

ETFO DOTL Health & Safety Report for the Annual General Meeting on May 28, 2025

Dear Colleagues,

Yes, I am back! That was a short retirement! Carmela Dunlop unfortunately was unable to continue as the Joint Health and Safety Committee Representative (JHSC), and is very missed. I stepped back into my role in November. I must admit that I really did miss being a part of the DOTL Executive and a part of the workers' committee for the JHSC.

This report is to update the statistics provided by the DDSB Health and Safety Department (the JHSC) as well as reminding members of important safety considerations in our daily and occasional (LTO) assignments.

As daily OTs, sometimes we aren't given information needed about the students that we teach.

A Supply Teacher Handbook should be provided for the class you are covering and should contain information about students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and/or Behaviour Safety Plans (BSPs), as these students require extra support.

Please ask to be shown the Student Brief in the office when you arrive. This is a summary of individual student safety and de-escalation strategies and identifies the support persons trained in behaviour safety management that will respond to a request for assistance with an escalating student.

ETFO advises that although you are to **read the student briefs, you are not to sign your name** acknowledging that you have reviewed this confidential information, as historically, there were liability concerns from OT's not following the exact recommendations outlined in the brief. We are not given enough time to review the Briefs for us to recall all of the details contained therein for every student having a brief. Should you encounter any problems with administrators regarding the briefs, please let the Local know at 905-404-0411.

You must be given a classroom key and a fob. Ask for these items when you sign in, if it is not provided. If you are not given a classroom key and fob, ask if this is available for you in the Classroom Emergency Folder and if the key and fob aren't

in the folder, let the school office know immediately. If you encounter any problems obtaining **both** items, please call the Local immediately at 905-404-0411.

Violence in our schools continues to be a serious concern as incidents continue to increase year over year. A special JHSC sub-committee was formed in 2023, with committee members continuing to address this issue on an ongoing basis. The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, Occupational Health and Safety Department, performed Violence in the Schools on-site Inspections at a number of schools in 2023/24, resulting in a number of safety recommendations being implemented which were specific to those school population's needs.

Statistics: From August 1, 2024 to February 28, 2025 , there were 4,337 violent incidents reported. Of these reported incidents, 4315 involved students and 22 involved a parent/guardian or visitor. EAs were involved in 2,467 of the reported incidents, which is 57% of the total, ECE's were at 358 incidents (8%), permanent ETFO members were 1,153 incidents (27%), and our OT's were 76 incidents (2%).

Of all reported incidents during this period, 57% occurred in the primary grades, including Kindergarten (same as last year). Sixty-five percent of incidents involved students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP), and 64 % of incidents involved students with a Behaviour Safety Plan (BSP). Of those students with a BSP, 32% had their plan reviewed and updated as a follow up action. Thirty percent of all incidents requested a debrief. The majority of incidents and BSPs are from Kindergarten, with the number of incidents being highest in September and October and decreasing to almost half of that, by February. Injuries requiring health care (including accidents) have increased from previous years for Elementary teachers and Educational Assistants (EA's) and decreased for Early Childhood Educators (ECE's). The most common cause of injuries are aggression (violence) and being struck/or contact-by-an-object type of injuries. Aggression, struck/or contact-by-an-object, and slip, trip and fall, were the most common injuries resulting in time lost off work.

Information for DOTL Members having recently joined ETFO DOTL:

Under the Occupational Health & Safety Act (OHSA) workers and employers share responsibility for occupational health and safety. This internal responsibility system is based on the premise that workplace parties are in the best position to identify health and safety problems and to develop solutions. The Durham District School Board (DDSB) Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC)

meets 6 times per school year to discuss health and safety concerns in our schools, and includes union members representing workers as well as School Board members. Each school, and our Local office, has the minutes of the latest JHSC meeting including names of the JHSC members posted on their bulletin board in the staff room at schools, and in the hallway at our Local, for your perusal.

To help support you in your role as an Elementary Occasional Teacher (OT), and to ensure that you have the most current information, please be reminded that **all OTs are required to complete the Return to School – 2024/25 Health & Safety-Mandatory training** (if you haven't yet) by accessing the **Professional Learning Hub on the DDSB staff portal**. Under 'Courses for me' you will see **6 Mandatory modules**.

There is no time limit to complete the training. It has been suggested by the DDSB Health and Safety department that you access this training during your assigned preparation (prep) time in your daily assignments, or use part of a Professional Activity (PA) day if you are in a Long-Term Assignment (LTO) and are starting after the beginning of the 2024/25 school year. As OTs are often asked to give up prep time, along with permanent teachers, in order to fill vacancies when there are not enough daily OTs, it is expected that school administrators will be mindful of OTs self-training needs when assigning unscheduled prep coverage.

Violent Incident reporting is one of the **Mandatory training modules** and it outlines your **legal obligation to report** all violent incidents, whether you are directly involved in the violent incident with a student, staff, or parent, or whether you have witnessed a violent incident between students, student and staff, parent and staff, etc. **The reporting forms are found in the Staff Portal, Employee Self-Serve section under HRP Link, Forms Online. Information to help you fill out the forms is found on pages 6 & 7 of your current ETFO DOTL planner.** Please **document** and keep a copy for yourself of all incidents you may have with a student or parent. This is important in case of any false allegations. If an incident does occur, contact the school's administrator for an immediate debrief and then file your report online. It is felt that OTs are not reporting all violent incidents. There are no repercussions to you if you file a report. The information is used to help the student get the support they need and to protect other staff and OTs. Yes, it is difficult at times to file a report immediately, as we may need to run off to do yard duty, to another class, another school, or our after-school jobs or family first. You may create and submit your report retroactively, which will, of course, result in no immediate debrief of the incident. Multiple incidents may be filed on one form, e.g., Student- SK- May 29- 10:00 am -slapped OT, 1:30 -spit on

another student, eloped from classroom at 3:00 pm, etc.

In closing, for all members, please be mindful at all times to **wear safe footwear** to avoid slips, trips, and falls as improper footwear may impact your accident claim. **If you experience an accident, please seek medical attention immediately,** keeping your documentation in case the injury has later repercussions to your health. There have been a number of accidents recently involving OT's being injured while playing a ball game with students. If possible, stationary skill modelling with one or two students, rather than participating in the ball game would perhaps help to keep our members safe. We are reminded by the DDSB Health and Safety Department that the **Employee Family Assistance Program is available to all OT's** and can be used not only in a crisis situation. If you are struggling with any aspect of life, reach out by confidentially accessing the plan on the DDSB website. Your mental health is just as important as your physical safety.

Respectfully submitted by,

Harriet Hunt
JHSC Representative for DOTL
Executive Member-at-large