

Workplace Violence & Personal Awareness for Multifamily Professionals



DISCLAIMER

The information provided today is from research from various sources and is not intended to reflect any particular company policies or procedures

We are not attorneys, therapists or crisis prevention professionals

This content is to provide awareness to recognize, prepare and hopefully prevent violence in your workplace



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The Basics

- PLAN-POLICIES-PROCUDURES
- Main goal: Going home safely to your family
- Maslow, you can't reach your best performance until you feel safe
- 1.5% experience an assault on the job each year
- Negative impacts: Morale, productivity, security costs, workers compensation
- No legalization to protect employees. Once something happens, OSHA will come in to mandate

What is Workplace Violence

- Any threatening behavior that happens in a work environment
- Overt physical or verbal acts or written threats to cause harm to anyone or anything
- People within and outside of the workplace can commit violence in the workplace
- There are three main types of workplace violence

Preventing Workplace Violence

Type I: Violence by Strangers and Outsiders

- Use physical barriers to protect yourself when possible
- Consider installing a silent alarm system or panic button
- Use mirrors, raised platforms, and make sure if money is exchanged that those areas are seen
- Use bright and effective lighting
- Make sure you are adequately staffed when possible
- Post signs telling people limited or no money is keep on site
- Control or limit access to the facility if possible
- Install locks on doors that lead to staff-only areas
- Video surveillance equipment is a plus so activity is monitored



Preventing Workplace Violence

Type II: Violence by People Receiving Services

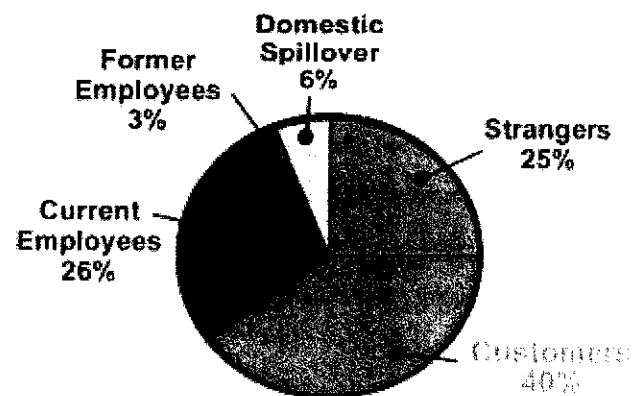
- If you are required to work alone, safety measures should be taken
- Allow workers to carry pagers, mobile phone, etc.
- Train workers so that they know what to do in a violent situation
- Have a list of phone number to call in an emergency
- Consider using only first names on name badges
- Meet with your employees so they can voice concerns about safety issues

Preventing Workplace Violence

Type III: Violence by Acquaintances or Employees

- Have close contact with employees. Make sure everyone is feeling a part of the organization
- Review any acts of violence in the workplace, even if it is minor
- Have WRITTEN policies explaining workplace violence, what it is, that it is not tolerated, and define unacceptable behavior
- Use a BUDDY system or a defined policy so each employee has someone to go to in case they are having problems at work
- Remain calm when confronting employees involved in disputes
- Be sure to get both sides of the story before actions are taken.
- Violence usually mandates dismissal

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

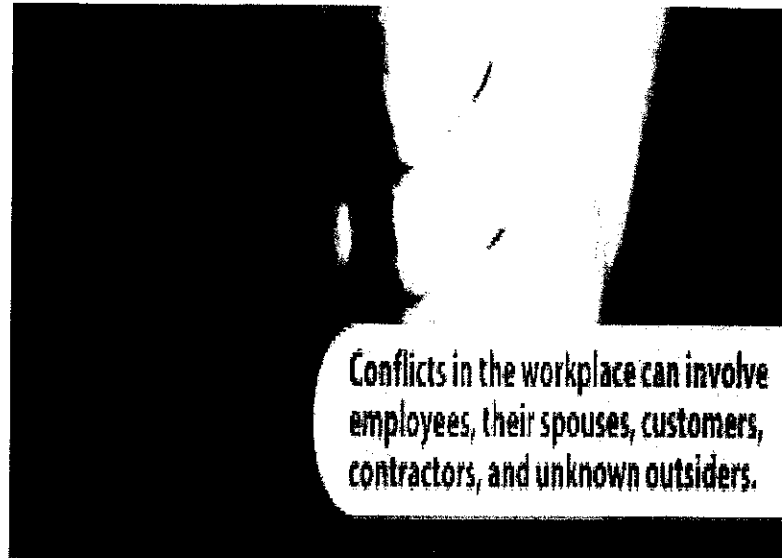


Common Traits of Violent Offenders

- History of violent behavior or involvement with the criminal justice system
- Middle age white males
- Bitter or unhappy
- No job security or low level jobs
- Problems growing up, low grades in school, abusive parents
- Substance abuse, including medications
- Signs of mental instability
- Low self esteem

Warning Signs of Violent Behaviors

- Challenges authority and following procedures
- Physical acts: shaking fist, throwing objects, pacing
- Verbally abusive or using inappropriate language or threats
- Difficult to communicate with or acceptance of help
- Angry behavior towards persons
- Feeling of being treated unfairly



Bullying Examples

- Shouting, name calling, belittling and making someone feel unimportant
- Being treated with disrespect, excessive monitoring, making someone feel ashamed or bad
- Deliberately overloading someone with work
- Setting up someone to fail
- Withholding information which is needed for a person to do their job effectively
- Excluding someone from normal workplace meetings or conversations, making people feel unwelcome

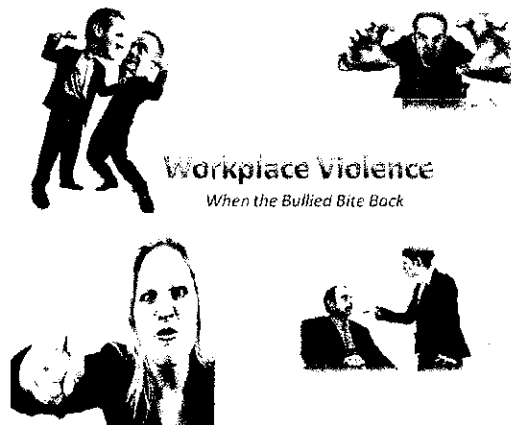
Dealing with Bullying

Policies:

- Create clear definition of bullying to separate from constructive criticism, discipline and motivation
- Create a written policy that lays out the consequences for bullying
- Head off repeat offenses by encouraging reports of bullying
- Make sure there is no retaliation for reporting incidents of bullying
- Make sure reports are taken seriously and dealt with immediately

Victim:

- Set boundaries and stand up for yourself
- Stay calm or just walk away
- If bullying continues, keep a record of date, times and incidents to discuss with a supervisor or the HR department
- Do not retaliate, you could be blamed instead of bullying



Violence Prevention Programs

- Should include a clear written policy for workplace violence
- Should ensure no worker who reports or experiences workplace violence faces reprisal
- Should encourage workers to promptly report incidents and suggest ways to reduce or eliminate risks

Intervention: Employee Workplace Violence

Strategies take into account two aspects of workplace violence:

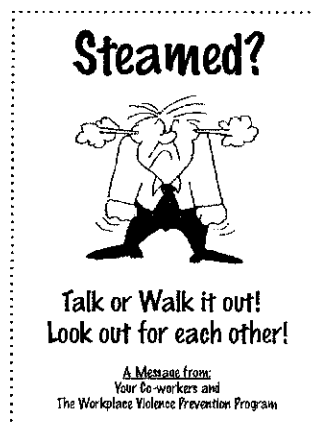
Action and Flash Points

- Action Points occur the moment someone recognizes an employee may be on the path to violent behavior and takes action to prevent
- This is an opportunity to intervene before a situation becomes dangerous
- It may be helpful to talk to the employee and see if everything is alright. Allowing people to vent can release tension
- If an employee displays threatening behavior, they should be reported directly to a supervisor or human resources
- Some companies use drop boxes, 24-7 tip lines, to allow anonymity

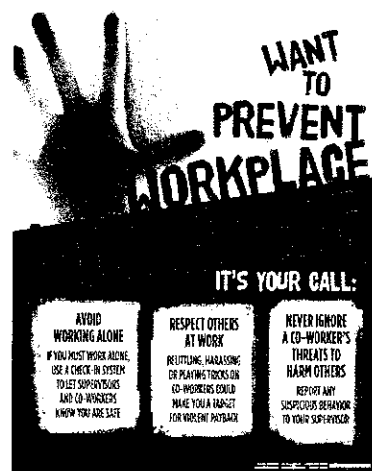
Intervention: Employee Workplace Violence

- Flash Point: this is the moment workplace violence occurs, it's too late for any preventive strategies
- After an incident is when most employees indicate they were concerned about the offender but never reported their concerns
- Authorities stress **"if you sense something say something"**
- Stress awareness for employees to recognize "red flag" behavior
- Companies must create a climate of trust that allows employees to come forward to report troubling behavior
- The best strategy is AWARENESS+ ACTION=PREVENTION

Samples of Workplace Posters

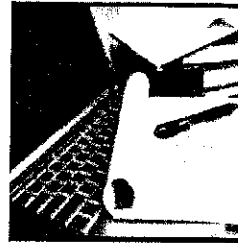


046—Steamed Poster



Prevention Programs

- Management commitment
- Workplace analysis
- Hazard prevention and control
- Training and education
- Form a team and meet regularly
- Record keeping and evaluation



Safety Training

- Policies and plans
- Recognizing and predicting violence
- Tactics for predicting and defusing
- Personal Security matters(Self Defense)
- Know who to alert/departments or corrections
- Maintenance staff office/limit unauthorized residents

Follow up

- Visibility and lighting
- Control access to work areas
- Ensure adequate staffing when possible
- Form a liaison with law enforcement and other responders
- Meet to form a plan when an emergency arises.

Self Defense

- Best defense, run away
- Help 911 “assault in progress” gets the quickest response
- Code or distress signals “red folder on desk” or name or location
- Best response “do you want me to call 911” second questions “do you want me to send someone”
- Personal panic alarm no good, no one responds
- Better to yell “I need help, I’m being attacked, call 911 and point to someone
- Bystander effect (Google) in a large group is less likely anyone will act

Self Defense

- Talk your way out, "leave me alone"
- Get space between you and the offender
- Take a photograph with your phone and say it's going directly to the police
- In an elevator press the alarm
- Street smarts, be aware of your surroundings
- If attacked turn sideways, more balance. Put up your hands and say STOP, BACK OFF
- If you believe you are about to be attacked, a swift kick to the knee or top of the foot will delay the attack
- Items to use: key in hand, any type of spray, salt, sugar, water bottle, hot pepper (the hotter the better)

When a Prospect Enters the Office

- Always ask for a photo ID. Follow your company policy regarding origin of ID
- Leave a copy of the guest card with the ID before you leave the office
- If anyone is unruly, threatening or noticeably impaired you may ask them to leave or call 911
- If your instincts tell you the prospect could be a safety issue, offer to reset the appointment with a viable excuse. DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT
- When in the office by yourself, call a sister property or answer service and mention the name of the prospect, apartment number and time of your return
- "Lean" into another office and announce to an "invisible" person where you are going
- Always carry your cell phone or other communication device with you
- If you feel uncomfortable, ask another employee to accompany you or radio maintenance to meet you at the apartment to check out a "make believe" situation

When Demonstrating an Apartment

- Always let the prospect enter first, keep the door ajar or throw the deadbolt in case of the need for a quick exit
- Never enter confined spaces such as closets, bathrooms, balconies
- Stay on the outer perimeters of each room, this will become a natural way to still point out the apartment features and benefits
- Keep the conversation focused on apartment information, avoid personal information or questions
- If the situation becomes uncomfortable or threatening make an excuse and return to the office
- Again always document the “facts” and report to a supervisor ASAP



Fair Housing Implications



- Be consistent
- Treat everyone the same in similar situations
- Whenever you have to deny demonstrating an apartment, due to safety precautions, document your Guest Card
- Be sure to include “just the fact”, never make notes referring to a protected class
- Alert you Manager as soon as possible regarding the incident
- Be FAIR but also make sure you are SAFE

Dealing with Angry Residents

On the phone:

- Ask for the name and contact number. Ask if you are speaking to the lease holder and pull their file
- Ask permission to take notes and document
- Listen without interruptions. Apologize for the inconvenience
- Ask for an appointment to discuss the matter.
- Plan to have another team member at the meeting if necessary



In the Office

- Take the resident to a private space but in view of others
- Ask them to be seated. Sit beside them to remove the barrier of a desk
- Repeat the information to clarify the details of the dispute
- Apologize when appropriate, do not assign blame
- Tell them what your CAN DO, not what your CAN'T DO
- Make an action plan to resolve the issue and FOLLOW UP and FOLLOWTHROUGH
- Get their contact information
- Again take notes and document the conversation
- Poorly handled angry resident can turn into a disgruntled individual that results in workplace violence
- Properly handled situation can prevent violence and build goodwill



Maintenance on Service Request

- Never enter an apartment without a Service Request, unless it's an emergency
- Always place on the entry door a door hanger "Maintenance Inside" to alert residents of your presence
- If the resident is not home leave behind a maintenance card that work was performed or a part needs to be ordered
- Never touch residents' belongings. Clean up behind yourself
- Do not use resident's towels, paper towels, broom, trash can etc.



Maintenance on Service Request

- If you encounter an angry resident, respectfully ask them to contact the office to discuss their situation
- If the situation becomes "heated" or becomes threatening leave immediately and report the incident to the office
- If the situation becomes threatening "back off" and leave the apartment, let management know what transpired
- Never strike or curse a resident. No one wins



Conclusions



- Always practice personal awareness on the job
- Work with your company or property to establish safety procedure/codes and safety training
- Remember self defense tips to react in case of danger
- Always report to upper management if you are aware of a situation that might be of danger to residents or employees

The goal for today is for you to go home safely to your family!

Resources

- Crime Prevention/Workplace Violence
<http://crimeprevention.rutgers.edu/crime/violence/workplace/warningsigns.htm>
- Dealing with a Violent Employee www.xperthr.com
- Workplace-bullying and harassment:
www.wikihow.com/Deal-with-Workplace-Bullying-and-Harassment
- Prevention and Dealing with Bullying
www.bullyingstatistics.org/content/prevent-bullying.html