

ETFO DOTL Health & Safety Report - May 28/26 Annual General Meeting

This report is to remind our continuing members and advise new members of important safety considerations in our daily and occasional (LTO) assignments.

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 encouraged to complete the Return to School – 2025/26 Health & Safety- training** by accessing the **Professional Learning Hub on the DDSB staff portal**. 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 an LTO. As OTs are often asked to give up prep time, along with permanent teachers, 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 **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, under the new tab, ESS**. As well, **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 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 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 for you if you file a report. The information is used to help the students 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, but you can check the box on the report to request a scheduled debrief after the incident. Multiple incidents may be filed on one form, e.g., Student- SK- May 10 - 9:00 am -punched OT, 3:30pm -spit on OT, etc. All Violent incident reports are read by the Board's Health and Safety manager, the Board's Inclusive Student Services manager, me and George Taylor, our President. You should receive a copy of the report once the Principal at the school completes their portion of the form. If you haven't received a copy within 10 days, please let us know at 905-404-0411 or info@etfodotl.com and we will follow up.

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 Student Safety Plans (SSPs), as these students require extra support. **Please ask in the office for the Student Brief to be shown to you** 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 student briefs for us to recall all the details contained therein. Should you encounter any problems with administrators regarding the student briefs, please let the Local know.

You must be given a classroom key and a fob. (yes, it is in our collective agreement) Ask for these items when you sign in, if it is not provided. If you encounter any problems obtaining **both** items, please call the Local immediately at 905-404-0411.

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 all workers in the school as well as 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.

Violence in our schools continues to be a serious concern as incidents continue to increase year over year. A special JHSC sub-committee is continuing to address this issue on an ongoing basis, and recommendations from workers and Board members have been included in a preliminary (draft) report. The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, Occupational Health and Safety Department, (MOL) has performed Violence in the Schools on-site inspections at various schools, resulting in many safety recommendations being immediately implemented which were specific to those school population's needs.

Statistics: From August 2025 to February 2026, there were 4,614 violent incidents to all DDSB employees reported. Of these reported incidents, the majority involved students, (4,577) with Educational Assistants (EAs) involved in over half of the total, Designated Early Childhood

Educators (DECEs) were at 6%, permanent teachers were at 27%, and our OTs were at 96 incidents (2%). Of all reported incidents during this period, 55% occurred in primary grades, including Kindergarten. Sixty-eight and a half percent of incidents involved students with an IEP, and 58% of incidents involved students with an SSP. Of those students with an SSP, 29% had their plan reviewed and 13% had their plan updated. Forty-two percent of all incidents requested a debrief. Most incidents and SSPs are from Kindergarten, with the number of incidents being highest in September (1,156) and October (1,048) and decreasing to much less than half of that (451) by December. Injuries requiring health care (including accidents) have increased from previous years for permanent and OT teachers combined, and for EAs, and DECEs. The most common causes of injuries resulting in time lost off work are aggression (violence) and being struck/or contact-by-an-object type of injuries, as well as slip, trip and fall injuries. There were several accidents in the last school year 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 yourself, will help keep you safe. Also, a number of educators have been injured by holding a portable door open with one foot. (Please, don't use your foot as a door stop!) All portable doors that caused injuries have since been fitted with a guard on the bottom of the door. DDSB is continuing to place guards on all portable doors with the goal of having this safety upgrade completed by the end of June.

In closing, for all members, please always be mindful to **wear safe footwear** to avoid slips, trips, and falls as improper footwear may impact your accident claim through the Workers Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). **If you experience an accident, please seek medical attention immediately,** keeping your documentation in case the injury has later repercussions to your health. We are reminded frequently by the DDSB Health and Safety Department that the confidential **Employee Family Assistance Program** is **available to all OTs** on the DDSB website and can be used to obtain counselling services to assist you and your family with any of life's struggles. It's ok to ask for help. Your mental health is just as important as your physical safety.

Respectfully yours,

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