

VIOLENCE AGAINST
EDUCATION PERSONNEL
A GUIDE TO
**PREVENTION AND
INTERVENTION**



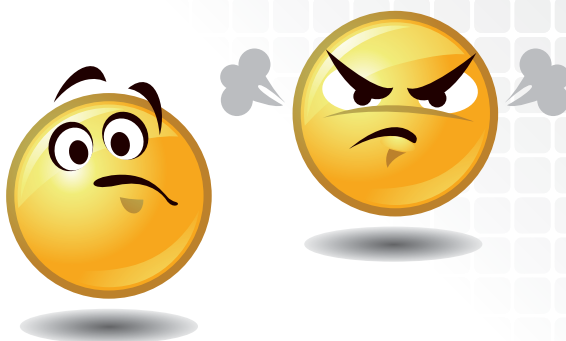
VIOLENCE
HAS CONSEQUENCES.
LET'S DEAL WITH IT!

Centrale des syndicats
du Québec



CR RES
Centre de recherche et d'intervention sur la violence scolaire

GRIAPS
Centre de recherche et d'intervention sur l'agressivité et la violence
dans l'éducation



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INTRODUCTION	3
1. RECOGNIZING VIOLENCE AT SCHOOL	5
1.1 Definition of school violence	7
1.2 Signs of violence	7
1.2.1 Physical violence	8
1.2.2 Verbal violence	8
1.2.3 Psychological or moral violence	8
1.2.3.1 Bullying/harassment	8
1.2.3.2 Social, relational or indirect aggression	9
1.2.3.3 Taxing	9
1.2.4 Violence with sexual overtones and homophobia	9
1.2.5 Cyberviolence (cyberbullying)	10
1.2.6 Conflicts	12
2. UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED AT SCHOOL: CAUSAL FACTORS AND CONSEQUENCES	13
2.1 Personal factors	14
2.2 Organizational factors	14
2.3 Consequences of violence for victims	15
2.4 Consequences of violence for school organization	16
3. TAKING ACTION AGAINST VIOLENCE	17
3.1 What can be done to prevent violence?	18
3.1.1 Assess the situation	18
3.1.2 Take action as individuals	18
3.1.3 Take action as a group	19
3.2 What should you do when incidents of violence occur?	21
3.2.1 What should you do following a critical incident?	28
3.2.2 What should you do in situations of harassment or bullying?	28
4. RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS WITH REGARD TO OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY	31
5. GET SUPPORT FROM YOUR UNION IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF OR WITNESS TO VIOLENCE	35
CONCLUSION	37

The use of violence in interpersonal relationships is of growing concern to society, because we now know much more about the short- and long-term effects on victims and the indirect consequences for witnesses. Violence that occurs in the workplace places serious constraints on quality of life for employees when they are performing their duties. In fact, staff members working in these settings have voiced concerns about their ever-growing sense of insecurity in the face of the many forms of violence to which they can be exposed.

This guide is addressed to employees working in the education network. It is intended to heighten their awareness of violence in the workplace. All education personnel are concerned, i.e., teaching, professional and support staff as well as administrative employees.

Since individual, group and organizational factors can influence the likelihood of being a victim of violence at school (Steffgen and Ewen, 2007), the guide proposes tangible ways of preventing and intervening in situations of violence, both for individuals and groups.

However, it only provides an overview of the interventions that education personnel can implement to improve the atmosphere at work. For this reason, we invite you to further your learning by consulting the references provided at the end of the guide.

We begin by explaining how to recognize violence at school. Second, we describe the causal factors to provide you with a better understanding of violence and its consequences. Third, we suggest several types of action that can be taken to take a stand against violence. Fourth, we outline rights and obligations regarding occupational health and safety. Fifth, we explain how your union can provide you with support if you are a victim of or a witness to violence at school.

Recognizing violence at school





When we talk about violence in schools, the first thing that comes to mind is the violence observed between pupils, between students or toward personnel. We often forget the other types of violence that education personnel can be exposed to while performing their duties: violence from parents, violence between colleagues, hierarchical violence and organizational violence.

In Québec, a study conducted by the CEQ (1998) indicated that approximately one teacher in ten had experienced a violent situation in his/her workplace. Psychological violence was reported in 70% of cases, whereas physical violence was reported by 24% of respondents. Students were identified as the aggressors in over half of the cases (53%), two-thirds of which occurred in secondary school. Persons in a position of authority were identified as the instigators of aggression in 26.5% of cases and work colleagues in 21% of cases.

Five years later, another study (Girard, Laliberté and Dompierre, 2003) associated physical violence experienced by school personnel with 15% of reported incidents, compared to 80% for psychological violence and 6% for sexual violence. In 89% of situations of physical violence, the aggressor was a student; in 5% of situations, the aggressor was a colleague. As for cases of psychological violence, 39% of the instigators were students, 25% were colleagues, 18% were parents, and 7% were persons in a position of authority.

More recently, researchers of the Groupe de recherche sur les environnements scolaires de l'Université de Montréal (Janosz, Pascal and Bouthillier, 2009) observed, based on data gathered from elementary school staff, that 29% of staff members had been subjected to insults made by pupils and 20%, to insults made by colleagues, followed by simple thefts (18%), threats uttered by pupils (18%) or the parents of pupils (16%), as well as physical aggression on the part of pupils (15%).

The data collected from secondary school staff indicated that they are mainly subjected to verbal aggression at school. On average, 39% of them reported that they had been insulted by a student at least once since the start of the school year; 23% reported they had been threatened by a student; 21% had been victims of theft (without their knowledge); 17% had been insulted by a colleague and 15% by the parent of a student.

Clearly, severe instances of aggression were less frequent, as less than 3% of staff members had been victims: student attacks (3%), instances of extortion (2%), threats or attacks from a street gang (1%), threats of an ethnic nature (1%) armed threats (1%) and physical injuries caused by a staff member (0.5%).

1.1 DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE AT SCHOOL

The World Health Organization (2002) defines violence in general as an abusive use of force or power that violates the moral or psychological integrity of others. Currently, there is no international consensus on a shared definition of school violence. For Hirigoyen (2001), violence in the workplace includes «any abusive behaviour, manifested in words, acts and written messages intended to cause injury to the physical and psychological integrity of an individual, jeopardize his/her job or to degrade his/her working conditions.» This concept of violence refers to many situations, practices, events and behaviours perceived to be intolerable by the persons who are subjected to them (Furlong and Morrison, 2000).

In 2009, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) proposed a definition of violence so that schools would adopt a common language and establish and meet educational goals in compliance with the mission of the schools. MELS defines violence as:

Any use of force—verbal, written, physical, psychological or sexual—against any person, by an individual or a group, with intent to directly or indirectly wrong, injure or oppress that person by attacking his or her integrity, psychological or physical well-being, rights or property (MELS, 2009).

Developed by a committee of university and school experts, this definition brings together several concepts found in the existing literature. It highlights the act of violence in terms of power relations and intentionality, and instances the context, potential instigators and victims (students, adults at the school, parents), possible forms of violence and the consequences of this type of behaviour. Although imperfect and likely to evolve over time, this definition enables the stakeholders of the education community to share a common vision of the violence they must deal with.

1.2 SIGNS OF VIOLENCE

Although unruly behaviour (protesting, refusal to obey etc.) requires a great deal of energy from teachers, it should not be confused with situations of real violence.

In more tangible terms, violence at school, CEGEP or university may take different forms, and the methods used by aggressors change and evolve over time. Cyberviolence is now on the list of incidents of violence because it is constantly evolving, and causing serious psychological damage to victims, whether teachers, pupils or students. The harmful effects extend to aggressors and to their families who can be held accountable for their actions.

The many forms that violence can take in schools can be illustrated as follows:

1.2.1 PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Of all forms of violence, physical violence, although the most easily identified, is not necessarily the most painful for victims. Physical violence is manifested in tangible ways by such acts as shoving, hitting, causing injuries (bites, bruises, etc.). This type of violence harms the individual's physical well-being and can cause physical injuries and long-term physical and psychological sequela. Perpetrators of physical violence are usually students, and more often at the elementary school level than at the secondary school level (Desbiens et al. 2006; Girard, Laliberté and Dompierre (2003).



1.2.2 VERBAL VIOLENCE

Verbal violence may involve yelling, swearing or insults and is often used to intimidate others. It may be intended to create tension in a person to keep him in a state of fear.

1.2.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL OR MORAL VIOLENCE

Psychological or moral violence consists of derogatory, humiliating or controlling attitudes and remarks, which result in the denigration of a person's sense of self-worth. It is sometimes expressed through a punitive relationship that consists of ignoring the presence of or refusing to communicate with a person. This form of violence is subtle and is not always expressed verbally. *Bullying* and *harassment* most frequently characterize psychological aggression in the workplace.

1.2.3.1 BULLYING/HARASSMENT

Bullying is behaviour intended to frighten and threaten victims to coerce them into acting against their will. Given the variety of existing definitions that sometimes confuse the terms *bullying* and *harassment*, for our purposes, we consider harassment the **repeated** bullying or intimidation of a victim. It includes abusive behaviours, committed by one or several persons, manifested in unilateral actions, words, acts, gestures or writing that are directed against an individual. The repetition of these gestures results in injuring the individual's psychological or physical well-being, and the victim usually feels powerless about the situation.

Bullying behaviour can harm a victim even though it may occur only once. Hence the importance of taking immediate action, from the first occurrence of bullying behaviour, to prevent the perpetrator's behaviour from advancing to harassment.

In a situation of bullying or harassment, it is hard for the victim to defend him/herself. A relationship of dominance is then established, and the aggressor (s) will attempt to denigrate or discredit the victim. The means used by the aggressor can take the form of verbal, written, gestural or other types of threats, mocking, vandalism, sabotage, blackmail, theft, or insulting, humiliating, vexatious or obscene remarks. Several authors have identified certain behaviours that are characteristic of harassment in the workplace, i.e., 1) preventing the victim from speaking out; 2) isolating the victim; 3) discrediting the victim with his/her colleagues; 4) discrediting the victim in his/her work; and 5) compromising the victim's health and security (Leymann, 1996; Hirigoyen, 1998; Field, 2001; Soares, 2002). Indirect aggression can also take the form of situations in which peer groups exclude the victim.

Psychological violence can take many forms, and aggression can be perpetrated by pupils, students, parents, colleagues or administrative personnel.

1.2.3.2 SOCIAL, RELATIONAL OR INDIRECT AGGRESSION

We call *relational violence* or *social violence* indirect aggression that consists of, for example, spreading false rumours about a person, and isolating a person from his or her friends or colleagues. Girls appear to practise this type of violence more frequently although it is also observed among boys. While not directly confronting the victim, the perpetrator attacks the quality of the victim's social relationships, thereby affecting his or her sense of social acceptance and belonging. According to some researchers (Verlaan et al., 2005), adults seldom take action to stop indirect aggression among children, because they do not know how to take effective action with regard to this kind of violence, long considered a normal stage in child and adolescent development.

1.2.3.3 TAXING

Taxing is said to occur when one or several persons use physical or psychological force to extort property from another person. The most serious form of bullying, taxing is a behaviour regulated by three sections of the *Criminal Code* and is described in legal terms as robbery committed with the intent to extort, intimidate and to harass (Ministère de la Sécurité publique, 2002).

1.2.4 VIOLENCE WITH SEXUAL OVERTONES AND HOMOPHOBIA

This type of violence refers to any type of bullying behaviour of a sexual nature. Although there is little documentation in the schools, this kind of aggression may be practised by pupils, students, parents, colleagues or superiors in the hierarchy. It may involve leering, hurtful remarks, insinuations or allusions concerning a person's private life. Acts involving sexual touching and aggression are more fully described in the *Criminal Code of Canada*, because these behaviours are considered crimes committed against the victim.

In recent years, a variety of plans to combat homophobia have been put in place to raise awareness in the schools about this problem and its disastrous effects on victims (sexual discrimination, social exclusion, insults such as «fag,» «fairy,» etc.). Sexist violence creates a high level of emotional distress, anxiety and somatic discomfort in victims, as well as a feeling of vulnerability and powerlessness with regard to the perpetrators.

1.2.5 CYBER VIOLENCE (CYBERBULLYING)

Cyberviolence or *cyberbullying* refers to the fact of using new technologies (Internet, cell phones) to injure the dignity of others. The victim of cyberbullying may be subjected to false rumours or hateful comments that may, in particular, harm his/her reputation, or the victim may receive insults, threats or hateful comments directly when using new technologies (e-mail, instant messaging or websites, chatting, cellphones, text messaging, photos or videos) (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009; Slonje and Smith, 2010). Some perpetrators may even create their own website.

Students filming scenes involving education staff using cellphone cameras or smartphone cameras may make improper use of such scenes by posting them on websites or social media sites.

Two CROP polls conducted on behalf of the CSQ¹ reveal that students in the schools of Québec are increasingly victims of cyberbullying (CROP 2008 and CROP 2011). Thus, 40% of education personnel stated they knew at least one person who had been a victim of cyberbullying in 2011, compared to 27% in 2008. Note that the victims of cyberbullying are mainly students. In fact, 81% of victims in the entourage of respondents are students. Girls are apparently more often targeted than boys: 72% of respondents polled know girls who have been victims of cyberbullying, whereas the proportion is 40% for boys.

In contrast, apparently staff members are less often targeted. Both in 2008 and in 2011, it was observed that few education staff members (5%) had been victims of cyberbullying since the start of their career. However, twice as many teachers in private schools and in CEGEPs are targets (10%). This would be attributed to the fact that students attending these institutions are more affluent and as result, have easier access to computers or smartphones.

The majority of victims (60%) indicate they have been intimidated via e-mail. However, social networks appear to be the new preferred means of cyberbullies, judging by the significant increase in their use (27%) in 2011 compared to that observed in 2008 (3%).



1. In 2008, (n = 1,200, 3% margin of error) and in 2011 (n = 1,214, 2.8% margin of error).

The perpetrators of cyberbullying directed toward education staff are mainly students, either a student acting alone in 69% of cases (41% in 2008) or a group of students in 65% of cases (only 4% in 2008). Students tend to group together more often to conduct cyberbullying against a teacher. Note that teachers are more often targeted than other personnel categories.

Cyberbullying has significantly decreased between colleagues, dropping from 22% in 2008 to 12% in 2011. It might be thought that awareness-raising campaigns for staff on school violence and bullying have yielded results.



However, 74% of the staff members polled believe that institutions are powerless to deal with this phenomenon. In fact, the members polled said they were concerned by cyberbullying and hoped for more sustained commitment on the part of their educational institution. Almost all respondents (98%) believe that institutions have an educational role to play in order to raise the awareness of youths and adults about this problem. They also believe that institutions should include components to address cyberbullying in the student code of conduct (97%).

The results of the poll also show that according to the perception of staff, most institutions still have to make much greater efforts to deal with this phenomenon. Barely 18% of respondents indicated that their institution had formal rules that are understood and applied.

Lastly, the vast majority (94%) of CSQ members polled believe that the consequences of cyberbullying for victims are serious, and 46% of them consider them to be very serious.

1.2.6 CONFLICTS

Sometimes a mere sigh can trigger overt or latent conflict. Verbal or physical violence can originate in an unarticulated or unresolved conflict between two people. According to Deutsch (1973), conflict is a state of incompatibility between the desires and goals of two individuals. A conflict arises when the actions of one individual aim to attain his/her personal goals by interfering with the needs and actions of another individual. The presence of conflicts indicates unease that sometimes masks a deeper problem, hence the importance of deciphering the warning signs before a mere sigh turns into a conflict, then into outright violence. Furthermore, frequent or unresolved quarrels drain energy, and exhaust and demotivate people in the workplace.

Conflicts are not necessarily a bad sign for an organization. On the contrary, if no conflicts ever arose, no important problems would come to light, which would interfere with improving working conditions. Moreover, new ideas or challenges often emerge from conflicting points of view that are openly shared and discussed without hurting individuals.

Conflicts are not inherently good or bad; what's important is to focus on the management of conflict. People should opt for constructive strategies, or win-win situations based on the idea that a conflict is the symptom of problem to be solved rather than a battle to be won.

However, most cases of psychological violence do not arise from latent conflict between two individuals. This is why it is important to distinguish between manifestations of aggression between two individuals and situations of victimization. In the first case, the parties (adults or students) may confront each other in a conflict, and this confrontation may involve two opponents with equal power, i.e., there is not necessarily a relationship of dominance between the parties (for example, a fight between two students, quarrels or disagreements between two colleagues). When we speak of bullying, harassment, threats or social exclusion, the situation is different because of the relationship of dominance exercised by the perpetrators.

Victims of harassment or bullying are not necessarily in conflict with their aggressors, because the latter seek out their victims based on characteristics that distinguish them and make them vulnerable. In this type of situation, interventions that aim to help parties solve their conflict may prove ineffectual, because this is not a conflictual situation, but rather a relationship of dominance between the aggressor and the victim (Naylor and Cowie, 1999).

In most cases, the victim remains silent, out of fear of the perpetrator. Such a situation requires another type of intervention: first of all, the victim needs support so that he/she denounces the aggressor; the victim then requires help to restore self-esteem. For people who bully or harass, a different type of intervention is required to end behaviours causing destructive domination.

Psychological violence can take many forms, and aggression can be perpetrated by pupils, students, parents, colleagues, visitors or administrative personnel.

Understanding violence experienced at school: **causal factors and consequences**





Many individual and organizational factors are closely linked to the risk of becoming a victim of violence at school (Steffgen and Ewen, 2007).

2.1 PERSONAL FACTORS

According to Jeffrey and Sun (2006), younger teachers are subject to the most violence at school. People who experience difficulty asserting themselves, who are anxious or emotionally fragile are at higher risk of being targets of aggressors. A victim's lack of social and interpersonal skills deprives him/her of a social network, which is considered a factor in protecting against victimization (Cole, Grubb, Sauter, Swanson and LAWLESS, 1997). Poor knowledge of class management or types of intervention with more difficult students may also contribute to escalating aggression at school. Adults may become victims of violence because of personal characteristics such as sexual orientation, ethnic origins, physical appearance, political opinions, etc.

2.2 ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS

The quality of the school environment has often been considered as an indicator of the level of violence among students. It is also relevant to the victimization of teachers. However, some schools are less affected by violence than others. The conditions observed in these «safe» schools make it possible to identify a number of facts that explain why some settings are more resistant than others to school violence (Debarbieux et al., 2003; Gittens, 2006).

The organizational factors that promote the maintenance of a positive educational atmosphere are:

- A real commitment from staff members to take individual and collective action to prevent violence;
- Cooperative work among adults (mentoring for young teachers);
- Management of conflict among them;

- Constant monitoring of students (schoolyard recreation periods and in the classroom);
- A clear, consistent disciplinary system;
- Acceptance of shared disciplinary tasks;
- Stable teaching teams, stable seniority;
- Community activities practised in conjunction with the school;
- Parental involvement and cooperation.

The size of the school, working as a substitute teacher or starting to teach later in the school year also increase the risk of being involved in situations of violence (Jeffrey and Sun, 2006).

Effective intervention plans implemented in school organization include:

- The establishment of a clear policy that everyone is familiar with (pupils or students, staff, parents...);
- The presence of a social skills training program for all pupils or students (peaceful conflict and anger management, principles of communication, etc.);
- Specific interventions planned for victims and aggressors;
- Stimulating learning activities that engage students;
- The participation of pupils or students in the development of the school's rules and school affairs;
- Peer mutual support systems;
- Appealing extra-curricular activities that motivate students.

2.3 CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE FOR VICTIMS

Victims of violence suffer significant psychological effects (depression, dropping out, suicide, substance abuse, etc.), and there are also adverse effects when adults are victimized and subjected to violence in educational institutions.

Many psychological and physical impacts are associated with victimization. The physical symptoms are 1) sleep disorders, 2) fatigue, 3) headaches and stomach aches, 4) palpitations and 5) digestive problems. The psychological symptoms observed include 1) increased stress, and insecurity, 2) feelings of incompetence, 3) emotional distress, 4) depressive episodes or even depression, 5) lowered self esteem, 6) fear of being judged by others, 7) frustration, 8) professional burnout, 9) suicidal ideation, and 10) abuse of drugs, alcohol or medication.

Adverse effects can also impact the quality of work of a victim in his/her workplace: 1) absenteeism, 2) leaving the profession, 3) fear and mistrust of pupils and students, parents, colleagues and the principal or the administration, 4) declining motivation, 5) loss of credibility with students, parents, colleagues and the administration, 6) isolation, 7) increased relational conflicts (Jeffrey and Sun, 2006; Girard et al., 2003), and 8) loss of a sense of meaning, enthusiasm, or commitment on the job or in interpersonal relations.

2.4 CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE FOR SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

Many effects of violence experienced in educational institutions are observed at the organizational level. It is also important to address and intervene to limit adverse effects on adult victims, pupils or students, the work atmosphere and relations with parents. The adverse effects on the organization include high absenteeism rates, high staff turnover rates, a decline in teamwork cohesion and increased risk of errors in performing daily tasks. If harassment or bullying on the part of colleagues occurs, cliques may form and undermine both the overall atmosphere and interpersonal relations. Aggression among staff members may also constitute a significant adverse effect, along with the deterioration of the employer-employee relation of trust. Undermining the image or the reputation of the school may also constitute a significant side effect that has to be taken into consideration, because a reputation will take years to restore.



Taking action against violence

3



3.1 WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT VIOLENCE?

Many kinds of action can be taken to prevent instances of violence or to limit the consequences. These actions have to be adjusted to the circumstances. Here are a few suggestions for better managing these situations.

3.1.1 ASSESS THE SITUATION

- Recognize that violence in the workplace is a real, undesirable problem in organizations and that addressing it is a priority.
- Identify previous violent incidents with the different personnel categories, analyze them and draw up a profile of the situation specific to your workplace. This profile will be useful for identifying problem situations and establishing priority action.
- Cultivate ties with other decision-making bodies and organizations that can help prevent violence: governing board, board of directors, community organizations, public safety, etc. Evaluate the assistance and support that can be obtained from them.

3.1.2 TAKE ACTION AS INDIVIDUALS

- Identify risk and protection factors that exist in your work environment in order to determine those aspects that can help you to take a preventive position on violence (taken from Assess, 2006):
 - ▶ **As an individual**, become aware of your strengths and limitations, your experience, your understanding of violence, your physical and psychological condition, duties and degree of integration;
 - ▶ **For others**, identify client groups at risk (students with behavioural disorders or significant psychopathological disorders), visitors (parents, strangers, etc.), social roles (teachers, secretary, principal/administration, etc.), other staff members, members of the surrounding community and the specific cultural and social situation of the school;

- ▶ **In terms of facilities**, identify objects that could be used as potential weapons, identify access to communication systems (intercom, Internet, telephone), to facilities and furnishings and to the security system;
 - ▶ **In terms of the environment**, locate doors and exits, isolated locations, the layout of facilities and furnishings, open and closed areas, waiting rooms and the school's immediate surroundings (park, wooded area, vacant lot, proximity of a police station, etc.);
 - ▶ **In terms of organizational parameters**, take into account the number of employees, rules, procedures and policies, team work, the emergency intervention plan and available assistance;
 - ▶ **In terms of time**, consider the schedule, operating hours and days, breaks and movement of students and staff;
 - ▶ **In situational terms**, is there potential for a crisis situation, or an atmosphere of anxiety or insecurity in the establishment linked to a specific event, a declared threat or warning signs?
- Establish individual strategies by determining concrete actions to confront situations of aggression and to ensure your safety. These strategies might include identification of exits for leaving the premises quickly and actions to undertake to defuse a violent situation.
 - Make professional development a means of enhancing professional and personal self-awareness to improve classroom management skills and to practise interventions in order to prevent aggression or intervene when pupils or students engage in aggressive behaviours.
 - Identify resources and persons that can assist you with violent incidents (support programs for employees, unions, etc.) as well as possible forms of recourse.

3.1.3 TAKE ACTION AS A GROUP

- Create a task force that will set up an **action plan** addressing problems of physical and psychological violence and an emergency plan for crisis situations. It is important that employees of all employment groups be represented as well as various organizations in the community likely to be affected (police, community groups, etc.). The action plan must take into account the institution's specific characteristics, its culture and practices in the work environment.
- Develop a **code of ethics** for all personnel categories. The code of ethics deals with interpersonal relations and it must provide for a workplace that is free of harassment, intimidation and violence.
- Formulate a **code of conduct** in the establishment for pupils or students and, if need be, for parents. This code deals with acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, as well as consequences for non-compliance with the code.

- Formulate **procedures** indicating how visitors must behave while in the school.
- Adopt a **policy** on violence to formalize your intent, determination and commitment to prevent violence and the methods to be used. Employers and employees must work together to define the content in good faith so that everyone shares the chosen goals and methods. Girard, Laliberté and Dompierre (2003, p. 109) suggest some useful elements to include in a policy:
 - ▶ Guidelines on violence concerning the form, the nature, the object or the source (violence committed among pupils or students, by students towards adults or adults towards adults);
 - ▶ Procedures facilitating the reporting of incidents of a violent nature;
 - ▶ Explicit procedures for processing complaints;
 - ▶ Procedures for investigation, case analysis and review, and appeal mechanisms;
 - ▶ Procedures for accessing external specialized resources that can provide support to persons who need it following a violent incident;
 - ▶ Emergency measures to be undertaken when violent events occur;
 - ▶ Measures and sanctions to be implemented for aggressors;
 - ▶ Measures aimed to prevent conflicts and their impacts.
- Ensure that everyone is informed of the policy and the procedures implemented by the organization.
- Apply the established policy in a fair and consistent way to everyone, by not tolerating any act of violence within the establishment or during events that it organizes.
- Constantly revise the policy in light of events.
- Establish an emergency intervention team in which each member has well-defined roles and responsibilities (Beaumont and Sanfaçon, 2006). It is important to ensure that a leader is appointed to direct operations and that substitutes are identified should front-line persons be unavailable in the event of a crisis. Adopt instructions for individuals and the organization arrived at by a consensus between managers and intervention teams. Establish a list of telephone numbers required in such cases.



- Improve the internal and external physical organization of educational institutions in order to eliminate risk factors in a context of violence. This may involve upgrading the lighting in parking lots, installing a security desk at the entrance of the school, or a barrier to block direct access to secretaries, etc.
- Ensure training for personnel about the specific aspects of violence (difficult client groups, recognition of different forms of violence, warning signs of violent events, actions to be undertaken in cases of violence, defusing violent situations, conflict resolution, communication techniques, safe physical interventions).

3.2 WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WHEN INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE OCCUR?

Despite the implementation of violence prevention precautions and measures, violent incidents may occur. What should be done when it happens? Different ways of effectively managing a crisis situation can be considered, depending on the nature of the work situation, assessment of the violent person's potential dangerousness, and the evolution of the crisis situation (see Figure 1).

The type of intervention chosen must always reflect the objectives of security and ethics and ensure that the various players take responsibility. Table 1 presents do's and don'ts for interventions, depending on how the crisis situation evolves.

FIGURE 1 THE PHASES OF A VIOLENT CRISIS OF VIOLENCE (OR AGGRESSION)

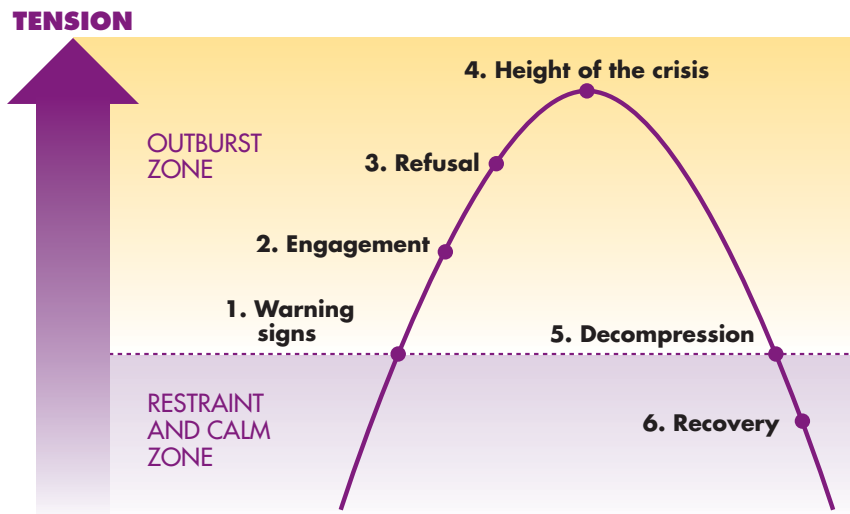


TABLE 1 DO'S AND DON'T'S BASED ON THE EVOLUTION OF A CRISIS SITUATION²

PHASE 1 WARNING SIGNS:
 be attentive to the first signs of tension
 in order to intervene as soon as possible

PERSON IN CRISIS	<p>FACTORS PRECIPITATING THE CRISIS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of injustice or personal feeling of powerlessness. • Emotional recall (the situation resembles an unpleasant situation experienced in the past and causes the person to relive strong emotions). • Acute stressor (pain, intoxication, intense fear, situational crises, etc.). • Physical health problems or pain. • Accumulated frustration. <p>BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exaggeration or noticeable change in behaviour: head/shoulders drawn back to appear imposing, cold gaze, hands on hips, finger-pointing, etc. • Psychomotor agitation: moving about, pacing, waving arms, trembling, etc. • Physiological reactions: rapid breathing, perspiring, flushed or pale complexion, etc. • Indicators of frustration: complaining, whining, raised tone of voice, aggressive expressions or actions (bared teeth), threatening gestures with a fist, etc.) 	<p>WHAT YOU SHOULD DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gauge the potential dangerousness of the person in crisis: emotional tension, conditional cooperation, resistance to cooperation, destructive behaviour (throwing or breaking objects), psychological intimidation, active resistance, physical aggression, serious assault, uttering serious threats. In the last three cases, the crisis must be physically managed to stop the aggressive action. In the last case, you have to buy time, negotiate, make the area secure and call an emergency intervention team. • Ensure your personal protection: keep at a safe physical distance; ensure you have access to an exit so you can quickly leave the premises; plan on a pretext to withdraw or a diversion; remain in communication with colleagues to get rapid assistance. • Try to establish contact with the person in crisis. • Show that you are receptive or provide assistance.
	PERSON DEALING WITH THE SITUATION	

2. Taken and adapted from MASSÉ, L., M. VERREAULT, C. VERRET, F. BOUDREAU and C. LANARIS (2011). *Mieux vivre avec le TDA/H à la maison*, Montréal, Chenelière Éducation.

- Adopt an empathetic attitude and use active listening; ask questions to help the person in crisis verbalize his/her frustrations; allow the person to express him/herself.
- Say nothing; give the person time to express him/herself.
- Repeat the last words spoken by the person to complete his/her thoughts and encourage him/her to keep on talking.
- Tell the person what you observe without making any judgment on the motives for his/her behaviour.
- Speak in a calm, slow and reassuring voice.
- If the person is out of control and does not seem to respond to conciliatory remarks, withdraw and allow the person to calm down.
- Play down the situation with humour in order to defuse the atmosphere.

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT DO

- Make remarks about the observed aggressiveness.
- Ask the person to apologize for his/her actions or words.
- Make the person feel guilty or judge the person.
- Speak loud or give orders.
- Prevent the person from expressing his/her frustration.
- Emphasize your status of authority or the person's status to make yourself heard.
- Touch or push the person in crisis.
- Confront, deride or take a condescending tone with the person in crisis.
- Adopt an aggressive posture: place your hands on your hips, point a finger, cross your arms.
- Stay in a place that is potentially dangerous or near any instruments that can be used as weapons.

PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT: process the crisis in words

PERSON IN CRISIS

- Agitation escalates.
- Asks unproductive questions, argues, is agitated, while refusing to calm down or do what he is supposed to do.
- No longer feels restrained/constraints or any social inhibitions (e.g. the person swears.)
- Communicates aggressively.

PERSON DEALING WITH THE SITUATION

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

- Continue with empathetic listening.
- Mirror the person's feelings (e.g. «You're angry.»)
- State an instruction to explain what is expected of the person or what he/she must do; frame the conflict with requests and suggestions.
- Bring the person back to the topic or the request that has been formulated.

PHASE 3 REFUSAL OR ESCALATION: establish limits

PERSON IN CRISIS

- Adopts defensive behaviours: offers excuses, complains, contradicts him/herself, accuses or insults others, cries, while refusing to calm down or respond to the request.
- Starts to lose control.
- His/her remarks may seem incoherent and unrelated to the situation or to your remarks; raises his/voice.

PERSON DEALING WITH THE SITUATION

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

- Set behavioural limits for the person in crisis by explaining which behaviour is to be stopped, the reason why this behaviour cannot be tolerated and the consequences that will occur if the behaviour does not stop.

- Recall the context of the intervention (people's roles, purpose of the intervention, etc.).
- Maintain psychological distance: do not allow yourself to be upset by the individual's aggressive speech.
- Create a diversion by drawing attention to something besides the reason for the tension.
- Separate adversaries (distance them from each other, break eye contact).

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT DO

- Show signs of impatience, condescension or lack of attention.
- Raise your voice (and this is discouraged in phase 1).
- Try to control or intimidate the person.

- Inform the person of the positive consequences if he/she complies with the instructions given. Make the person he/she has a choice.
- Limits must be clear, simple, reasonable and applicable.
- State the limits in a firm, but non-threatening tone.

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT DO

- Make ill-thought out threats, or state illogical consequences or consequences disproportionate to the act committed.
- Moralize.
- Enter into a long discussion about the consequences of his/her actions.
- Raise your voice.
- Physically restrain the person.

PHASE 4 HEIGHT OF THE CRISIS:

protect yourself and possibly-gradually withdraw

PERSON IN CRISIS

- Completely loses self-control and throws a tantrum, adopting verbally aggressive behaviours (yelling, insults, swearing, etc.) or physically aggressive behaviour (hitting, throwing objects, breaking equipment, etc.).
- He/she may assault others nearby or attack the physical environment.
- May also inflict self-injury.

PERSON DEALING WITH THE SITUATION

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

- Ask the person to withdraw to a calm place or to calm down, using a firm, but steady tone.
- Ask others present to move away.
- Slowly approach the person, if possible, and try to gently touch him/her; if the aggressiveness escalates, withdraw and wait.

PHASE 5 DECOMPRESSION OR WINDING DOWN:

let the aggressor collect his/her wits

PERSON IN CRISIS

- Tension released, both physical and emotional.
- Afterwards, the individual is often completely exhausted, empty.

PERSON DEALING WITH THE SITUATION

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

- Secure and reassure the person and find a peaceful spot for him/her to rest.

PHASE 6 RECOVERY:

re-establish contact

PERSON IN CRISIS

- The person is calm and has regained self-control.
- Agitation and tension have dissipated.

PERSON DEALING WITH THE SITUATION

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

- At this point, suggest a possible transition, such as moving to another place.

- Create a diversion or withdraw.
- If the safety of the individual or others present is in danger, ask for help and implement the available emergency measures.
- Back away toward the exit.

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT DO

- Stand with your arms crossed facing the person in a defensive position, saying that you are expecting him/her to calm down.
- Express exasperation or insult the person.
- Push the person to a wall or restrain the person against an obstacle.
- Order the person not to speak.
- Raise your voice.

- Allow the person a short period of time (10 to 30 minutes) so he/she can quietly collect his/her wits or recover.

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT DO

- Immediately engage the person in a discussion of the reasons for his/her crisis.
- Give a sermon or reproach the person.
- Mention a negative consequence right away.

- Gently resume contact with the person.

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT DO

- Force the person to talk, even if he/she is not ready.
- Interpret the situation for the person without allowing the person to talk.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Do not engage in a power struggle to establish your authority, do not make threats or give ultimatums.
- Do not engage in a relationship of dominance.
- Ask yourself if you are the right person to intervene (based on the roles defined by the establishment and your own interpersonal skills).
- Ensure that only one person intervenes with the individual in crisis.
- Allow the person in crisis to express his/her feelings and frustrations.
- Show empathy.
- Avoid giving orders.
- Avoid judging or blaming the other and attributing motives to his/her behaviours or psychological state.
- Make slow gestures.
- Take time; don't upset the person in crisis.
- Don't bring up the topic of behaviours, unless the immediate safety of someone is compromised (stick to the level of observations or expression of emotion).
- Do not focus on previous events.
- Maintain a calm but firm tone of voice, do not raise your voice or take a threatening attitude.
- Use physical restraint as a last resort, only at the height of the crisis and if you feel comfortable doing so. If not, turn to the people on the intervention team who have received specific training.
- Intervene as a team by letting a leader speak, direct the situation and make the decisions.
- Obtain the support of people who will make the setting safe and provide assistance if need be.

3.2.1 WHAT SHOULD YOU DO FOLLOWING A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

In the situations below, the persons responsible are indicated as follows:

V: VICTIM W: WITNESS U: UNION (DELEGATE) A: ADMINISTRATION

- Immediately following a critical incident, give first aid to the victim (respond to his/her physical needs, allow the person to leave the workplace or direct him/her to medical resources if necessary). Within 72 hours at most, offer psychological support (try to comfort the person, make him/her feel safe, calm the person and reassure the person about his/her reactions) [A].
- Provide support to witnesses and the actors involved: do a post-event review with all those involved and witnesses to promote debriefing and to help them detach from the event [A].
- Obtain assistance, if necessary, to complete administrative forms [UA].
- A few days after the critical event, check on the victim's state of health and if necessary, offer counselling services [A].

3.2.2 WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IN SITUATIONS OF HARASSMENT AND BULLYING?

- **Stop violent behaviours**
 - ▶ Resolve the situation so that no one is injured [VW].
 - ▶ Intervene verbally right after an incident, firmly indicating that the behaviour is unacceptable and have a conversation with the aggressor to make him/her understand that you are upset about having been targeted, but not intimidated by the situation [VW].
 - ▶ En the event of physical violence, take the victim to a safe place where support and follow-up are provided, while distancing the aggressor from the place of the incident [WA].
- **Determine, describe and report violent behaviours**
 - ▶ Document the details of the incidents associated with violence: nature of the aggression, the people involved, location of the incidents, the time, underlying reasons (personal characteristics, work, etc.), tone used, formulation (exact words used), circumstances, number of times and repercussions [VU].
 - ▶ Consult a colleague, a resource person from the employee support program to confirm impressions about situations experienced and if necessary help victims to formulate their complaints or obtain assistance [VWU].
 - ▶ If necessary, report the events to the school administration or to the appropriate authorities [VU].
- **Evaluate situations of violence**
 - ▶ Implement a complaint-processing structure, evaluate their relevance, make a judgment about violent incidents and make recommendations [UA].
 - ▶ Evaluate complaints in terms of the scope, frequency, duration and gravity, in order to choose the relevant means of settlement [UA].
- **Intervene following situations of violence**
 - ▶ Refer to the employee support program to find solutions or to ensure intervention with the employer in order to help solve the problem [VW].
 - ▶ Intervene directly with the aggressor to reinforce his/her sense of empathy, make him/her take responsibility, help him/her be accountable for his/her actions and to improve his/her social skills [A].
 - ▶ Impose the defined sanctions on the perpetrator of the violent incident. The sanctions must reflect the gravity of the actions, and be fair. They may take the form of a reprimand, a suspension, a transfer, a dismissal or legal proceedings [A].

The support and involvement of the institution's administration are indispensable, particularly when situations involve students, parents or work colleagues. If it concerns a conflictual situation that causes aggressive behaviours between two people, the administration may implement mediation sessions with the help of a person who is competent in this field, to help both parties to settle their conflict without aggression. When intimidation or harassment is involved, mediation is not pertinent, because the victim must be believed, and the aggressor denounced. Acts of violence are thus unilateral, and reparation must be made to the victim, who must be assured that the violence will stop. The aggressor must understand that he/she is subject to serious sanctions if he/she persists in aggressive behaviour. The administration has a crucial role to play in explaining the roles and responsibilities of personnel, in establishing the establishment's code and policy concerning violence in the school environment.

Rights and obligations with regard to **occupational health and safety**





Violence in the workplace, whatever the cause or form, may have effects on the health³ of the victim and the witness. Knowledge of two laws is particularly useful: the *Act respecting occupational health and safety*⁴ (AOHS) which deals with prevention and the *Act respecting industrial accidents and occupational diseases*⁵ (AIAOD) which deals with the indemnification of employment injuries and their consequences.

The AOHS stipulates the right of workers to have conditions of employment that have proper regard for his health, safety and physical well-being. This right is also stipulated in the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*⁶ of Québec and although in slightly different terms, in the *Civil Code of Québec*⁷ which also include the protection of dignity. Furthermore, the *Act respecting Labour Standards*⁸ stipulates that every employee has a right to a work environment free from psychological harassment and that employers must take reasonable action to prevent psychological harassment and, whenever they become aware of such behaviour, to put a stop to it. In more tangible terms, regard for these rights gives rise to obligations, on the one hand, for workers and on the other hand, for employers.

Thus, workers must, in addition to other obligations stated in section 49 of the AOHS:

- Take the necessary measures to ensure his health, safety or physical well-being;
- See that he does not endanger the health, safety or physical well-being of other persons at or near his workplace;
- Participate in the identification and elimination of risks of work accidents or occupational diseases at his workplace.

3. We are speaking here of health in its broad meaning and as defined by the World Health Organization: a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

4. R.S.Q., chapter S-2.1.

5. R.S.Q., chapter A-3.001.

6. R.S.Q., chapter C-12, section 46.

7. C.c.Q., article 2087.

8. R.S.Q., chapter N-1.1, section 81.19.

Clearly, we must protect others and ourselves by only intervening in violent situations if we have the knowledge and skills required to do so in a way that is safe for others and ourselves. In the same way, we must inform the employer of any violent situation of which we are victims or witnesses.

The AOHS also recognizes that a worker has a right to refuse to perform particular work if he has reasonable grounds to believe that the performance of that work would expose him to danger to his health, safety or physical well-being, or would expose another person to a similar danger (section 12 AOHS). However, the Act limits the exercise of this right if his refusal puts the life, health, safety or physical well-being of another person in immediate danger (section 13 AOHS). The AOHS also allows a pregnant worker whose working conditions may be physically dangerous to her unborn child, or to herself (for example, risk of injury to the abdomen) and on the advice of her physician, to be re-assigned to other duties involving no such danger. Failing a re-assignment that is in compliance, the worker will be removed from the position and indemnified by the Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CSST) (section 40 AOHS). Your union can advise you of the more specific terms and conditions concerning the exercise of the right of refusal or the right to preventive leave for pregnant workers.

Again, under the AOHS, the employer has obligations that are not comprehensively described in section 51. Generally, the employer must take the necessary measures to protect the health and ensure the safety and physical well-being of his workers. In this regard and in the context that concerns us, the employer must, in particular:

- See that the establishments under his authority are so equipped and laid out as to ensure the protection of the worker;
- Ensure that the organization of the work and the working procedures and techniques do not adversely affect the safety or health of the worker;
- Use methods and techniques intended for the identification, control and elimination of risks to the safety or health of the worker;
- Give the worker adequate information as to the risks connected with his work and provide him with the appropriate training, assistance or supervision to ensure that he possesses the skill and knowledge required to safely perform the work assigned to him;

In connection with the above, and as an example:

- All violent incidents of which we might be victims or witnesses, even if they do not cause absence from work, must be declared using an appropriate form or recorded in the register of work accidents, depending on the formula currently used by your employer;
- The employer must analyze work organization in order to detect potential risk of violence from the client group, staff members or persons from outside the workplace;
- The employer must, in accordance with the above, provide personnel with adequate information about the risks associated with their workplace; the employer must also ensure that appropriate training and supervision are provided (for example, exercises in restraining techniques [time-out]);
- Workplaces must be laid out so that access is controlled at all times;

- Work organization should ensure that staff members are not physically isolated from each other or alone in the establishment after work hours and unable to communicate in a case of emergency;
- An emergency measures plan must be prepared and regularly updated; all staff members must be familiar with the plan, and simulation exercises must be held on a regular basis;
- The employer (or the establishment, as the case may be) must adopt a policy on civility, harassment and all other forms of violence; all staff members and clients must be familiar with this policy, and awareness-raising, information and educational activities must be conducted on a regular basis; if such a policy provides for sanctions against those responsible for undesirable behaviour, the sanctions must be strictly applied.

When prevention proves inadequate and an event occurs (or a series of events) causing disability, a claim for a work accident must be submitted to the CSST. The AIAOD defines a work accident or an "industrial accident" as a sudden and unforeseen event, attributable to any cause, which happens to a person, arising out of or in the course of his work and resulting in an employment injury (injury or illness). Note that the fact that an event is theoretically foreseeable (for example, a disruption caused by a student with a pervasive developmental disorder) in no way diminishes the unforeseeable, sudden nature of the event when it actually occurs.



In the event that an employment injury involves absence from work, the Act provides for the payment of an income replacement indemnity equal to 90% of the net income. Collective agreements usually contain superior indemnities compared to those provided for in the Act. Your union can assist you regarding this matter.

The AIAOD also provides for indemnities for other consequences caused by an industrial accident, such as an indemnity for bodily injury in the event of permanent physical or mental impairment or an indemnity partially covering the repair or replacement of eyeglasses or damaged clothing. The cost of medical aid required by the condition, such as medication, physiotherapy, psychotherapy, etc., are completely covered by the CSST when it has accepted the claim. Should a claim be rejected, contact your union, which can provide guidance on contestation.

Get support from
your union if you are
**a victim of
or witness to
violence**



The CSQ's Declaration of Principles covers commitments pertaining to the following areas:

- Fundamental freedoms and human rights;
- The fight against discrimination in all its forms;
- The rights of children and young people and the realization of their rights to education and health;
- The rights of senior citizens, particularly their right to grow old in security and with dignity;
- The quality of life in activist environments and in workplaces, through the elimination of sexism, racism, homophobia, sexual, racial, homophobic and psychological harassment, as well as any other forms of violence.

Your union has made these commitments, and it is also your best ally in dealing with violence in your workplace. It is in a position to support the prevention procedures implemented in work settings, by making representations to the employer, and it can also support you through certain procedures to redress a wrong that you have sustained. Indeed, only the union can represent you before a grievance arbitration tribunal; based on its policies and practices, it can also represent you before the CSST. Moreover, it can direct you to other resources that can help you with other issues such as the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec, help centres for victims of criminal acts, and assist you with any other issues.

In a more immediate way, following a violent incident, the union can conduct an investigation to determine causes and the appropriate prevention measures to ensure violence doesn't recur. It can also ensure that the measures implemented by the employer yield the expected results.

However, the best guarantee of success for union interventions lies with the statements made by people involved in any violent situation that causes injury to education employees. The union encourages victims of violence to step forward and report these situations and supports victims in putting an end to such situations. Moreover, the employer is obligated to keep a register of minor accidents and incidents that do not cause absence from work, insofar, of course, as these events are reported. The union is entitled to obtain a copy of this register. Moreover, a sick leave following a violent incident in the workplace can be compensated by the CSST, which is more beneficial than disability insurance.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this document is to show people working in education how to recognize the various forms of violence to which they may be exposed, and to provide them with some tangible measures they can put to use. Since victims of violence may experience significant adverse effects on their personal, social and professional lives, it is very important that they learn about the solutions available to them.

The document provides a non-comprehensive set of examples illustrating the wide range of interventions in the field of violence prevention and intervention with violence and aggressive behaviours. Victims of violence in the schools should not feel that they are alone and they should be aware that support measures have been designed to put an end to these situations.

Finally, violence prevention in educational institutions involves everyone. All stakeholders have an important role to play in maintaining a healthy atmosphere in educational institutions and ensuring that everyone feels safe. That is why your union has joined forces with experts in the field of violence prevention, to provide you with an information and intervention tool to ensure you are better equipped to deal with school violence.

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www.ijvs.org

Canadian Observatory on School Violence Prevention:
www.preventionviolence.ca

Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence (PREVNet):
<http://prevnet.ca/home/language/en-US/tabid/36/default.aspx>



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