

TAKING CONTROL OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE



Second Edition

A Training Program
for Supervisors and Managers

Participant Manual

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Taking Control of Workplace Violence
Second Edition
Participant Manual

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Taking Control of Workplace Violence

Program Presentation

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this program, you will be able to:

- Define workplace violence.
- Describe the Company's commitment to preventing and controlling workplace violence.
- Describe societal, organizational, and personal factors that contribute to workplace violence.
- Identify warning signs and profiles of people at risk for committing violent acts.
- Know what to do when faced with threats or threatening behavior.
- Understand the Company's Workplace Violence Policy.
- Understand the Company's approach to handling high-risk employee security situations.
- Understand the Company's High-Risk Termination procedure.

Agenda

- Introduction
- *Taking Control of Workplace Violence* video
- Discussion of workplace violence and prevention
- Application of information to real-life scenarios

Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is a major cause of injuries and deaths in this country. The safety and security of Company employees are of vital importance to the Company.

Workplace violence consists of any real or perceived act or threat of a physical or verbal nature that is committed in the workplace.

It includes any conduct that arouses fear, hostility, intimidation, or fear of harm for an individual's personal safety or the safety of co-workers, family, friends or property.

Taking Control of Workplace Violence

Taking Control of Workplace Violence Video

As you watch the video, watch for:

- Hiring and firing procedures that help lower the risk of violence.
- Dealing with threats and threatening behavior.
- Using internal and external resources to resolve conflicts.
- Training to reduce stress and improve working relationships.
- Procedures to safely respond to emergency situations.

Taking Control of Workplace Violence

Reducing Workplace Violence

It is important for organizations to take practical steps to prevent workplace violence before it can escalate to a point where people are hurt or killed.

The Company has made a commitment to addressing workplace violence by presenting this training program.

There are many theories as to why workplace violence is so prevalent. Some researchers believe that the workplace mirrors the general level of violence in society.

Write down other factors that contribute to workplace violence from the group discussion.

Other workplace violence experts put part of the blame on the increasing stress in organizations caused by the rapid rate of change in the workplace, which results in re-engineering, downsizing and increased workloads.

Write down other activities in organizations that could contribute to workplace violence from the group discussion.

Taking Control of Workplace Violence

There are a number of personal factors that might also contribute to workplace violence. Government publications include the following "profile" of people who have been violent in the workplace:

- Males ages 35-50
- Midlife transition, dissatisfied with life
- Loner, no support system, low self-esteem
- History of being disgruntled during employment
- Projected shortcomings onto others
- History of intimidating co-workers and supervisors.
- Felt persecuted, lacked empathy.

In many of the reported cases of workplace violence, the perpetrators showed warning signs of violent behavior. These warning signs included:

- Direct or veiled threats of harm
- Intimidating, belligerent, harassing, bullying or other inappropriate and aggressive behavior
- Numerous conflicts or grievances with supervisors and other employees
- Bringing a weapon to the workplace, brandishing a weapon in the workplace, making inappropriate references to guns or fascination with weapons
- Statements showing fascination with incidents of workplace violence, statements indicating approval of the use of violence to resolve a problem, or statements indicating identification with perpetrators of workplace homicides
- Statements indicating depression (over family, financial and other personal problems) to the point of contemplating suicide
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Extreme changes in behavior

Taking Control of Workplace Violence

As supervisors and managers, it is important for you to be alert for these warning signs. Some of the ways to do this are:

- Get to know your employees.
- Encourage communication and information sharing with employees.
- Set clear standards using leadership skills.
- Look and listen for direct and indirect threats.
- Intervene early and assist with problems; utilize the services of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), if necessary.
- Document and report unusual behavior.
- Be particularly alert for extreme changes in behavior or performance.

For a person at risk for violence to actually become violent in the workplace, there is often an event or experience (or series of events or experiences) that starts, or ignites, the violent behavior.

Examples of these events and experiences are:

- Termination
- Demotion
- Being upset about disciplinary action
- Situations where the person did not feel valued or that they could make a difference

Some of these events may have occurred outside the workplace. For example, the triggering event might be a divorce, financial problem, loss of a loved one, development of a mental illness or some other significant stressor in the employee's life.

When you are faced with a potentially violent individual who is upset, agitated or threatening, specific actions will help de-escalate the situation.

Write down these actions from the group discussion.

Taking Control of Workplace Violence

Other actions that will help de-escalate the situation are:

- Maintaining a relaxed, yet attentive posture
- Positioning yourself at an angle rather than directly in front of the person
- Acknowledging the other person's feelings
- Calmly describing the consequences of any violent behavior
- Using delay tactics that will give the person time to calm down (e.g., offering a drink of water)
- Being reassuring and pointing out choices; breaking big problems into smaller and more manageable problems

Some actions could escalate a potentially violent situation and should be avoided. Some examples are:

- Using communication styles that would generate hostility or that could be perceived as a brush-off, a runaround or condescending
- Rejecting all the person's claims from the start
- Posing in a challenging manner (e.g., hands on hips, crossing arms, finger pointing, long periods of eye contact)
- Making sudden movements that could be perceived as threatening
- Trying to make the situation less serious than it is
- Making false statements or promises that you can't keep
- Invading the individual's personal space (keep 3-6 feet between you and the other person)

Hiring Procedures

Workplace violence prevention begins during the hiring process.

- The Company requires all job applicants to be thoroughly screened.
- Human Resources uses many methods to gather information on a prospective employee before a job is offered, including performing criminal background checks and reference checks.

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Termination Procedures

The termination process is a potential source of workplace violence.

- When an employee is terminated, determine if there are any current indications for violent behavior or if there have been any previous concerns of violence involving the employee.
- If so, the employee might be considered a high-risk termination. You should contact the appropriate Company resource for advice and/or follow any existing Company procedure.

Training

Education about workplace violence is one of the most fundamental steps for preventing it.

- All current supervisors and managers should be trained.
- Supervisors and managers should review the Company's Workplace Violence Policy with their employees.

Small Group Discussion Activity

Scenario #1

It appears to you that a male employee seems to be obsessed with a female coworker, although the female employee has not come to you (her boss) to complain.

Plan of Action:

Taking Control of Workplace Violence

Scenario #2

It has been reported to you that two employees were involved in an altercation during the shift and that it will be settled after work. One of the employees has shown aggressive and belligerent behavior recently, accusing the other employee of attempting to sabotage his employment at the company.

Plan of Action:

Scenario #3

A female employee, who is an excellent customer service representative, has been frequently absent from work in the last three months, as well as spending an excessive amount of time on the telephone making personal phone calls.

Plan of Action:

Scenario #4

The receptionist calls you to report that a male employee who was terminated two weeks ago has been seen driving through the parking lot on several occasions over the past few days.

Plan of Action:

Taking Control of Workplace Violence

Scenario #5

The night warehouse manager tells you that one of her employees has been making comments like "If I ever lost my job, I would go down in a blaze of glory." The manager also tells you that this same employee has been missing work lately and is currently going through a divorce.

Plan of Action:

Key points to minimize workplace violence

- Recognize changes or warning signs in employees.
- Respond to conflicts or inappropriate behavior as early as possible.
- Remember that any threat requires follow-up and investigation.
- Follow the procedures in the Company's Workplace Violence Policy.

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Notes



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