

# ETFO ACTION

*on Violence in Schools*

## Making our Schools and Workplaces Safe

**ETFO's call to action and strategy to address violence in school board workplaces involves many stakeholders and it starts with collaboration, training and accountability.**

## Your Right to a Safe Workplace

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*:

- Your principal has a duty to provide you with information about the risks of harm from a person with a history of violence. This duty happens if two factors are in place: you can be expected to encounter that person in the course of your work, and the risk of workplace violence from that person is likely to expose you to physical injury. There are limits on the disclosure of this information to what is "reasonably necessary" to protect you from physical injury.
- You may refuse to work or do particular work where you have reason to believe that the work is likely to endanger you. Work refusal is sometimes necessary. If you are a teacher, the legislation limits your right to refuse work due to your responsibilities to the students. If you believe you are being endangered by workplace violence, then report your concerns to the principal right away and get immediate assistance. Contact your ETFO local for advice and support.

## Everyone Has a Responsibility Concerning Workplace Violence

ETFO has identified that a lack of compliance to policy and program requirements by some principals and school boards has put a "chill" on reporting, investigating and dealing with workplace violence and serious student incidents. The Federation is working with the government, school board representatives and other unions to improve reporting systems, increase compliance by boards and principals and encourage a stronger health and safety culture with appropriate training within school boards. While these efforts continue, it's important to remember how the reporting system should work.

### **ETFO Members:**

- Under the *OHSA*, ETFO members have specific duties to report workplace violence.
- Under the *Education Act*, ETFO members have specific duties to report serious student incidents. These duties are further described in Ministry policies PPM 144 and PPM 145.
- Should workplace violence cause an injury or illness, an accident/injury/illness report is required. It is just as important to seek medical attention for psychological and emotional harm as it is for physical injury when workplace violence happens.
- Your duties to report workplace violence and serious student incidents cannot be limited by age, needs or other mitigating factors. If you are having difficulties making these required reports, get in touch with your steward or ETFO local as soon as possible to get support.

### **School Boards & Principals:**

- School boards and principals are required to investigate and deal with reports of workplace violence and serious student incidents.
- Both are required to conduct assessments of the risks of violence as often as necessary to continue to protect ETFO members from the risks of harm.
- Both are required to take measures and procedures to control identified risks. In the school setting, these steps could include, for example, a safety plan, a behaviour plan, staffing and supports.

### **ETFO Support for Members**

Contact your ETFO local for advice and support at [etfo.ca/link/locals](http://etfo.ca/link/locals). You can also contact ETFO provincial staff in Professional Relations Services at 416-962-3836/1-888-838-3836. For information and resources on workplace violence and serious student incidents, visit [etfohealthandsafety.ca](http://etfohealthandsafety.ca).



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