



Risk Control Focus April 2019

Effective Strategies for Preventing Workplace Violence

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) defines workplace violence as, any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) breaks down the types of workplace violence into four different categories:

- Violent acts by criminals who have no other connection with the workplace but enter to commit robbery or another crime.
- Violence directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, students, inmates, or any others for whom an organization provides services.
- Violence against coworkers, supervisors, or managers by a present or former employee.
- Violence committed in the workplace by someone who doesn't work there but has a personal relationship with an employee-an abusive spouse or domestic partner.

Signs of Potential Workplace Violence

- Watch out for direct or veiled threats.
- Look out for intimidating or aggressive behavior.
- Be alert to employees bringing weapons to the workplace or employees who seem exceedingly fascinated with firearms and/or violence.
- Pay attention to employees who appear to be going through a difficult time.
- Look for employees who suddenly start showing up late or not showing up at all that previously were always on time.
- Pay attention to workers who show contempt for fellow workers and or superiors.
- Is a worker acting paranoid?

According to the FBI, "Employers have a legal and ethical obligation to promote a work environment free from threats and violence."

Strategies/Prevention Tips

- Have a formal workplace violence policy and prevention program and communicate it to employees.
- Supervisors and managers take an active role in employee awareness of the plan; make sure they are alert to warning signs and know how to respond.
- Provide regular workplace violence and bully prevention training for all employees (both new and current), supervisors and managers.
- Create a climate of trust and respect among workers and between employees and management; eradicate a bad culture of bullying or harassment.

- Look for and stake steps to reduce negativity and stress in the workplace, which can precipitate problematic behavior.
- Identify and screen out potentially violent individuals before hiring while maintaining compliance with privacy protections and anti-discrimination laws.
- Establish procedures and avenues for employees to report threats, other violence or if there's imminent danger.
- Start a mediation program to resolve employee disputes rather than letting them simmer.
- Document any threats and your response to them including terminating employees who make a threat.
- Terminate employees with care and caution by involving witnesses or security for violent employees.
- Evaluate security systems regularly including alarms, ID keys, passcodes, cameras and personnel.
- Make sure employees know not to hold open secure access doors for others who don't have credentials.
- Ensure employees with restraining or protective orders against an individual provide that person's information and photo to security.

When confronted with violence, remember the three options:

Run

- Think of an escape route and plan before you flee
- Evacuate from where you are
- Help others run, too, but if they won't follow, go anyway
- Leave your belongings behind
- Do try to move wounded victims
- Prevent others from coming into the area where the shooter may be

Hide

- Hide out of the shooter's view
- If you are in an office, lock door and barricade it with extra furniture
- Silence your cell phone (including vibrate mode) and stay quiet

Fight

- This option is a last resort. Only fight if you have no choice and are confronted with the shooter
- Get as physically aggressive as you can and try to take out or injure the shooter
- Use anything as a weapon to throw at or stop the shooter
- Commit to your actions. Do it like you mean it!

ICRMA has additional resources available, including a [Workplace Violence Prevention Policy](#). For additional information or training needs [contact ICRMA](#).