the investigating or resolving an incident or complaint and individual statements may be subject to disclosure at proceeding (e.g. civil proceedings).

The consequences for anyone found to have engaged in workplace violence or harassment, and depending upon the severity of the circumstances, may include;

- **For Sistering Employees** – disciplinary action, up to and including, termination of employment
- **For Sistering Volunteers** – termination of volunteer assignment
- **For Contractors and Vendors** – termination of contract
- **For Participants** – Service restrictions, up to and including, discharge from services

### **Domestic Violence in the Workplace**

Sistering acknowledges that domestic violence can directly or indirectly affect the workplace (e.g. abuser harasses or assaults the victim on the job, the victim is absent from work due to injuries). Sistering is committed to supporting employees who may be experiencing domestic violence in their personal lives. In the event that the employer becomes aware that an employee is a victim of domestic violence, their Manager will:

- Make every effort to ensure the employee's confidentiality
- Support the employee in contacting the appropriate civil authorities
- Work with the employee to develop a safety plan when they attend the workplace.
- Ensure the employee is made aware of the support they can receive through the EAP (employee assistance programme).
- Encourage the employee to have the workplace included on restraining orders

### **Preventative Measures**

Sistering will do the following to reduce the risk of incidents of workplace violence:

- Conduct an annual Workplace Violence Risk Assessment using the following methods:
  1. Employee surveys (refer to Appendix C)
  2. Manager Surveys (refer to Appendix D)
  3. Review of incident reports
  4. Environmental assessments to determine hazards (refer to Appendix D)
  5. Obtain information from similar workplaces
- Report the results of the risk assessment to the Health and Safety Committee. This will be done by the Office Manager
- Use the results of the risk assessment to address any determined risks appropriately
- Regularly review workplace security policies and workplace safety tips with employees
- Provide employees with training/instructions in the management of hostile and angry participants to effectively diffuse volatile situations and prevent escalation to violence (e.g. Non-Violent Crisis Intervention, Understanding and Managing Aggressive Behaviour, etc. training).

**Disclosure of Risk of Violent Behaviour**

Sistering will provide information to employees if it is expected they will encounter an individual with a history of violent behaviour, of which Sistering is aware, and that the individual poses a risk of workplace violence that is likely to result in physical injury. However, Sistering will only disclose the information reasonably necessary to protect employees from violence.

**Training**

Sistering will provide training and education with respect to the contents of the Policy and program with respect to Workplace Violence and Harassment.

This policy shall be posted on the Health and Safety Board at all Sistering Locations

Any of Sistering employees who are found to have engaged in prohibited behaviour will be subject to disciplinary actions, up to and including, termination of employment.

Acts of physical violence, threats to cause bodily harm and criminal harassment are serious criminal offenses, and Sistering reserves the right to pursue criminal action.



## Appendix B

### HARASSMENT COMPLAINT FORM

1. Name of complainant:

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2. Work Location:

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3. Person(s) you are alleging of workplace harassment (respondent/s)

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4. Nature of the allegations (attach extra paper) if required:

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5. Date(s), time(s), where the incident took place (attach extra paper if required)

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**6. Did anyone witness the incident? Yes/No**

If yes:

**(a) Names of Witness(es):**

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**(b) Description of their respective role in the incident:**

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**(c) How did you react to the harassment?**

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**7. If applicable, describe any incident that took place previously:**

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I am filling this complaint because I honestly believe that \_\_\_\_\_ has been harassing me.

I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge that the above-mentioned information is true, accurate and complete. Making false, vexatious or frivolous allegations is in violation of Sistering's Policies and subject to disciplinary action.

Furthermore, I realize that an investigation as per policies will be initiated once this complaint has been filed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the complainant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

