

Fostering a safe workplace post-Harvey Weinstein

Last fall, film producer Harvey Weinstein became a prime example of what workplace sexual harassment could look like, after a *New York Times* exposé alleged that for more than 30 years he had propositioned and bullied countless victims. The exposé fueled many more revelations of sexual harassment reaching far beyond the entertainment industry, confirming suspicions that the behaviour is more widespread than many thought. “It’s a wake-up call for organizations,” says Andrew Harkness, WSPS’ Strategy Advisor, Organizational Health Initiatives. “This is a critical opportunity for workplaces to take a stand and work to prevent inappropriate and harmful behaviours from taking root.” This is mandatory for all workplaces under the OHSA.

Here are some tips to help your organization work to prevent this type of workplace harassment.

- 1. Assume that harassment may exist in your workplace.** “I often hear people say violence and harassment isn’t a problem in their workplace,” says Andrew. “But how do you know if you haven’t looked into it? “Keep an open mind and understand that some employees may be fearful of coming forward for various reasons, one may be workplace culture.”
- 2. Ensure you’re compliant with legal requirements.** Ontario’s Occupational Health and Safety Act sets out roles and responsibilities with respect to workplace violence and harassment, including sexual harassment. Among employers’ responsibilities: developing and implementing policies and programs, and reporting, investigating and resolving incidents. Learn more about what the law says <https://www.ontario.ca/page/understand-law-workplace-violence-and-harassment>.
- 3. Communicate policies, programs, roles and responsibilities to all employees** so they know that preventing violence and harassment is a company principle and understand what’s expected of them.
- 4. Create a code of behaviour that promotes civility and respect.** “If you know how you expect people to behave towards each other, you can coach this behaviour and prevent bullying or harassment from happening,” says Andrew.
- 5. Assess what’s going on in your organization.** Involve multiple players in a conversation: Human Resources, Health and Safety, Security, etc. They may be aware of, but not sharing incidents of harassment, bullying or discrimination.
- 6. Conduct an employee survey.** Consider using WSPS’ employee violence risk assessment questionnaire http://www.wsps.ca/WSPS/media/Site/Resources/SmallBusiness/sb_100-CCP-03-IGDO_EmplyVIncRskAssmntQstnrr_Final_Fillable.pdf?ext=.pdf as a model.
- 7. Implement training programs for all employees based on a needs assessment.** Start with people in leadership and supervision roles.

How WSPS can help

Learn more about our workplace violence and harassment resources <http://www.wsps.ca/Information-Resources/Topics/Violence-Harassment.aspx> including training courses and downloadable tools and forms. Call WSPS for additional guidance and assistance – 1-877-494-WSPS (9777).

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