



Workplace Violence

Violence in the workplace has received considerable attention in the popular press and among safety and health professionals. According to the FBI and the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, Inc. (AAOHN), negative behavior encompasses untrustworthy behavior, habitual lying, chronic bad attitude, verbal threats, history of violence, sexual harassment, domestic disputes which spill into the workplace, and many more unsolicited actions. Moreover, there are different viewpoints when a person perceives that there is a problem in the workplace, and the approach to it may vary when it comes to men and women. However, such differences in perception seem marginal when actual violence occurs. **Every** employee wants to feel safe, and should, within his or her daily work environment.

In order to effectively reduce or prevent these, it is important to curtail or eliminate abuse in any form. The following are some suggested actions:

Employers:

- **Create** an atmosphere or tone of the office where every employee makes a commitment to prevent or eliminate workplace violence.
- **Communicate and define** job descriptions in a way that clearly lays out areas of responsibilities to help avoid possible employee conflicts and establishes clear and definitive workplace policies that discourage inappropriate interactions which might lead to violent acts calling for appropriate discipline.
- **Write** job descriptions that clearly lay out areas of responsibilities to avoid possible employee conflicts.
- **Define** workplace policies clearly to discourage inappropriate interactions.
- **Discourage** borrowing between co-workers on work premises and curtail gambling. Such practices could lead to very negative inter-employee outcomes.
- **Use** a calm voice, with an appropriate non-confrontational tone, to communicate both instructions and ideas.
- **Prohibit** intimidation of fellow co-workers or subordinates.
- **Set** clear policies that prohibit harassment or sexual misconduct in the workplace. Inform employees about the Human Relations *and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission* of that city, county or state.
- **Do not** demean a subordinate in front of one's peers or senior staff.
- **Mandate** training for all employees such as in-house courses on discrimination and diversity.

- **Commit** to having training courses on how to reduce and/or eliminate violence in the workplace, and how not to retaliate in the midst of a negative interaction or circumstance.

Employees:

- **Value** one's duties and responsibilities and the opportunity for advancement by not initiating or being involved in workplace violence.
- **Refrain** from gossiping or devaluing of other's character or mannerisms. Stay professional regardless of station or position.
- **Avoid** spreading rumors within the workplace.
- **Do not** forward inappropriate e-mail messages. Employees may receive such e-mails from time to time, but should not send them on to anyone else. Such an act may bring about a disciplinary response from management.
- **Abstain** from putting a subordinate or co-worker in any uncomfortable or unacceptable situation.
- **Avoid** being coerced into activities or work situations that might lead to being reprimanded or fired.
- **Inform** the harasser or abuser, that he/she can be reported, if harassed or abused by a co-worker, subordinate or supervisor. Should the behavior continue first write a memo to the harasser to state that he or she risks being reported to his or her supervisor, department head, or agency administration if the inappropriate behavior does not end.
- **Know** that one can report workplace harassment or sexual abuse to the Human Relations and/or Employment Opportunity Commission of that city, county, or state.

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