Workplace Violence Meeting Kit



Workplace violence is any threat, disruptive behaviors, intimidation, physical aggression, or act of violence in the workplace including homicide.

Workplace violence is one of the major causes of death in the corporate world, second only to transportation. This growing issue can have very damaging effects on morale, reputation and revenue; making it something business have to address now.

Different factors contribute to whether someone may experience violence at work. People who work where money is exchanged are at a higher risk factor for workplace violence. Other career fields such as EMS, police officers, healthcare workers, customer service representatives, and delivery drivers are more likely to experience violence while on the job. Factors such as time of day worked, geographical area of work, working alone or in small groups, also has impact on whether someone is more likely to experience workplace violence.

THOSE AT RISK OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

The health care industry is one of the most susceptible to workplace violence. Nearly half of emergency physicians say they have experienced a physical assault at work. Some of the other vulnerable industries include education, transportation and retail.

Women in particular are vulnerable to domestic violence in the workplace.

They have more than double the rate of on-the-job homicides than men (19% to 8%), with 32% of the homicides committed by a domestic partner.

Taxi drivers, healthcare workers, and other social work occupations have some of the highest rates of workplace violence.

The occupations with the highest risk of workplace violence include any that interact with the public, are open after dark, and serve alcohol.

Many workplace risk factors can increase the likelihood of violence at work. Employees may be at higher risk of violence if they:

- Exchange money with the public – for example, as sales associates or bank tellers.
- Work with volatile, unstable people.
- Work alone, in a small group or an isolated area.
- Provide services or care.
- Work in an establishment that serves alcohol.

- Work late at night or in an area with a high crime rate.
- Work as delivery or taxi drivers, health care professionals, customer service reps, public service workers or law enforcement officers.

MEASURES TO PREVENT WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Research shows that preventing workplace violence is possible even with a small amount of effort.

1. Analyze your workplace: A thorough analysis of your workplace is necessary to understand where the bulk of your workplace violence prevention training should focus. Ask yourself these questions.

- Has there been violence in your workplace before?
- When, what kind, and who was involved?
- How was it handled?
- What systems were put in place afterwards, and were they effective?
- If there have been no violent incidents in your company's history, what are you doing well?
- Are there gaps in your workplace violence policies? Where?
- How safe is the physical environment? Which doors stay locked? How are employees protected if they leave late at night?

2. Create a supportive environment: Every training program starts with developing a relationship with employees. It is important that you and your HR department make employees feel heard and supported at work.

3. Offer communication and empathy training: Workplace violence training is often about how to handle a violent episode as it is occurring, but offering workers training in effective, empathic communication can prevent it before it starts.

4. Establish a clear workplace violence policy: How will you handle workplace violence? What supports or disciplinary actions are in place for verbal and nonverbal threats and actions?

5. Commit to a non-violent workplace: Commitment to a non-violent workplace means regularly allocating resources – money and time – to training workers and preventing workplace violence.

6. Train employees to recognize warning signs: Training employees to be alert to warning signs of potential workplace violence can stop an incident before it starts. Warning signs of potential violence include some or all of the following:

- Excessive use of alcohol or drugs
- Behavioral changes that include poor job performance
- Depression or withdrawal
- Complaints about unfair treatment
- Violation of company policies
- Mood swings and overreaction to criticism or evaluations
- Paranoia

7. Create an action plan, share it with employees, and practice: The 1950s had nuclear attack drills; these have been replaced in the 21st century by active shooter simulations and lockdown drills. No one wants to think about the worst-case scenario, much less practice it regularly, but having a plan in place could save lives.

FINAL WORD

Report any suspicious activities whether it be the public or another employee when dealing with situations that can lead to violence on the job. When faced with workplace violence dealing with another coworker, do not become confrontational with them. Leave the area when you can do so safely and report the situation immediately to a supervisor. If your immediate supervisor does not take the report seriously, go to a higher level of supervision to correct the issue.