

Preventing Workplace Violence



Objectives

At the end of this training you will be able to:

1. Explain what workplace violence is and the different levels of threat.
2. Tell how to recognize violent potential.
3. Cite techniques to diffuse potentially violent situations .
4. Describe how to respond effectively to workplace violence.

What is Workplace Violence?

Workplace violence can be any act of physical violence, threat or physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening, disruptive behaviors that occur in the workplace. PICORE WORLDWIDE

AN ASSAULT OR OTHER VIOLENT ACT/THREAT THAT OCCURS IN OR IS RELATED TO THE WORKPLACE AND ENTAILS A SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL HARM TO INDIVIDUALS OR DAMAGE TO COMPANY RESOURCES OR CAPABILITIES. SHRM

VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE IS A SERIOUS SAFETY AND HEALTH ISSUE. ITS MOST EXTREME FORM, HOMICIDE, IS THE FOURTH-LEADING CAUSE OF FATAL OCCUPATIONAL INJURY IN THE UNITED STATES. ACCORDING TO THE BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS CENSUS OF FATAL OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES (CFOI), THERE WERE 521 WORKPLACE HOMICIDES IN THE PRELIMINARY COUNT OF 2009 IN THE UNITED STATES, OUT OF A TOTAL OF 4,349 FATAL WORK INJURIES. OSHA

Participants in Workplace Violence:

Co-workers.

External visitors or customers to the workplace.

Former employees.

Family members or domestic partners

Workplace Violence is NOT:

Annoying behavior

Disliking a co-worker

A rude customer

RISK FACTORS

A NUMBER OF FACTORS MAY INCREASE A WORKER'S RISK FOR WORKPLACE ASSAULT, AND THEY HAVE BEEN DESCRIBED IN PREVIOUS RESEARCH [COLLINS AND COX 1987; DAVIS 1987; DAVIS ET AL. 1987; KRAUS 1987; LYNCH 1987; NIOSH 1993; CASTILLO AND JENKINS 1994].

THESE FACTORS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

CONTACT WITH THE PUBLIC

EXCHANGE OF MONEY

DELIVERY OF PASSENGERS, GOODS, OR SERVICES

HAVING A MOBILE WORKPLACE SUCH AS A TAXICAB OR POLICE CRUISER

WORKING WITH UNSTABLE OR VOLATILE PERSONS IN HEALTH CARE, SOCIAL SERVICE, OR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SETTINGS

WORKING ALONE OR IN SMALL NUMBERS

WORKING LATE AT NIGHT OR DURING EARLY MORNING HOURS

WORKING IN HIGH-CRIME AREAS

GUARDING VALUABLE PROPERTY OR POSSESSIONS

WORKING IN COMMUNITY-BASED SETTINGS

RISK FACTORS

- Sexually harassing, or obsessing about a co-worker: sending unwanted gifts, notes, unwanted calling, stalking
- Increased demand of supervisor's time
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Talking to oneself

RISK FACTORS

- Carrying a concealed weapon, or flashing one around
- Quiet seething, sullenness
- Refusal to accept criticism about job performance
- Sudden mood swings, depression
- Sudden refusal to comply with rules or refusal to perform duties
- Inability to control feelings, outbursts of rage, swearing, slamming doors, etc.

RISK FACTORS

- Instability in family relationships
- Financial problems combined with not receiving a raise or promotion
- Poor relationships with co-workers or management
- History of violent behavior
- Previous threats, direct or indirect
- Presenting and talking about reading material that is violent in nature

RISK FACTORS

- Blaming of others for personal problems
- Sudden change in behavior, deterioration in job performance
- Statement that he or she would like something bad to happen to supervisor or another coworker
- Paranoid behavior
- Sudden increased absenteeism

Different Levels of Threat

Low:

Tendencies toward agitation, blaming others, veiled threats, excessive use of profanity, entitlement, argumentative, inappropriate use of company equipment, firearm at home.

Moderate:

Indirect threats, sexual or violent notes, firearms in vehicles, inappropriate display of firearms, intentional bumping into another person, property theft, expressed suicidal threats, depressed, mood swings, persistent anger.

High:

Clear intent to harm, overt threats to kill, substance abuse exacerbating aggression, grabbing, striking, intense anger, exhibiting a weapon.

Different Types of Threat

Threatening communication begins with a type of stressor which escalates into additional stress, anxiety and/or depression. Usually the person has a hard time coping with life.

Divorce

Bankruptcy

Death in Family

Threat of loss of job

Loss of job

Recognizing Violent Potential

It can be very difficult to know when a person is going to be violent. While not all people will show the following signs, these types of behaviors and physical signs can serve as warning signs that a situation could turn violent.

One warning sign may not be a particularly strong predictor of violence but numerous warning signs increase the potential for violence

Recognizing Violent Potential (cont)

History of violence:

- Fascination with weapons, acts of violence or both.
- Demonstrated violence towards inanimate objects.
- Evidence of earlier violent behavior.

Threatening behavior:

- States intention to hurt someone.
- Holds grudges.
- Excessive behavior (phone calls, gift giving, obsessions).
- Preoccupation with violence.

Recognizing Violent Potential (cont)

Intimidating behavior:

- **Argumentative.**
- **Displays unwarranted anger.**
- **Uncooperative, impulsive, easily frustrated.**
- **Challenges peers and authority figures.**

Increase in personal stress:

- **An unreciprocated romantic obsession.**
- **Serious family or financial problems.**
- **Recent job loss.**

Recognizing Violent Potential (cont)

Negative personality characteristics:

- Suspicious of others.
- Sense of entitlement.
- Unable to take criticism.
- Feels victimized.

Marked changes in mood or behavior:

- Extreme or bizarre behavior.
- Irrational beliefs or ideas.
- Appears depressed or has heightened anxiety.
- Marked decline in work performance.

Recognizing Violent Potential (cont)

Socially isolated:

- History of negative interpersonal relationships.
- Few family or friends.
- Views the workplace as a home and coworkers are “family”.
- Has obsessive involvement in his or her job.

How to Spot an Aggressive Situation (SGAMP)

SPEAKING LOUDLY, FRANTICALLY OR QUICKLY.

GESTURING WILDLY.

AGGRESSIVE STANCES AND GESTURES SUCH AS

MAKING THREATS AND PERSONAL INSULTS.

POINTING, GETTING CLOSE, CLINCHING FISTS.

How to Diffuse Violence

THINGS TO DO WHEN DEALING WITH A POTENTIALLY VIOLENT PERSON:

ASSESS THE SITUATION IN YOUR MIND.

PROJECT CALMNESS.

BE PATIENT, EMPATHETIC AND ENCOURAGE THE PERSON TO TALK.

FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION ON THE PERSON SO THEY FEEL THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY.

MAINTAIN A RELAXED YET ATTENTIVE POSTURE, POSITION YOURSELF AT A RIGHT ANGLE INSTEAD OF DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE PERSON.

ASK FOR SMALL SPECIFIC FAVORS, SUCH AS IF YOU COULD TALK IN A QUIETER AREA.

BE REASSURING AND POINT OUT CHOICES.

ARRANGE YOURSELF SO THAT YOUR EXIT IS NOT BLOCKED.

Actions to AVOID when dealing with violent situations

DO NOT BE THE HERO.

**YOUR FOCUS SHOULD BE DIVERTING THE
AGGRESSIVE INDIVIDUAL AND KEEPING
OTHERS SAFE WITHOUT PUTTING YOURSELF
IN HARM'S WAY.**

**DO NOT MAKE PROMISES YOU CANNOT
KEEP.**

**DO NOT MAKE PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH
THE INDIVIDUAL.**

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How to Respond after an Incident

CONTACT LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT (911) AND FOLLOW THEIR INSTRUCTIONS.

CONTACT YOUR SUPERVISOR

CONTACT QUALITY ASSURANCE, DREW HILD 850-769-6001

GET PEOPLE AWAY FROM THE SCENE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

SECURE THE AREA IF POSSIBLE.

STAY CALM.

FTS Incident Reporting Policy

POLICY: All FTS team members are expected to report and document each unusual or critical incident involving an FTS team member and/or client. A FTS team member that files an incident report may not be subjected to any civil action by virtue of that incident report. FTS team members shall document incidents using the FTS Incident Report Form (See attached form.) Incident Report Forms may be found on the FTS website. An incident report form must be completed within 24-hours (or next business day) upon being informed of, or involved in, an incident.

The completed incident report form is to be given to the team member's immediate supervisor (or turned into the Executive Director or Clinical Quality Manager, should the team member's immediate supervisor be out.) All incident reports must be filled out completely with **no blanks** being left. Should something be not applicable on a line, then the team member should write NA.

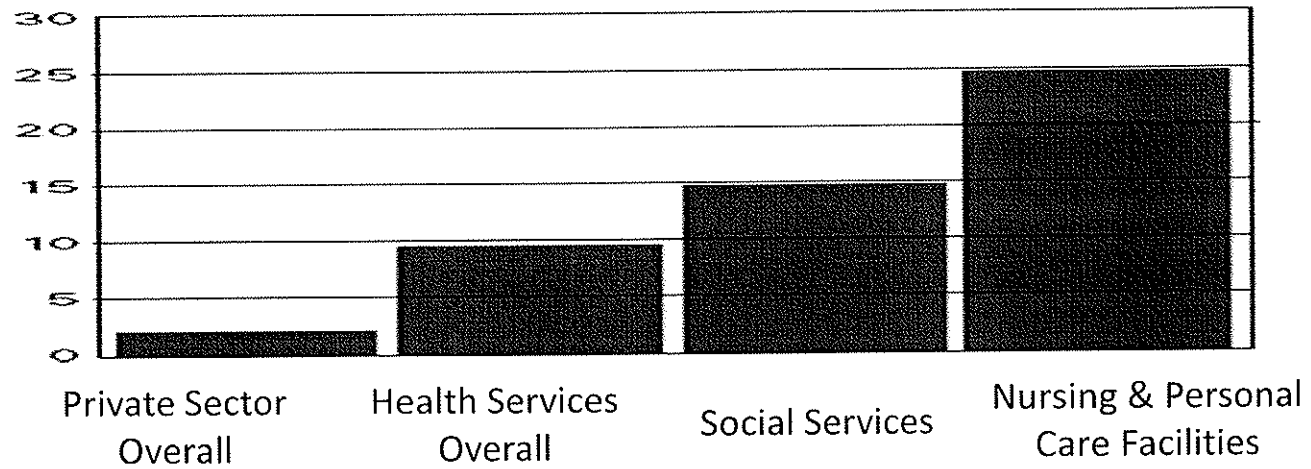
Categories of incidents that fall within the scope of *Mandating Reporting*, such as the:

- The abuse, neglect and abandonment of children
- The abuse, neglect and exploitation of the elderly
- The abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable adults

must be reported to the proper authorities immediately. Such incidents must be annotated on the incident report form. When an incident is reported to the Abuse Hotline, the team member should obtain the first name and ID number of the person who had received the report. Should the report be declined (or not accepted) the provider should obtain the name and ID number of the hotline staff member and document the reason for the refusal on the incident report form. Any person who makes a report to the Florida Abuse Hotline in good faith is immune from liability.

Follow-up to an incident or an outcome to an incident must also be documented on the incident report form. It is the responsibility of the team member to keep his/her supervisor informed of any follow-up or outcome concerning the incident, which in-turn should be noted on the incident report.

Incidence rates for nonfatal assaults and violent acts by industry, 2000
Incidence rate per 10,000 full-time workers



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2001). *Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, 2000*.

Prevention

- Install and regularly maintain alarm systems and other security devices.
- Arrange for a reliable response system when an alarm is triggered.
- Keep automobiles well maintained if they are used in the field.
- Lock automobiles at all times.

Prevention

- Provide comfortable client or patient waiting rooms designed to minimize stress.
- Ensure that counseling or patient care rooms have two exits.
- Arrange furniture to prevent entrapment of staff.
- Use minimal furniture in interview rooms or crisis treatment areas and ensure that it is lightweight, without sharp corners or edges and affixed to the floor, if possible.
- Limit the number of pictures, vases, ashtrays or other items that can be used as weapons.

Prevention

- Provide lockable and secure bathrooms for staff members separate from patient/client and visitor facilities.
- Lock all unused doors to limit access, in accordance with local fire codes.
- Install bright, effective lighting, both indoors and outdoors.
- Replace burned-out lights and broken windows and locks.
- Conduct Regular evacuation drills
- Conduct regular facilities inspections.

Summary

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE IS AN ASSAULT OR OTHER VIOLENT ACT/THREAT THAT OCCURS IN OR IS RELATED TO THE WORKPLACE AND ENTAILS A SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL HARM TO INDIVIDUALS OR DAMAGE TO COMPANY RESOURCES OR CAPABILITIES.

IT CAN BE PREVENTED THROUGH:

- PROACTIVE MEASURES TO REDUCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR VIOLENCE**
- OPEN COMMUNICATION**
- SECURITY**
- BEING AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS**
- RECOGNIZING STRESS**