



# Township Of Zorra General Policy Manual

Policy #: 300-25

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**POLICY:** Harassment & Violence in the  
Workplace Bill 168

**SECTION:** Personnel

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** June 15, 2010

**REVISED:**

**APPROVED BY:**

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## **Purpose:**

The Township of Zorra is committed to providing and maintaining a working environment that is based on respect for the dignity and rights of everyone in the organization. It is the Township of Zorra's goal to provide a healthy and safe work environment that is free of any form of harassment or violence.

## **Procedure**

This policy applies to all employees, contractors and consultants. It applies in any location in which you are engaged in work-related activities. This includes, but is not limited to:

- the workplace
- during work-related travel
- at restaurants, hotels or meeting facilities that are being used for business purposes
- in Township of Zorra owned or leased facilities
- during telephone, email or other communications; and
- at any work-related social event, whether or not it is Township sponsored

This policy also applies to situations in which you are harassed or subjected to violence in the workplace from individuals who are not employees of the Township of Zorra, such as taxpayers and suppliers, although the available remedies may be constrained by the situation.

## **Definitions**

### **1. Discrimination**

Workplace discrimination includes any distinction, exclusion, or preference based on the protected grounds in the Ontario Human Rights Code, which nullifies or impairs equality of opportunity in employment or equality in the terms and conditions of employment.

The protected grounds of discrimination are:

- race, colour, ancestry, citizenship, ethnic origin or place of origin
- creed, religion
- age
- sex (including pregnancy and gender identity)
- sexual orientation
- family, marital (including same-sex partnership) status



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- disability or perceived disability
- a record of offences for which a pardon has been granted under the *Criminal Records Act (Canada)* and has not been revoked, or an offence in respect of any provincial enactment.

**2. Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment includes conduct or comments of a sexual nature that the recipient does not welcome or that offend him or her. It also includes negative or inappropriate conduct or comments that are not necessarily sexual in nature, but which are directed at an individual because of his or her gender.

Both men and women can be victims of harassment, and someone of the same or opposite sex can harass someone else.

Some examples of sexual harassment are:

- sexual advances or demands that the recipient does not welcome or want
- threats, punishment or denial of a benefit for refusing a sexual advance
- offering a benefit in exchange for a sexual favour
- leering (persistent sexual staring)
- displaying sexually offensive material such as posters, pictures, calendars, cartoons, screen savers, pornographic or erotic web sites or other electronic material
- distributing sexually explicit email messages or attachments such as pictures or video files
- sexually suggestive or obscene comments or gestures
- unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes, propositions or taunting about a person's body, clothing or sex
- persistent, unwanted attention after a consensual relationship ends
- physical contact of a sexual nature, such as touching or caressing; and
- sexual assault

**3. Discriminatory Harassment**

Discriminatory harassment includes comments or conduct based on the protected grounds in the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, which the recipient does not welcome or that offends him or her.



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Some examples of discriminatory harassment include:

- offensive comments, jokes or behaviour that disparage or ridicule a person's membership in one of the protected grounds, such as race, religion or sexual orientation
- imitating a person's accent, speech or mannerisms
- persistent or inappropriate questions about whether a person is pregnant, has children or plans to have children; or
- inappropriate comments or jokes about an individual's age, sexual orientation, personal appearance, or weight.

Harassing comments or conduct can poison someone's working environment, making it a hostile or uncomfortable place to work, even if the person is not being directly targeted. This is commonly referred to as a ***poisoned working environment*** and it is a form of harassment.

Some examples of actions that can create a poisoned work environment include:

- displaying offensive or sexual materials such as posters, pictures, calendars, web sites or screen savers
- distributing offensive email messages, or attachments such as a pictures or video files
- practical jokes that embarrass or insult someone; or
- jokes or insults that is offensive, racist, or discriminatory in nature.

#### **4. Workplace Harassment and Bullying**

Workplace harassment is a health and safety issue that is covered under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* defines workplace harassment as:

Engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is know or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.

Workplace harassment may have some or all of the following components:

- it is generally repetitive, although a single serious incident may constitute workplace harassment if it undermines the recipient's psychological or physical integrity and has a lasting harmful effect



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- it is hostile, abusive or inappropriate
- it affects the person's dignity or psychological integrity; and
- it results in a poisoned work environment.

In addition, behaviour that intimidates isolates or discriminates against the recipient may also be included.

Some examples of workplace harassment are:

- verbally abusive behaviour such as yelling, insults, ridicule and name calling including remarks, jokes or innuendos that demean, ridicule, intimidate or offend
- workplace pranks, vandalism, bullying or hazing
- gossiping or spreading malicious rumours
- excluding or ignoring someone, including persistent exclusion of a particular person from workplace-related social gatherings
- undermining someone else's efforts by setting impossible goals, with short deadlines and deliberately withholding information that would enable a person to do their job
- providing only demeaning or trivial tasks in place of normal job duties
- humiliating someone
- sabotaging someone else's work
- displaying or circulating offensive pictures or materials
- offensive or intimidating phone calls or emails
- impeding an individual's efforts at promotions or transfers for reasons that are not legitimate; and
- making false allegations about someone in memos or other work related documents

***What Isn't Harassment***

Workplace harassment should not be confused with legitimate, reasonable management actions that are part of the normal work functions, including:

- measures to correct performance deficiencies, such as placing someone on a performance improvement plan,
- imposing discipline for workplace infractions; or
- requesting medical documents in support of an absence from work



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It also does not include normal workplace conflict that may occur between individuals or differences of opinion between co-workers.

***The Test of Harassment***

It does not matter whether you intended to offend someone. The test of harassment is whether you knew or *should have known* that, the comments or conduct was unwelcome to the other person. For example, someone may make it clear through his or her conduct or body language that the behaviour is unwelcome, in which case you must immediately stop that behaviour.

Although it is commonly the case, the harasser does not necessarily have to have power or authority over the victim. Harassment can occur from co-worker to co-worker, supervisor to employee and employee to supervisor.

**5. Workplace and Domestic Violence**

Workplace and domestic violence that may occur in the workplace are health and safety issues, which are covered under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

***Workplace Violence***

Workplace violence is defined under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* as:

- the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker
- an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker
- a statement of behaviour that is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.

It is defined broadly enough to include acts that may be considered criminal. Workplace violence includes:

- physically threatening behaviour such as shaking a fist at someone, finger pointing, destroying property, throwing objects



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- verbal or written threats to physically attack a worker
- leaving threatening notes or sending threatening emails
- wielding a weapon at work
- stalking someone; and
- physically aggressive behaviours including hitting, shoving, standing excessively close to someone in an aggressive manner, pushing, kicking, throwing an object at someone, and physically restraining someone or any other form of physical or sexual assault.

Violence that occurs outside the normal workplace but which has an impact on the working environment, including working relationships, may also be considered violence in the workplace.

### ***Domestic Violence***

If you are experiencing domestic violence that would likely expose you, or other workers, to physical injury that may occur in the workplace, we will take every precaution reasonable to protect you and your co-workers in the circumstances. This may include some or all of the following:

- creating a safety plan
- contacting the police
- establishing enhanced security measures such as a panic button, code words, and door and access security measures
- screening call and blocking certain email addresses
- setting up priority parking or providing escorts to your vehicle or to public transportation
- adjusting your working hours and location so that they are not predictable; and
- facilitating your access to counselling through the Employee Assistance Program or other community programs.

We appreciate sensitivity of these issues and will do our best to assist you as discreetly as possible while maintaining your privacy.



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## **Preventing Harassment and Violence**

It is our mutual responsibility to ensure that we create and maintain a harassment and violence-free workplace and address violence and/or the threat of violence from all possible sources (including taxpayers, clients, employers, supervisors, employees, strangers, and domestic/intimate partners).

### **Township of Zorra's Commitment**

Township of Zorra will do its part by not tolerating or condoning discrimination, harassment, or violence in the workplace. This includes making everyone in our organization aware of what behaviour is and is not appropriate, assessing the risk of workplace violence, investigating complaints and imposing suitable corrective measures.

### **Duties of Supervisors**

Supervisors are expected to assist in creating a harassment-free workplace and to immediately contact the Workplace Respect Committee if they receive a complaint of workplace harassment or violence or witness or are aware of harassing or violent behaviour. Supervisors must also take every reasonable precaution to protect employees from workplace violence, including evaluating a person's history of violent behaviour to determine whether and to whom this employee poses a risk. In making this evaluation, supervisors should consider:

- whether the person's history of violence was associated with the workplace or work;
- whether the history of violence was directed at a particular employee or employees in general; and
- how long ago the incidence of violence occurred.

In certain circumstances, supervisors may have a duty to provide information about a risk of workplace violence from a person with a history of violent behaviour if an employee can be expected to encounter that person during the course of his or her work, and the risk of workplace violence is likely to expose the employee to physical injury. Supervisors will only release as much personal information about the person with a history of violent behaviour as is reasonably necessary to protect the employee from physical injury.



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**Duties of All Employees**

You must do your part of ensuring that your behaviour does not violate this policy and by fostering a work environment that is based on respect and is free of harassment.

You are also required to report to your supervisor or the Workplace Respect Committee, the existence of any workplace violence or threat of workplace violence.

**Duties of Advisors**

To assist you in understanding your rights and obligations under this policy, the Township of Zorra has appointed certain individuals to act as advisors.

The role of the advisors is to:

- act as a resource and answer inquires with respect to this policy
- discuss complaints on a confidential basis, unless the advisors are required to release information by law, or where there is a risk of harm to you or another individual
- assist in the informal resolution of complaints through counselling; and
- engage in discussions with the respondent to see if the matter can be resolved informally.

To avoid any potential conflicts of interest, the advisors are not involved in conducting formal investigations.

Advisors are impartial and may provide assistance in resolving issues of harassment and discrimination to any employee, contractor, or consultant. This can include facilitating a solution between two or more affected parties or assisting a complainant, respondent, or witness during an investigation.

Advisors are advocates for a respectful workplace; they are not advocates for a particular individual. Advisors maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable and appropriate under the circumstances. They are not investigators under the policy nor are they decision-makers.

In carrying out their duties under this policy, advisors will be directly responsible to the Workplace Respect Committee.



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Township of Zorra's advisors are:

- Doug Mills
- Terry Smith
- Kelly Hall

## **Procedure for Resolving and Investigating Harassment Complaints**

### **Informal Procedures**

If you believe that you are being harassed, the first thing to do is to tell the person to stop. Do so as soon as you receive any unwelcome comments or conduct. Although this may be difficult to do, telling the person you do not like their actions is often enough to stop the behaviour.

Some of the things you can say that might stop the behaviour include:

- "don't want you to do that"
- "please stop doing or saying"
- "it makes me uncomfortable when you"
- "don't find it funny when you"

If the harassment continues after you have confronted the individual, you may want to provide him or her with a written statement of the situation. Include specific details of the behaviours you consider harassing, your request to the harasser to stop and your expectations that he or she will stop. Provide details of the next steps you plan to take if the harassment does not stop e.g., filing a formal complaint. Make sure you keep a copy of this statement for yourself.

It helps to keep a record of any incident(s) that you experience. This includes when the harassment started, what happened, whether there were any witnesses and what was your response.

If you believe that someone who is not a member of our organization e.g., a customer, supplier, etc., has harassed or discriminated against you, please report the harassment to your supervisor or a member of the *Workplace Respect Committee*. Although the Township of Zorra has limited control over third parties, we will do our best to address the issue and prevent further problems from arising.



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## Formal Procedures

### *Workplace Respect Committee*

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally or if it is too serious to handle on an informal basis, you may bring a formal complaint to the Workplace Respect Committee. The Workplace Respect Committee acts as our workplace coordinators with respect to harassment and violence in the workplace.

Workplace Respect Committee consists of:

Aden Corcoran  
Ron Greason  
Rick Ackert  
Terry Smith  
Doug Mills  
Kelly Hall

If you bring a formal complaint, we will need as much written information as possible, including the name of the person you believe is harassing you, the place, date and time of the incident(s), and the names of any possible witnesses. A copy of the Workplace Respect Complaint form is available from the Workplace Respect Committee.

It is important that we receive your complaint as soon as possible so that the problem does not escalate or happen again. Once we receive your complaint, we will initiate a formal investigation, if it is necessary and appropriate to do so.

Discrimination and harassment are serious matters. Therefore, if you decide not to make a formal complaint, we may still need to investigate the matter and take steps to prevent further harassment. For example, we may need to continue with an investigation if the allegations are serious or if there have been previous complaints or incidents involving the respondent.

Please note that it is our policy not to investigate anonymous complaints unless there are extenuating circumstances.



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***Investigation Procedure***

The Workplace Respect Committee will commence an investigation as quickly as possible. We may choose to use either an internal or an external investigator, depending on the nature of the complaint.

The investigation will include:

- interviewing the complainant and respondent to ascertain all of the facts and circumstances relevant to the complaint, including dates and locations
- interviewing witnesses, if any
- reviewing any related documentation; and
- making detailed notes of the investigation and maintaining them in a confidential file

Once the investigation is complete, the investigator(s) will prepare a detailed report of the findings to the CAO for the Township of Zorra. A summary of the findings will also be provided to the complainant and respondent.

It is our goal to complete any investigation and communicate the results to the complainant and respondent within thirty days after we receive a complaint, where possible.

***Corrective Action***

The CAO for the Township of Zorra will determine what action should be taken because of the investigation.

The Workplace Respect Committee will inform the complainant and respondent of the results of the investigation and whether (but not necessarily what) corrective measures were taken, if any were necessary.

If a finding of harassment is made, Township of Zorra will take appropriate corrective measures, regardless of the respondent's seniority or position in the Township of Zorra.

Corrective measures may include one or more of the following:

- discipline, such as a verbal warning, written warning or suspension without pay
- termination with or without cause



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- referral for counselling (sensitivity training), anger management training, supervisory skills training or attendance at education programs on workplace respect
- a demotion or denial of a promotion
- reassignment or transfer
- financial penalties such as the denial of a bonus or performance related salary increase, and
- any other disciplinary action deemed appropriate under the circumstances.

If there is not enough evidence to substantiate the complaint, corrective measures will not be taken.

If you make a complaint in good faith and without malice, regardless of the outcome of the investigation, you will not be subject to any form of discipline. Township of Zorra will, however, discipline or terminate anyone who brings a false and malicious complaint.

### **Procedure for Resolving and Investigating Workplace Violence**

#### ***Workplace Violence***

You have the right to refuse work if workplace violence is likely to endanger you. In that instance, please immediately contact your supervisor at which point appropriate measures will be taken to protect you and investigate the situation. You will be moved to a safe place as near as reasonably possible to your normal workstation and will need to be available for the purposes of investigating the incident. In some circumstances, you may be provided with reasonable alternative work during normal working hours.

In appropriate circumstances, we may contact the police, or other emergency responders as appropriate, to assist, intervene or investigate workplace violence.

Provided the situation is dealt with quickly and the danger to workers is removed, the necessity of work refusal may be alleviated.

#### ***Investigation Procedure***

You are required to report the existence of any workplace violence or threat of workplace violence to your supervisor or the Workplace Respect Committee. The Workplace Respect Committee will commence an investigation as quickly as possible. We may choose to use either an internal or an external investigator, depending on the nature of the incident.



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The investigation will include:

- conducting interviews of relevant individuals to ascertain all of the facts and circumstances relevant to the complaint, including dates and locations
- reviewing any related documentation; and
- Making detailed notes of the investigation and maintaining them in a confidential file.

Once the investigation is complete, the investigator(s) will prepare a detailed report of the findings. A copy of the report will be provided to the Joint Health and Safety Committee.

### ***Corrective Action***

The CAO for the Township of Zorra will determine what action should be taken because of the investigation.

If a finding of workplace violence is made, Township of Zorra will take appropriate corrective measures, regardless of the respondent's seniority or position in the Township of Zorra.

Corrective measures may include one or more of the following:

- discipline, such as a verbal warning, written warning or suspension without pay
- termination with or without cause
- referral for counselling (sensitivity training), anger management training, supervisory skills training or attendance at educational programs on workplace respect
- a demotion or denial of a promotion
- reassignment or transfer
- financial penalties such as the denial of a bonus or performance related salary increase, and
- any other disciplinary action deemed appropriate under the circumstances.

Such measures are irrespective of disciplinary policy 300-07.

If you have a complaint in good faith and without malice, regardless of the outcome of the investigation, you will not be subject to any form of discipline. Township of Zorra will, however, discipline or terminate anyone who brings a false and malicious complaint.



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### ***Procedures for Addressing Domestic Violence***

If you are experiencing domestic violence that would expose you to physical injury in the workplace or you are experiencing workplace violence or believe that workplace violence is likely to occur, you may seek immediate assistance by contacting any member of the Workplace Respect Committee. The Workplace Respect Committee will assist in preventing and responding to the situation.

### ***Confidentiality of Complaints and Investigations***

We recognize the sensitive nature of harassment and violence complaints and we will keep all complaints confidential, to the extent that we are able to do so. We will only release as much information as it necessary to investigate and respond to the complaint or situation or if required to do so by law.

Out of respect for the relevant individuals, it is essential that the complainant, respondent, witnesses and anyone else involved in the formal investigation of a complaint maintain confidentiality throughout the investigation and afterwards.

### ***Protection from Retaliation***

Township of Zorra will not tolerate retaliations, taunts or threats against anyone who complains about harassment or takes part in an investigation. Any person, who taunts, retaliates against or threatens anyone in relation to harassment or violence complaint may be disciplined or terminated.