

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

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WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

- Workplace violence is any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site.

WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

- It ranges from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and even homicide. It can affect and involve employees, clients, customers and visitors.

WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

- Robbery at a convenience store
- Customer yelling, threatening and/or assaulting
- Coworker yelling, threatening and/or assaulting
- Physical altercations
- Violent act (ex: bag of defecation)
- Suicide
- Homicide

WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

- Homicide is currently the fourth-leading cause of fatal occupational injuries in the United States. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI), of the 4,679 fatal workplace injuries that occurred in the United States in 2014, 403 were workplace homicides.

CRIMINAL INTENT

- Criminal intent workplace violence incidents is when the perpetrator has no relationship with the targeted establishment and the primary motive is theft. This type is generally a robbery, shoplifting or trespassing incident that turns violent. The biggest targets of criminal intent violence are workers who exchange cash, work late hours or work alone.

CUSTOMER/CLIENT

- During a customer/client workplace violence incident, the perpetrator is a customer or client of the employer and the violence often occurs in conjunction with the worker's normal duties. The occupations with the highest risk for customer/client violence are healthcare and social service workers whom are four times more likely to be a victim than the average private sector employee, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

CUSTOMER/CLIENT

- Assault from psychiatric patient
- Security guard
- Bus operator
- Customer service representative
- Police officer
- Postal worker

WORKER TO WORKER

- This type of workplace violence incident is generally perpetrated by a current or former employee, and the motivating factor is often interpersonal or work-related conflicts, or losses and traumas. The group highest at risk for this type of workplace violence incident is managers and supervisors.

WORKER TO WORKER

- Harassment: verbal, physical, sexual

BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE

- Bullying is generally defined as unwelcome behavior that occurs over a period of time and is meant to harm someone who feels powerless to respond.
- Verbal bullying includes teasing and threatening to cause harm.
- Social bullying in the workplace might happen by leaving someone out of a meeting on purpose or publicly reprimanding someone.

BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE

- These behaviors may or may not constitute unlawful harassment. Bullying is actionable under federal law only when the basis for it is tied to a protective category such as race or sex.

BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE

- Bullying can lead to emotional symptoms and alleged stress and/or mistreatment in the work environment.
- Case example: Feeling left out, cake thrown away.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Domestic violence in the workplace oftentimes is perpetrated by someone who is not an employee or a former employee. This type of incident is frequent because the abuser knows exactly where his/her spouse will be during work hours. Women are targeted much more frequently than men, and the risk of violence increases when one party attempts to separate from the other.

IDEOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

- Ideological workplace violence is directed at an organization, its people, and/or property for ideological, religious or political reasons. The violence is perpetrated by extremists and value-driven groups justified by their beliefs. Many of the recent active shooter and terrorist incidents across the globe fall under this bucket.

EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

- It is up to each employee to help make the department a safe workplace for all of us.
- The expectation is that each employee will treat all other employees, as well as customers or clients, with dignity and respect.

EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Depending on the parameters of the incident and the resources available, one or more of the experts in the functional areas listed below may be called upon to provide technical assistance in their particular field to help assess, investigate, and/or respond to a violent or potentially violent situation.

EMPLOYEES (INCLUDING MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS) ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Their own behavior by interacting responsibly with fellow employees, supervisors, and clients;
- Being familiar with Department policy regarding workplace violence;
- Promptly reporting actual and/or potential acts of violence to appropriate authorities;

EMPLOYEES (INCLUDING MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS) ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Cooperating fully in investigations/assessments of allegations of workplace violence;
- Being familiar with the service provided by the Employee Assistance Program; and
- Informing appropriate personnel about restraining or protective court orders related to domestic situations so that assistance can be offered at the work site.

MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS ARE
ADDITIONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Informing employees of the Department's workplace violence policy and program;
- Taking all reported incidents of workplace violence seriously;
- Investigating all acts of violence, threat, and similar disruptive behavior in a timely fashion and taking the necessary action(s);

MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS ARE
ADDITIONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Providing feedback to employees regarding the outcome of their reports regarding violent or potentially violent incidents;
- Requesting, where appropriate, assistance from functional area expert(s);
- Being cognizant of situations that have the potential to produce violent behavior and promptly addressing them with all concerned parties;

MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS ARE
ADDITIONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Encouraging employees who show signs of stress or evidence of possible domestic violence to seek assistance, such as the Employee Assistance Program; and
- Assuring, where needed, that employees have time and opportunity to attend training, e.g., conflict resolution, stress management, etc.

SECURITY OFFICE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Providing security and helping to defuse violent situations;
- Providing technical advice and support regarding physical security matters;
- Maintaining an ongoing security awareness program;

SECURITY OFFICE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Assisting with or conducting investigations of threats or incident of violence;
- Requesting, where appropriate, assistance from functional area expert(s);
- Acting as liaison with local authorities and outside law enforcement agencies; and

SAFETY AND HEALTH MANAGERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Assisting, when appropriate, Department officials with threat assessment and response activities;
- Assisting, when appropriate, in assessing the physical and social environment for potential negative and positive stressors (e.g., space, lighting, temperature, and noise level);
- Preparing trend reports and other analyses of safety and health incident report data; and
- Assisting in emergency preparedness activities.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Providing consultation and guidance to supervisors in dealing with employees who exhibit performance or conduct problems;
- Providing problem assessment for employees experiencing personal problems on and off the job;
- Providing short-term counseling and referral service to employees;

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Referring employees needing long-term counseling to appropriate treatment resources; and
- Participating in conducting threat assessments, when requested.

UNIONS AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Supporting the Department's workplace violence policy and program;
- Being cognizant of situations that have the potential to produce violence and promptly addressing them with all concerned parties;
- Being sensitive to stress generated by the workplace and assisting employees in alleviating it;

UNIONS AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Encouraging employees who show signs of stress to obtain assistance, such as that offered by the Employee Assistance Program; and
- Advising employees, if they inquire, of the procedures for reporting violent behavior.

HUMAN RESOURCES IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Assisting in assessing and investigating allegations of workplace violence raised by employees, supervisors, and/or managers, as requested;
- Providing technical expertise and consultation to help supervisors determine what course of administrative action is most appropriate in specific situations, including Alternatives to Discipline and use of Alternative Dispute Resolution process;

HUMAN RESOURCES IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Providing advice and counsel regarding personnel rules and regulations; and
- Offering training courses to assist employees to deal with situations which may lead to potential violence, e.g., conflict resolution, stress management, negotiation skills, etc.

PREVENTING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

- One of the major components of an effective workplace violence program is its strategy regarding prevention.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

- The best prevention strategy is to maintain an environment which minimizes negative feelings, such as isolation, resentment, and hostility among employees. Although no workplace can be perceived as perfect by every employee, there are several steps that management can take to help create a professional, healthy, and caring work environment. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Promoting sincere, open, and timely communication among managers, employees, and union representatives;
- Offering opportunities for professional development;
- Fostering a family-friendly work environment;

WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Maintaining mechanisms for complaints and concerns and allowing them to be expressed in a non-judgmental forum that includes timely feedback to the initiator;
- Promoting "quality of life" issues such as facilities and job satisfaction; and
- Maintaining impartial and consistent discipline for employees who exhibit improper conduct and poor performance.

SECURITY

- Maintaining a secure and physically safe workplace is part of any good strategy for preventing workplace violence. The Department uses a variety of security measures to help ensure safety. The measures used depend on the resources available in the area. These may include:

SECURITY

- The Federal Protective Service or designated security personnel to respond to requests for assistance;
- Employee photo identification badges and coded card keys for access to secure areas;
- On-site guard services;

SECURITY

- Guard force assistance in registering, badging, and directing visitors in larger facilities; and
- Other appropriate security measures such as metal detectors.

EDUCATION

- Education and communication are also critical components of any prevention strategy. The following types of education and communication are effective in preventing violence and other threatening behavior:

EDUCATION

- Communicating an awareness among employees, supervisors, and managers regarding all aspects of the Department's Workplace Violence Program: what it is, what to do when faced with possible problems, employee and management responsibilities, early intervention techniques, who to call for assistance, etc.; and
- Educating employees and communicating to them techniques designed to effectively deal with conflict resolution, stress reduction, etc.

PERFORMANCE/ CONDUCT INDICATORS

- Being aware of performance and/or conduct problems which may be warning signs of potential trouble is good prevention strategy. These signs may show up in perpetrators of violence, those who are victims, and those involved in domestic violence. Although it is possible that only one of these indicators will occur, it is more likely that a pattern will occur or that they will represent a change from normal behavior.

PERFORMANCE/ CONDUCT INDICATORS

- Remember that the presence of any of these characteristics does not necessarily mean a violent act will occur. They may be indicators of another type of problem such as being ill, depressed, bereaved, etc. Some examples of performance and/or conduct indicators are listed below (listing is not intended to be all inclusive):

PERFORMANCE/ CONDUCT INDICATORS

- **Attendance problems** – excessive sick leave, excessive tardiness, leaving work early, improbable excuses for absences;
- **Adverse impact on supervisor's time** – supervisor spends an inordinate amount of time coaching and/or counseling employee about personal problems, re-doing the employee's work, dealing with co-worker concerns, etc.;
- **Decreased productivity** – making excessive mistakes, poor judgment, missed deadlines, wasting work time and materials;

PERFORMANCE/ CONDUCT INDICATORS

- **Inconsistent work patterns** – alternating periods of high and low productivity and quality of work, inappropriate reactions, overreaction to criticism, and mood swings;
- **Concentration problems** – easily distracted and often has trouble recalling instructions, project details, and deadline requirements;
- **Safety issues** – more accident prone, disregard for personal safety as well as equipment and machinery safety, needless risks;

PERFORMANCE/ CONDUCT INDICATORS

- **Poor health and hygiene** – marked changes in personal grooming habits;
- **Unusual/changed behavior** – inappropriate comments, threats, throwing objects;
- **Evidence of possible drug or alcohol use/abuse;**

PERFORMANCE/ CONDUCT INDICATORS

- **Evidence of serious stress in the employee's personal life** – crying, excessive phone calls, recent separation;
- **Continual excuses/blame** – inability to accept responsibility for even the most inconsequential errors; and/or
- **Unshakable depression** – low energy, little enthusiasm, despair.

BEING MINDFUL OF WORKPLACE STRESS

- Having an awareness of one's workload, work place responsibilities and expectations.
- The ability to communicate one's needs openly with a supervisor.
- How various professions might have unfair or unhealthy expectations on their employees.

EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

- What can happen if one does not have healthy coping mechanisms or outlets to deal with their stress and exposure to a violent event?
- The different emotions that arise in individual's experiencing chronic stress.
- How one's behavior can be affected when dealing with chronic stress and trauma.

VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA FOR THE COLLECTIVE GROUP

- How a traumatic event can lead to chronic stress in the work environment and for its employees.
- The impact of a traumatic event and violence for a collective group.
- How the collective group can support and help one another when dealing with trauma and chronic stress.

DISORDERS THAT CAN ARISE

- Exposure to workplace violence can cause and exacerbate emotional symptomatology such as stress, anxiety, fear, anger, sadness, despair, trauma, depression, etc.

MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER

- Characterized by at least two weeks of low mood that is present across most situations. It is often accompanied by low self-esteem, loss of interest in normally enjoyable activities, low energy, and pain without a clear cause. People may also occasionally have false beliefs or see or hear things that others cannot.

ACUTE STRESS DISORDER

- Development of severe anxiety, dissociation, and other symptoms that occurs within one month after exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor (e.g., witnessing a death or serious accident). As a response to the traumatic event, the individual develops dissociative symptoms. Individuals with acute stress disorder have a decrease in emotional responsiveness, often finding it difficult or impossible to experience pleasure in previously enjoyable activities and frequently feel guilty about pursuing usual life tasks.

ACUTE STRESS DISORDER

- Either during or following the distressing event, the individual has 3 or more of the following dissociative symptoms:
- A subjective sense of numbing, detachment, or absence of emotional responsiveness
- A reduction in awareness of his or her surroundings (e.g., “being in a daze”)
- Derealization
- Depersonalization
- Dissociative amnesia (i.e., inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma)

ACUTE STRESS DISORDER

- The disturbance in an acute stress disorder must last for a minimum of 3 days and a maximum of 4 weeks, and must occur within 4 weeks of the traumatic event.

ADJUSTMENT DISORDER

- Adjustment disorder is an abnormal and excessive reaction to an identifiable life stressor. The reaction is more severe than would normally be expected and can result in significant impairment in social, occupational, or academic functioning. Symptoms must arise within three months of the onset of the stressor and last no longer than six months after the stressor has ended.

ADJUSTMENT DISORDER

- Adjustment disorder often occurs with one or more of the following: depressed mood, anxiety, disturbance of conduct (in which the patient violates rights of others or major age-appropriate societal norms or rules), and maladaptive reactions (i.e. problems related to work or school, physical complaints, social isolation).

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

- Develops after a person is exposed to a traumatic event, such as sexual assault, traffic collision or other threats on a person's life. Symptoms may include disturbing thoughts, feelings, or dreams related to the events, mental or physical distress to trauma-related cues, attempts to avoid trauma-related cues, alterations in how a person thinks and feels, and an increase in the fight or flight response.

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

- These symptoms last for more than a month after the event
- More than six months is classified as “chronic”

CASE EXAMPLE: MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENT

- Applicant was stuck inside the cabin of his truck. Claustrophobic. Terrified his truck would catch on fire. PQME in Psychology diagnosed him with PTSD. Had fractured his cervical spine. Determined that his trauma was a compensable psychological injury. Exception of being a violent act Labor Code 3208.3(b)?

CASE EXAMPLE: FALLING OFF LADDER, HITTING HEAD

- Violent act *Labor Code 3208.3(b)* defined as, “an act that is characterized by strong physical force, extreme or intense force, or an act that is vehemently or passionately threatening.”