



The **Regulation** and
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Authority

POLICY ON ZERO TOLERANCE ON THE ABUSE OF STAFF

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1. Introduction

In line with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Circular HSS (Gen) (3) 2007 – “Zero Tolerance on Abuse of Staff, Protecting Healthcare and Emergency Staff from Violence”, the RQIA is committed to the creation of a culture and environment where employees may undertake their duties without fear of abuse or violence.

We are committed to:

- Ownership and responsibility for staff safety.
- Introducing preventative measures to minimise the risk to staff.
- Ensuring that all staff are appropriately trained.
- Reporting and monitoring all incidents.
- Communicating to staff to ensure awareness of policy and procedures.
- Staff support including appropriate support in taking action.
- Public Awareness of our Zero Policy Statement.
- Working with the relevant bodies, including PSNI
- Influence how perpetrators should be dealt with.

All staff have a vital role to play in protecting themselves, including participation in appropriate training, reporting of incidents and taking appropriate action against perpetrators of abuse or violence. The RQIA has a responsibility to ensure that appropriate support is given to staff in such instances.

2. Purpose of this Policy

- To achieve a positive attitude and approach towards RQIA staff
- To prevent incidents of abuse including aggression and violence
- The RQIA will seek to ensure that staff receive appropriate support in recovering from the effects of an incident and in trying to prevent recurrence
- To ensure that the RQIA complies with its statutory responsibilities under the Health & Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 and other related legislation/guidance

3. Scope

This Policy applies to violence and aggression towards all RQIA employees as well as to employees of external contractors, including Recruitment Agency staff. This policy applies to situations arising during the course of professional duties or due to employment. It also applies to those undertaking work on behalf of the RQIA, whether from service users, other staff or members of the public.

4. Accountability

The Head of Corporate Services will be accountable for the effective implementation and monitoring of this policy across the organisation. Responsibility for the day to day implementation will rest with the line management structure.

5. Definitions

The following definitions have been set out in the Departmental Circular HSS (Gen) (3) 2007 on Zero Tolerance:

- 5.1 Non Physical Abuse: The use of inappropriate words or behaviour causing distress and/or constituting harassment. This includes receipt of abusive telephone calls from any source.
- 5.2 Physical Abuse: The intentional application of force against the person of another without lawful justification resulting in physical injury or personal discomfort.
- 5.3 Anti-Social Behaviour: The following are examples of anti-social behaviour that are not acceptable at or in connection with work:
 - Excessive noise eg loud or intrusive conversation, or shouting
 - Threatening or abusive language including excess swearing or offensive remarks or gestures
 - Derogatory racial, religious or sexual remarks or behaviour
 - Malicious allegations relating to members of staff
 - Inappropriate behaviour as a result of alcohol or misuse of illicit drugs, including non-prescribed medication or drugs
 - Intimidation, threats or threatening behaviour (eg 'I know where you live')
 - Harassment or stalking
 - Violence, perceived acts of violence or threats of violence
 - Any explicit or implicit challenge to the safety, well-being or health of any member of staff
 - Brandishing weapons or objects which could be used as weapons

6. Role of Senior Managers

Senior managers must, in consultation with staff and their representatives carry out an assessment of the risk of violence within their working environment and within the scope of their responsibilities. They have an on-going duty to:

- Establish a safe system of working conditions for their staff including, where necessary, an assessment of the compatibility of the employees circumstances/condition with the workplace;
- Ensure that a systematic assessment of training needs is carried out for staff within their area of responsibility,
- Ensure that appropriate training is provided to and accessed by all staff
- Ensure that staff receive relevant and timely support including counselling following incidents of violence so they are enabled to evaluate and learn by experience.

7. Role of Line Managers

Line Managers have a responsibility to:

- Ensure that their staff understand the policy and related operational procedures with regard to handling incidents of violence.
- Ensure that where staff have identified any potential area of risk, a risk assessment is carried out.
- Ensure that where staff are placed in imminent danger immediate action is taken to minimise or remove the danger.
- Ensure that staff attend training appropriate to their area (as identified through the risk assessment process).
- Ensure that records are maintained of risk assessments and training.
- Ensure that relevant reporting documentation has been completed.
- Provide timely and appropriate support to staff who have been victims of abuse/violence.
- Provide feedback to affected staff on action taken by RQIA.
- Support staff in relation to all incidents of abuse of violence at work, including those that are transphobic, sexist, homophobic, sectarian, disability, race, religion or political opinion related.

8. Role of the employee

All staff have the responsibility to:

- Accept responsibility for their own safety.
- Consider the safety of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions.
- Familiarise themselves with and follow this policy and attached guidelines and to bring to their managers attention concerns relating to personal safety.
- Participate fully in risk assessments conducted in their work area.
- Participate in any training that is made available to them.
- Report all incidents of violence or threatened violence to their line manager.
- Record details of incidents on an appropriate report form.
- Contribute towards reviews concerning any violent incidents in which he/she has been involved.

9. Training

This policy will be incorporated into RQIA Induction Training.

All training needs identified will be addressed, and it will be the responsibility of the line manager to ensure that all staff attend appropriate training, including refresher courses. The Line Manager is responsible for maintaining records, on HRPTS, of training attended.

10. Reporting, Investigating and Monitoring

All incidents of abuse or violence to staff must be formally reported to their line manager using the RQIA Adverse Incident reporting procedure.

All incidents should be investigated and reviewed by the line manager to ensure that control measures are appropriate.

Monitoring of all incidents will be carried out by the relevant Senior Manager and any follow up action required will be assessed to ensure that it is appropriate and has been carried out.

Monitoring of trends will be carried out by the RQIA's Corporate Services Directorate, to identify particular problem areas in order to anticipate future preventative action.

Any incidents or trends that emerge will be reported to the RQIA Board via the Head of Corporate Services on a quarterly basis.

The RQIA will ensure that members of the public accessing its facilities are made aware of its commitment to zero tolerance of abuse or violence against staff including what actions the RQIA may take against perpetrators.

11. Staff Support

In the event of an employee becoming a victim of abuse or violence at work the RQIA will ensure that appropriate support is given. This may include support from Occupational Health and Carecall as appropriate.

12. Liaison with PSNI

Where physical injury or threatening behaviour has been suffered by a member of staff it is important that the matter is referred to the police for investigation if appropriate. The decision to refer to PSNI lies with the staff member and RQIA will provide support as necessary.

The RQIA will support the police when undertaking a criminal investigation with a view to prosecution. It is important that staff affected co-operate in this process.

This policy has been screened for equality implications as required by Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and has no serious impact on Section 75 groups. Equality Commission guidance states that the purpose of screening is to identify those policies which are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to these.