

## Workplace Violence & Understanding the Problem

Workplace violence is defined as: **any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in a work setting.**

### **There are Four Main Types of Violence in the Workplace:**

**Type 1: Criminal Intent.** In this type of workplace violence, the perpetrator has no legitimate relationship to the business or its employee(s). Rather, the violence is incidental to another crime, such as a robbery or trespassing. While this type of workplace violence is not the most prevalent, it is responsible for the most fatalities. Acts of terrorism fall into this category.

**Type 2: Customer/Client.** In this type of workplace violence, the violent person has a legitimate relationship with the business. He or she might be a customer, a vendor, or a student, for example. This is the most common type of workplace violence.

**Type 3: Worker-on-Worker.** The perpetrator in this type of violence is an employee or past employee of the business who attacks or threatens other employee(s) or past employee(s) in the workplace. This risk exists for all organizations, and it is the reason why background checks are so important.

**Type 4: Personal Relationships.** In this type of violence, the perpetrator does not have a relationship with the business but has a personal relationship with the intended victim. It might be a family member or spouse, for example. Typically, the violence is intended for the employee with whom there is a relationship, but that doesn't mean it will be contained there. This category includes victims of domestic violence who are assaulted while at work.

## Warning Signs of Violence

It is important to be aware of your surroundings and recognize potential signs:

### **Stage 1**

- Unusual behavior changes
- Uncooperative with direct supervisor on a regular basis
- Curse profusely
- Argues with coworkers constantly
- Spreads gossip and rumors deliberately to harm others
- Unwanted sexual remarks
- Hostile toward customers or coworkers
- Irritability and anxiety escalates
- Sleep disturbances are mentioned on the job

### **Stage 2**

- Plays the role of a victim
- Writes violent or sexual notes to other employees or management
- Verbalizes desires to harm coworkers or employer
- Sabotages equipment or steals property
- Disregards company policies and procedures
- Levels of arguments or altercations increase with all personnel
- Accidents increase; either physical or traffic-related
- Noted decrease in interest and confidence in work

### **Stage 3**

- Intense anger is the frequent emotion displayed and results in:
  - Depression or withdrawal
  - Property destruction
  - Physical assault
  - Suicidal threats
  - Threats to harm others
  - Use of weapons to harm others

## Prevention and Control

Understanding and recognizing the problem of workplace violence is the number one step toward prevention and control. However, it is not always possible to anticipate circumstances that may arise when dealing with a disgruntled employee or disturbed person. Therefore, workers must use their best judgment in attempting to defuse volatile situations. Management should assess the situation and determine if Security (ext. 4444) should be called. **Human Resources (ext. 4376) and Safety, Risk and Emergency Management (ext. 7777) must be notified.**

### **What You Can Do at Work:**

- Treat each other with respect
- Get to know the people around you and agree to look out for each other
- Look intently for how everyone is doing
- Improve communication throughout your company
- Improve working conditions by offering suggestions for safety
- Notify management of any suspicious activities
- Watch for the warning signs of violence
- Encourage each other to be alert for danger signals in coworkers
- Promote workplace integrity between all employees
- Listen for verbal intimidation on the job
- Watch for psychological abuse on the job between employees
- Be aware of behavioral pattern changes in fellow workers
- Become more responsive to each other

**Employees who are confronted by persons who appear to be threatening should:**

- Not attempt physical restraint of the person or use of force
- Notify Security (ext.4444) or signal someone else to do so
- Make an effort to keep a desk, counter, or other object between themselves and the person making the threat
- Speak in a low calm voice
- Attempt to calm and reassure the person until assistance arrives
- If the situation permits, move to an area where other people are present
- Take note of the person's physical description
- Allow the person to save face; never embarrass, degrade or humiliate the person in front of others

Supervisors and managers are encouraged to have a department plan to deal with the issue of workplace violence to include:

- Continued education/training on the District's Workplace Violence Prevention Program
- Administrative controls implemented
- Notification/communication procedures
- Incident reporting procedures

**Having knowledge of the subject, establishing a department policy, and utilizing District resources for support will place us in the best position to protect employees from the potentially devastating effects of an incidence of workplace violence.**

**Should you have a concern about potential workplace violence or if you need assistance personally, the following confidential resources are available:**

- **The Employees Assistance Program**  
(1-800-266-0510)
- **The District Hotline**  
(1-800-826-6762)

*Questions may be referred to:*

**Safety, Risk and Emergency Management**  
Ext. 7777



**-If you see something, say something.**



## **Managing Workplace Threats**

Prevention and Control of Workplace Violence

