

The Workplace

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A Fact Sheet

Highlights

The basic elements of an effective workplace violence prevention program are:

1. Workplace violence committee
2. Assessment program
3. Violence prevention policies and procedures
4. Education and training plan
5. Reporting procedure

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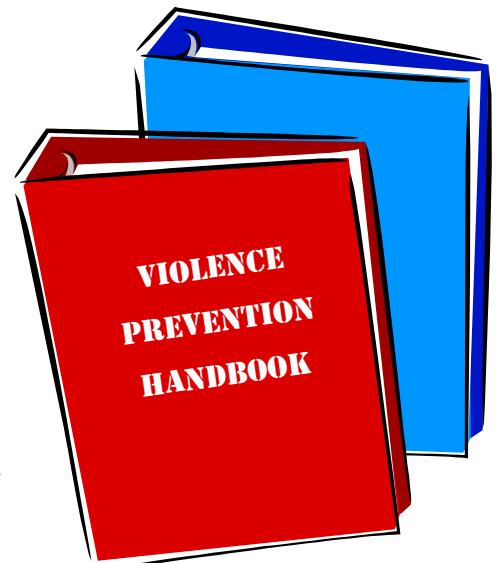


Workplace Violence Prevention Programs

Most incidents of workplace violence are predictable because most happen in worksites typically associated with identifiable risk factors. The predictable nature of workplace violence enables employers to either reduce or eliminate the potential for violence in places of employment through the implementation of an effective workplace violence prevention program.

Workplace violence prevention programs should be tailored to meet the needs of individual employers. Some employers prefer to establish a stand alone workplace violence prevention program. Others incorporate this information into other company policies and procedures such as the safety program, accident prevention program or the employee handbook.

The vehicle for implementing a workplace violence prevention program is not as important as making certain the basic elements are in place. Effective workplace violence prevention programs (a) ensure that every segment of the workforce is represented; (b) critically and objectively assess the workplace for existing or potential risk factors; (c) establish policies and procedures for handling potential acts and acts of violence; (d) include education and training in how to recognize potentially violent situations; and (e) institute an anonymous procedure for reporting potential threats. Comprehensive violence prevention program includes reviewing hiring practices and termination policies, a crisis response plan, and provisions for continual monitoring. Please see February 15, 2002 edition of *The Workplace* for a discussion of these topics.



Strong violence prevention programs are essential in today's workplace. Violence prevention programs protect both employers and workers.

Visit the Workforce Development web page at www.aces.edu/crd/workforc.html

The basic elements of an effective workplace violence prevention program are:

1. Workplace violence committee—Form a committee that includes representatives from each company department, i.e., human resources, risk management, security, facilities, public relations, first aid/medical, legal, rank-and-file personnel, etc. The effectiveness of this committee is dependent upon the involvement and support of upper level management who have ultimate decision-making authority on final implementation and enforcement. The involvement of the hourly personnel is equally crucial because of the feedback they can provide about actual working conditions and day-to-day problems incurred.

2. Assessment procedures—Critically and objectively assessing the workplace for existing or potential risk factors provides a baseline for future decisions concerning workplace violence policies. Adequately assessing the workplace requires examining current programs and policies related to threats and harassment as well as exploring the physical security of the property to identify risk factors. Accident reports should be analyzed for injuries possibly related to violence.

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3. Violence prevention policies and procedures—Once strengths and weaknesses have been determined, policies must be written (or re-written). Policies and procedures should define potentially threatening and/or unacceptable behavior and the specific consequences for such behavior. Guidelines aimed at eliminating potential risks in the workplace should be outlined and parameters for accessing the work areas should be set. Procedures for handling potential acts and acts of violence should be clear. Most effective workplace violence programs allow for zero-tolerance for threats, harassment, intimidation, or possession of weapons.

4. Education and training plan—Every employee should be educated to recognize behavior and risk factors known to have the potential for turning violent. Employees must be trained to be more aware of their surroundings.

5. Reporting procedures—Establishing a confidential method for employees to report behavior that is suspicious is the first step to empowering employees to take an active role in preventing violence in their work environment. Employees must have the assurance that there will be no retaliation from other employees or from the company if they report incidents.

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Sources:

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