

PHYSICIAN REPORTING PROCESS:

Physical and Psychological Workplace Incidents in Northern Health



THE PROJECT & PROCESS:

To clearly define the pathway and process for Northern Health physicians to report physical and psychological incidents in the workplace. Family Physicians, Specialists, Medical Staff Association presidents, Chiefs of Staff, and Northern Health leadership were interviewed by an independent contractor using questions provided by Doctors of BC.



THEMES FROM PHYSICIANS INTERVIEWED:

- Lack of knowledge of the Northern Health Respectful Workplace Policy
- How to report incidents and respond to complaints
- Complaint process is difficult, isolating, and distressing: “In a situation where do we go? Who supports us?” “When distressed it is hard to find resources”
- Physicians feel unsupported and defenceless: “Culture among physicians when it comes to bullying and harassment is to tolerate it because they are physicians”



THE FINDINGS:

This project highlighted significant short comings in physicians’ understanding, application, and awareness of the [Physician Health and Safety Memorandum of Agreement](#), as well as the Northern Health Respectful Workplace Policy. The expectation is that physicians familiarize themselves with the regulations, policies, by-laws etc. when they sign on for privileges; however, this is not the reality.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Establish a collaborative working group with physicians, Northern Health, and Doctors of BC to:
 - a. Review Respectful Workplace Policy to ensure it is inclusive of physicians and encompasses their wants and needs:
 - i. Timely, fair, and transparent process
 - ii. Inclusive of physicians and a physician voice
 - iii. Support mechanisms for physicians
 - iv. Use of independent third party and/or mediation process when complex and if requested
 - v. Process must be resolved, and physicians must have closure



- b. Establish a process for dealing with complaints in small communities (physician vs. physician)
 - c. Build training for Respectful Workplace Policy; include in onboarding for new physicians to ensure it's clear and understood, also annual CME accredited Respectful Workplace Policy course for physicians and physician leaders
 - d. Create a one-pager/information package that guides physicians through the complaint process and support mechanisms
 - e. Display a one-page poster in physician workspaces and lounges
2. Establish a physician peer support and resource network
 3. Create a Respectful Workplace section on Northern Health's website so physicians can access the information offsite



WHAT HAS NORTHERN HEALTH DONE TO ADDRESS RECOMMENDATIONS?

Northern Health reviewed the physician recommendations and assessed what could be done to support the recommendations, as well as support the broader Northern Health teams and overarching policy.

1. Northern Health hired a third party to review the [Medical Staff Complaints and Discipline Policy and Toolkit](#), including interviews, focus groups and broader email feedback opportunities with the Doctors of BC, Medical Staff Associations, and medical staff from across NH.
 - a. A list of external [education resources](#) was created for medical staff who receive a complaint.
 - b. Education is in development for 2023. Contact John.Macdonald@northernhealth.ca for more information.
 - c. A one-page information sheet, webpage and other resources specific to the Respect in the Workplace Policy are currently in development for 2023.
2. Northern Health added two new, permanent positions to the Medical Affairs team: a Human Resources Advisor for Medical Affairs, [John Macdonald](#), and a physician co-lead Medical Director, Enhanced Medical Affairs, [Dr. Becky Temple](#). Together, this team is leading a fulsome review of the Northern Health Respect in the Workplace Policy, as well as developing an annual CME accredited Respect in the Workplace course for medical staff and leaders.
3. Northern Health partnered with Facility Engagement to host two CME accredited Town Hall sessions (both recorded for all medical staff and available by contacting Physician.Education@northernhealth.ca)
 - a. *What is available to medical staff who receive a complaint?* With presentations from the Doctors of BC, Medical Staff Associations, and the CMPA. This was accompanied by a [list of resources](#) that was created by Facility Engagement.
 - b. *Respect in the Workplace Complaints:* A joint presentation by the VP Medicine and the new Medical Director of Enhanced Medical Affairs