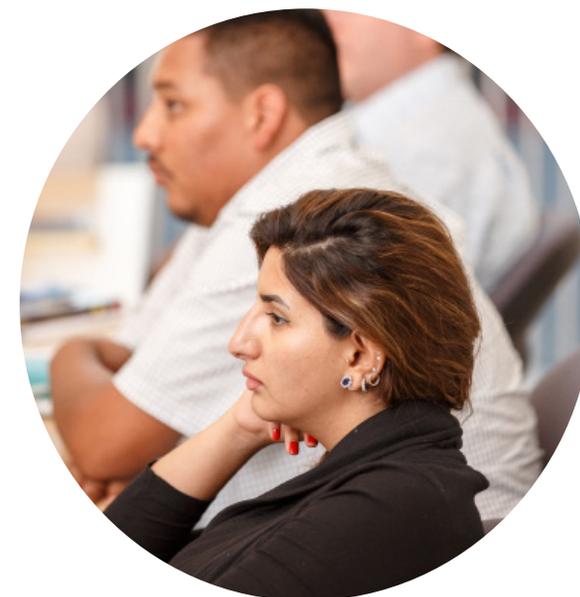


MITIGATING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Identifying, Preventing
& Handling Potentially
Violent Situations



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Indicators of Potential Violence

When workplace violence occurs, it is wrong to assume the person just “snapped.” There are often indicators of the potential violence well in advance. These indicators may be recognized, managed and addressed to reduce the risk of violence in your workplace.

The following behaviors are often associated with persons who commit violent acts. They may be present individually or in combination. This list is not all-inclusive and the presence of any of these behaviors in a co-worker is not proof that violent tendencies exist.

Behavior:

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Increased absences or late arrivals
- Decreased attention to personal appearance
- Withdrawal
- Resistance or over reaction to change
- Repeated disciplinary problems
- Severe mood swings
- Explosive outbursts with little provocation
- Suicidal comments
- Paranoid actions or statements
- Increase in personal problems brought into the workplace
- Talk of violent incidents or empathy with persons who commit violent acts
- Unsolicited comments about guns, other weapons, or violent crimes

Attitude:

- Isolated or loner
- Morally superior
- Entitled to special rights; the rules don't apply to them
- Feels wronged or humiliated
- Has no choice or options

Responding to Disruptive/Violent Behavior

Workplace violence is divided into four categories:

- Type I – Criminal Intent
- Type II – Customer/Client
- Type III – Worker on Worker
- Type IV – Personal Relationship

The vast majority of workplace homicides occur as Type I incidents, primarily involving taxi drivers, convenience store employees and police officers. A small percentage are Type III, worker on worker, and an even smaller percentage are Type IV, personal relationship incidents. Though the probability of an incident in your workplace may be limited, there are safety steps you can take if confronted in the workplace.

Step 1: General response to disruptive behavior (no threats or weapons)

- Respond calmly and quietly – try to defuse the situation.
- Do not take the behavior personally – you are usually being used as the outlet in a situation that has nothing to do with you.
- Ask questions – respectful concern and interest may demonstrate that violence isn't necessary.
- Consider an apology – even if you've done nothing wrong, it could defuse the situation “I'm sorry that happened, what can we do to solve the problem?”
- Summarize what the person is saying – communicate clearly; your summary of the person's concerns reflects your attention.
- Focus on areas of agreement.

Step 2: If Step 1 was ineffective and the person does not seem dangerous:

- Calmly and firmly set limits – “Please lower your voice; there will be no disruption in this office.”
- Ask the individual to stop and warn that official action may be taken.
- If the disruption continues – tell the person he/she may be disciplined or prosecuted, state that the discussion is over, direct him/her to leave and advise them that refusing to leave will require calling the police.

Step 3: If Step 1 was ineffective and the person seems dangerous:

- Move to a quiet, safe place to talk – maintain a safe distance, do not turn your back, have a co-worker present or nearby, do not close the door but sit near the door.
- Use a calm approach and try to defuse the situation.
- Never touch the person – it could be interpreted as aggression and result in escalation of violence or a lawsuit.
- Set limits - “Please lower your voice,” or “Please stop cursing.”
- Do not mention discipline or police if you fear an angry or violent response.
- If the situation escalates, find a way to excuse yourself.