

Free Workplace Violence Prevention Video

Below is a link to a free 27 minute video which discusses practical measures for identifying risk factors for violence at work, and taking strategic action to keep workers safe. It is produced by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and is based on extensive NIOSH research, supplemented with information from other authoritative sources. This video can be placed on your Website as Flash file, put on an Autorun CD, link e-mailed to every worker, or ordered free from NIOSH in DVD format.

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/video/violence.html>

Five Things You Can Do as an Organization in the Aftermath of the Virginia Tech Incident by Dr. Steve Albrecht, PHR, CPP

1. See the totality of the issue.

The events at Virginia Tech changed the way most Americans felt about our college campuses and their vulnerability to attacks. Your employees will have strong feelings about this incident and most know exactly where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news. As we have seen following the deaths of famous figures or elected leaders, acts of war, or national disasters, many people choose these incidents to reflect on their places in our world, and their lives with their families and friends. Because the news media will surely bombard us with images both painful and touching, it's important to prepare for the possibility of revictimization. In terms of global, 24-hour coverage, this will be a huge story for about three more weeks. The networks and print media will saturate this story, and its impact will reach our workplaces. And although it should and will be a time of remembrance, it will also be a time of sadness and pain.

2. Recognize that it's not "business as usual."

If people start talking about the shootings in even greater detail, it will be hard to keep employees focused on their work. It probably won't be possible for your employees to serve their customers and co-workers in a distraction-free way. With televised observances and ceremonies, your employees won't feel much like working and your customers may want to talk about it on the phone or in person for a few more days.

3. Address the human connection.

Remember that two things – the two "T's" – help people recover from traumatic events: time and talking. The passage of time offers people psychological distance and allows their more vivid memories to fade and diminish. Talking about their feelings and reactions, even in an unstructured, non-therapeutic environment, simply makes people feel better about their exposure to bad situations. We know that people who talk to one or more co-workers, friends, and family about the events at Virginia Tech have helped each other cope. People who keep these things bottled up may have a harder time putting this trauma behind them.

4. Remind employees that not all media information is entirely accurate.

One of the difficulties many organizations found during the VA Tech attacks was that information came to their employees from a huge number of sources: TV broadcasts, radio newscasts, phone calls to coworkers and family members, emails, and even the Internet. During much of the first 12 hours, a lot of the information was sketchy, wrong, and worse, created even more fear. Remind the employees to measure their responses to what they hear and to consider both the content and the context.

5. Provide hope and strength for the future.

Leadership is rarely easy and in times of stress and uncertainty, it's even harder. Many of your employees may have expressed concerns about "waiting for the other shoe to drop," meaning they are understandably anxious about a copycat attack at another college campus (especially if they have kids in college themselves). While we all hope violence will never strike our schools again, we can only strive to remain vigilant and connected to each other, both at home and at work. Your employees will continue to look to your organization for answers in times of need. You have the opportunity, now and in the coming months, to help your co-workers feel hopeful and strong.

Proactive Steps Your Organization Can Take To Prevent Workplace Violence

1. Providing EAP services to workers and dependents 24 hours per day can be an immense help during critical times. Companies should remind managers and workers about the ready availability of assistance from the EAP on a 24 hour basis.
2. Providing supervisory training on: how to identify and refer people with problems; conflict resolution; perpetrator profiles; warning signs; intervention techniques and termination procedures. Training can be brief, concise, comprehensive, inexpensive and even fun. And if any employer is ever concerned that violence prevention training is an unnecessary expense, just consider the cost of not having it at all. "The cost of providing training for employees to prevent workplace violence is not as high as the cost of not providing it." Hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent just settling lawsuits arising out of workplace violence incidents and millions more are spent if the jury finds against you. Should your organization ever fall prey to a violent incident, it's entirely possible to mitigate the damages against you by demonstrating to the court that you acted with due diligence and in good faith by providing your employees with the awareness necessary to recognize and deal with the threat against them.
3. Formal assembling of Threat Management Teams to assess and respond to any potential for violence. Provide special training for the Threat Management Team, conducted by a competent professional in preventing workplace violence.
4. Conducting an organizational needs assessment. This is a confidential survey that looks at people and organizational components at all levels as well as objective factors that relate to potential for violence. These components include, but are not limited to: Policies and Procedures, Threat Management Team, Screening process for new hires, Providing

“Venting Programs” such as grievance procedures and open door policies, Employee feelings of security, Use and promotion of the EAP, and Termination Procedures.

5. Conducting an organizational security vulnerability assessment that evaluates physical layout, security practices areas of vulnerability and potential of threat from outside the organization. When you think you've done everything right, continue to evaluate your organization for improvement.
6. Conduct thorough pre-employment screening and drug test all new hires.
7. If a traumatic event occurs at the workplace or with an associate, call the EAP to coordinate a critical incident response. Violence breeds violence and humans respond in a variety of ways to traumatic events. Debriefings identify and assist those who need outlets for their reaction to traumatic events.

Behaviors Linked To Potential For Workers To Harm Others In The Workplace

People who are most likely to commit workplace violence include:

- Recently fired employees or those with the perception that he/she soon will be fired or laid off
- The employee who feels that he/she is not being heard
- The person involved in separation, adultery, divorce or child custody
- People who believe they have no voice about changes in their job
- People with romantic or sexual obsessions
- People (employees or others, i.e.: visitors) who have exhibited bizarre behaviors
- People who have made threats or have intimidated others
- People who have exhibited angry outbursts
- Employees with a history of interpersonal conflict with co-workers or supervisors
- People that often have a sense of persecution/injustice
- People with a history of past violence
- People who report a past history of violence by family members, especially if they can justify past violent behaviors
- People who have exhibited major behavioral changes
- People with a past history of alcohol or other drug abuse and/or psychiatric problems
- Employees that cannot take criticism and show contempt for the company and the boss
- People involved in stalking behavior or discussing stalking as a good thing
- People that exhibit feelings of desperation, such as divestment of valued property or other indicators of impending suicide

An additional factor is gender. A number of studies reveal that males ages, 30-48 account for most workplace violence. It is estimated that perpetrators are males 85% - 95% of the time and females only 5% - 15% of the time.

Behaviors To Watch For In Children That Are Linked To Potential For Children Hurting Themselves

Most suicidal young people don't really want to die; they just want the pain to stop. Many times they will give signals or talk about suicide as a way to "ask for help." The key to prevention is to know these signs and what to do to help. The more signs you see, the greater the risk.

- A previous suicide attempt
- Talk of suicide or making a plan
- A preoccupation with death
- Giving away prized possessions
- Moodiness, hopelessness, withdrawal (signs of Depression)
- Increased alcohol and/or other drug use
- Hinting at not being around in the future or saying good-bye
- Readily accessible firearms
- Impulsiveness and taking unnecessary risks
- Lack of connection to family and friends (no one to talk to)

These warning signs are especially noteworthy in the child has a recent history of:

- a death or suicide of a friend or family member
- a break-up with a boyfriend or girlfriend
- significant conflict with parents
- news reports of suicides by peers at school

What You Can Do:

- Let the person know you care. Talk about your feelings and ask about his or hers. Listen carefully to what he or she has to say. "I'm worried about you, about how you feel."
"You mean a lot to me. I want to help."
- Don't hesitate to raise the subject of suicide. Talking with young people about suicide won't put the idea in their heads. Chances are, if you've observed any of the warning signs, they're already thinking about it. Be direct in a caring, non-confrontational way. "Are you thinking about suicide?" "Do you really want to die?"
- Get Help. Never keep talk of suicide a secret, even if the person asks you to. It's better to risk a conflict than a life. Stay with the person and seek help from someone with professional skills to provide the help that he or she needs, while you continue to offer support. "I know where we can get some help." "Let's talk to someone who can help...let's call the EAP now." "I can go with you to get some help."

Youth Violence Warning Signs **From SafeYouth.org**

Researchers have identified a number of warning signs that suggest that a child may be at risk for violent behavior. The presence of one or more of the following increases the risk of violent or dangerous behavior:

- past violent or aggressive behavior (including uncontrollable angry outbursts)
- access to weapons
- bringing a weapon to school
- past suicide attempts or threats
- family history of violent behavior or suicide attempts
- blaming others and/or unwilling to accept responsibility for one's own actions
- recent experience of humiliation, shame, loss, or rejection
- bullying or intimidating peers or younger children
- a pattern of threats
- being a victim of abuse or neglect (physical, sexual, or emotional)
- witnessing abuse or violence in the home
- themes of death or depression repeatedly evident in conversation, written expressions, reading selections, or artwork
- preoccupation with themes and acts of violence in TV shows, movies, music, magazines, comics, books, video games, and Internet sites
- mental illness, such as depression, mania, psychosis, or bipolar disorder
- use of alcohol or illicit drugs
- disciplinary problems at school or in the community (delinquent behavior)
- past destruction of property or vandalism
- cruelty to animals
- firesetting behavior
- poor peer relationships and/or social isolation
- involvement with cults or gangs.
- little or no supervision or support from parents or other caring adult

Typically, the greater the number of these warning signs present, the greater the risk. **It is important to realize, however, that many children exhibit these warning signs and never resort to violence.** Even so, these signs can be a cue that something is wrong, and the individual needs help.