



HSA mourns loss of member David Bland; calls for commitment to reduce risk of workplace violence

January 21, 2005

BL10021

HSA members have reacted with shock to this week's violent and deadly attack on HSA member David Bland, a recreation therapist with the Richmond Mental Services Health Team.

"On behalf of HSA, I extend condolences to David's family, friends and co-workers. Words cannot express the sorrow we all are feeling at losing a member of our team, particularly under such violent circumstances," HSA President Cindy Stewart said.

While the employer, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, has been quick in responding to the incident, ensuring workers are offered the supports they need during such a difficult time, Stewart said HSA expects a full and thorough review of the incident will be undertaken with a view to improving workplace safety for HSA members.

"For some time, HSA has been raising the issue of workplace violence in the health care sector with employers and agencies like the Workers' Compensation Board. Members have told us that they feel less safe at work than they use to," she said. HSA members point to tight budgets, reduced resources and the increased frustration of patients and their families dealing with a stressed health care system as factors contributing to workplace injury.

In the aftermath of David Bland's death, HSA is working with Vancouver Coastal Health Authority to address specific concerns at his workplace.

"But our expectations don't end there," Stewart said.

"First and foremost, we are calling on government to acknowledge that workplace violence is a real concern - particularly in health care. The incident this week was not an isolated one. HSA members - in fact all health care workers - face the risk of violence at work."

WCB statistics show that up to 10 per cent of all accepted claims in the health care industry are related to violence - that is three to four times more than any other sector in BC.

HSA is also calling for government to follow through on a recommendation from the Auditor General last year that directs Health Authorities to assess work environments for risk of violence to staff safety and develop action plans to mitigate the risks.

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