
Workplace Violence Prevention

Prevention

Recognition

Response

Resources

Workplace Violence Prevention

What is workplace violence?

Workplace violence is defined as any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the workplace. A workplace may be any location, either permanent or temporary, where an employee performs any work-related duty.

Who can be involved in workplace violence?

- Strangers (criminal intent)
- Employees vs. customers/clients
- Employees vs. employees or supervisors
- Victims of domestic violence which affects the workplace

What are the signs of a troubled work environment?

- Chronic labor /management disputes
- Extraordinary number of injury claims
- Frequent employee grievances or complaints, particularly of harassment
- Understaffing or excessive demands for overtime
- High worker stress
- Authoritative style of management

What are the levels of violence and types of behaviors?

- **Level 1: Early Warning signs**
 - Refuses to cooperate with those in authority
 - Spreads rumors and gossip with the intention of harming others
 - Consistently argues with superiors, employees, colleagues or clients
 - Constantly swears at others
 - Makes unwanted sexual comments
 - Pounds on counters or desks, slams doors
 - Shouts, screams or yells
 - Harasses others

Employees who observe these warning signs should document the offending behavior right away and report their concerns to a supervisor or another appropriate contact. As a supervisor, you should meet privately with the offending individual as soon as possible to discuss the concerns and remind them of your workplace standards and behavioral expectations.

Workplace Violence Prevention

- **Level 2: Escalation**

- Argues increasingly with others at work
- Repeated violations of policies and procedures
- Steals and/or sabotages company or a co-worker's property for revenge
- Verbally expresses wishes to hurt co-workers and/or management
- Sends violent sexually suggestive notes to co-workers and/or management
- Perceives that they are being victimized by the organization (them against me)
- Stalks others
- Physically blocks someone from exiting an office
- Trespasses; invades one's privacy
- Uses intimidating behaviors
- Threatens others

Employees should appear calm, document the behavior as soon as possible, and notify a supervisor or appropriate contact. As a supervisor, you should do whatever you can to diffuse the situation and take necessary disciplinary actions.

- **Level 3: Heightened escalation, usually resulting in an emergency response**

- Violates restraining order by spouse
- The individual's frequent displays of intense anger result in:
 - Recurrent suicidal threats
 - Recurrent physical assaults
 - Destruction of property
 - Engaging weapons to harm others
 - Murder, rape, arson

Employees and supervisors should try to remain calm, secure safety for yourself and others immediately, and call 911 and/or appropriate building security officials.

Workplace Violence Prevention

Prevention

- Early intervention is the key to prevention! Your early intervention will:
 - Help a troubled employee.
 - Maintain safety of employees.
 - Keep the organization from dealing with workplace violence and the trauma it creates.
 - Prevent related consequences such as damaged morale, lowered productivity, decreased teamwork.

- Promote and create a safe workplace:
 - Encourage employees to come to you for issues/concerns of any nature.
 - Ask employees to report any strange or dangerous behaviors; assure them that:
 - Their concerns will be taken seriously.
 - There will be no repercussions or retaliation.
 - Promote respectful treatment by everyone to everyone.

Recognition and Awareness

- Look for patterns of behaviors that include several of the following:
 - Overreacting to simple problems.
 - Aggressive and erratic behavior, such as verbal abuse, harassment and threats.
 - Decrease or inconsistency in productivity.
 - A formerly good employee makes too many mistakes or missed deadlines.
 - Excessive absenteeism or tardiness.
 - Excessive demands on supervisor's time.
 - Poor interaction with co-workers.
 - Over-reaction to criticism.
 - Radical mood swings.
 - Memory or concentration problems.
 - Deteriorating grooming habits.
 - Unsafe work habits and recklessness.
 - The need to blame others.
 - Severe depression.
 - Withdrawal from social contact.
 - Evidence of personal stress, such as divorce, child custody, death
 - Abuse of alcohol and other drugs.
 - Fascination with weapons.
 - Paranoid or irrational ideas.
 - Romantic obsession in someone "they can't have."

Workplace Violence Prevention

Response

- **When an employee reports concerns, leaders need to begin an intervention process:**
 - Identify the troubled employee / perpetrator.
 - Analyze the perpetrator's behavior.
 - Determine if his/her behavior varies from usual behavior.
 - Document the employee's performance and any erratic/aggressive behavior.
 - Make notes regarding tardiness, absenteeism, patterns of productivity problems, minor issues with co-workers, etc.
 - Present employee with evidence.
 - Be compassionate and understanding.
 - Firmly explain that his/her behavior and /or performance has been unacceptable.
 - Keep the discussion related to the job.
 - Focus on future expectations.
 - Express support for employee.
 - Offer EAP.
 - Provide disciplinary action as needed, with assistance from HR.

- **Immediate threats or danger:**
 - Call law enforcement / 911
 - If confronting a situation,
 - Ask bystanders to leave.
 - Be patient and reassuring.
 - Don't judge behaviors.
 - Have an alert, calm and non-threatening expression.
 - Stay at least five feet away.
 - Speak calmly.
 - Ask what's troubling him/her - let them talk. Talking out the anger may help diffuse the situation.

Workplace Violence Prevention

Employer Resources

- Immediate Supervisor
- Subsequent Levels of Management
- TVA/RT Team
 - TVA/RT = Threat and Violence Assessment and Response Team
 - Members:
 - General Manager, Human Resources
 - Risk Manager
 - Safety Engineer
 - Designated HR Staff
 - Others as needed (refer to Procedures) including:
Applicable Business Center/Office/Agency Workplace Violence Prevention Coordinator, General Manager, Communications, representatives from Organizational & Employee Development, Emergency Services Business Center, the 911 Center (Sheriff's staff member), law enforcement personnel, employee assistance program staff, and psychiatric/medical professionals.
- HR Intranet Site (http://intranet/human_resources/home/)
 - Procedures
 - Incident Reporting Form
 - Important Contacts and Phone Numbers
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
 - 4 Free Visits per Incident per year
 - Phone: 941-917-1240 or 1-800-425-7764
 - Completely confidential - third party administrator
 - For stress associated with finances, sickness, family/personal problems, grieving, etc.
- SCG Classes (TRAC) (see next page for details)
- OED Library (Admin Ctr, 5th Floor)

Workplace Violence Prevention

Learning Resources

SCG Classes related to Preventing Workplace Violence (Available via TRAC)

- Conflict Resolution Skills
- Reasonable Suspicion: Recognizing Signs of Substance Abuse
- Coping with Difficult People
- ADA & FMLA
- Classification & Compensation
- Coaching for Peak Performance
- Diversity...and Successfully Managing It
- Employee Relations and Dispute Resolution
- Employee Selection & Interviewing Using Core Competencies
- Performance Management for Leaders
- Prevention of Harassment for Leaders

Videos Available in the OED Library (Available in Admin Ctr, 3rd Floor)

- *Diversity: Food for Thought*, by Coastal Human Resources
- *Sexual Harassment: New Behaviors, New Issues*, by Pool & Crew
- *Myths Vs. Facts: How to Manage Sexual Harassment*, by BNA Communications
- *The Practical Coach*, by Media Partnership Corp.

Workplace Violence Prevention

Learning Resources (cont'd)

Books Available in OED Library (Available in Admin Ctr, 3rd Floor)

- *The Gift of Fear*, by Gavin DeBecker
- *Coaching & Counseling*, by Crisp Publications
- *Handling the Difficult Employee*, by Crisp Publications
- *The Bad Attitude Survival Guide*, by Harry E. Chamber
- *The Human Touch Performance Appraisal*, by Charles M. Cadwell
- *Performance Reviews*, by Ken Langdon & Christina Osborne
- *Handling Diversity in the Workplace*, by AMI Publishing
- *Managing Change at Work*, by Crisp Publications

Videos Available in the Risk Library (Available in Admin Ctr, 3rd Floor)

- *Workplace Violence - Recognizing and Defusing Aggressive Behavior*
- *Workplace Violence - The Calm Before the Storm*
- *Alcohol Training for Transit Supervisors*
- *Drug and Alcohol Training for CDL Drivers*
- *Drug and Alcohol Training for Transit Supervisors*
- *Reasonable Suspicion Training*

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Other Resources

Web-sites:

- www.thecolumbuscoalition.org/work/business2.php
- www.thecolumbuscoalition.org/docs/notebook.pdf
- <http://www.fcadv.org/centers.html>
- <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence/>

Local Agencies:

- **Abuse and Family Violence Services**
 - Child Protection Center - 941-365-1277
 - Dept. of Children and Families - 941-483-5922
 - Family Partnership Center - 941-756-3007
 - Hope Family Services Inc. - 941-755-6805
 - Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center - 941-365-1976
 - Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence Hotline -800-500-1119

- **Addiction and Counseling Services**
 - Alcoholics Anonymous - 941-951-6810
 - Al-Anon and Alateen - 941-749-1750
 - Narcotics Anonymous - 941-957-7910
 - Sarasota Mental Health Community Center - 941-953-3477
 - Women's Support Center of South Sarasota County - 941-485-9724

- **Family Violence Advisory Council**
 - Contact: James Schulz, Health & Human Services / Social Services
 - jschulz@scgov.net
 - 861-2900



S - See the early warning signs - be aware of behaviors and situations

A - Act asap and appropriately when an incident occurs

F - Follow-up by completing incident reporting forms within 1-2 days

E - Encourage others to discuss their concerns - don't wait until it's too late

Don't Walk By Something Wrong!