

Workplace Bullying



Objectives

- Define workplace violence
- Know the Warning Signs
 - Behavioral
 - Physical
- How to respond
- What your company can do
- What you can do
- Cost to companies
- What is workplace bullying?
- Bullying warning signs Impact on the company and employees
- Who gets targeted?
- Why bullying persists?
- Developing a policy against Workplace Bullying
- What to do if you are targeted

Definition of Workplace Violence

- Violence or the threat of violence against workers
- Can occur at or outside the workplace
- Can range from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and homicide

Statistics on Workplace Violence

- Workplace shootings account for roughly 10% of all work-related deaths per annum in the United States.
- On an average working day, three people will be murdered on the job in the U.S.
- Homicides are now the second highest cause of work related deaths in America
- The average retail employee is more likely to be shot fatally by a co-worker than a construction worker is to fall to his death, or be killed by operating heavy equipment.

[U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

July 2010, recently published fact sheet:

Know the Warning Signs

Beware of employees who...

- use intimidation, harass, bully, display belligerent behaviors
- talk about weapons, carry weapons
- exhibit paranoid or anti-social behavior
- feel they're not being heard by the company
- exhibit extreme signs of personal desperation
- obsesses about their problems
- are loners and don't fit in with the group.
- seem like their anxiety is getting more frequent or more extreme in nature

More Warning Signs

Employees who...

- yell, slam doors
- are inflexible and controlling
- take no responsibility for their actions
- blame others for their mistakes
- have many conflicts with customers, co-workers or supervisors
- become fixated on an idea and/or an individual
- have a history of violence
- suddenly behave in ways that are out of character and extreme

Physical Warning Signs

- Perspiring and red face
- Clenched jaw or opening and closing fists
- Raised voice
- Rapid breathing
- Staring
- Talking too close to you
- Repetitive movements such as running fingers through hair
- Pacing

How to Respond

- Do not overreact
- Do not ignore a situation
- If you see something say something to your managers
- Managers should discuss situations with trained supervisors to determine how to best handle
- All employees should know who to go to/phone numbers/resources should a tense situation start to escalate

What Your Company Can Do

- Stress importance of training
- Appoint a group to examine violence in the workplace
- Create policies to prevent workplace violence
- Review and update current policies and training as it relates to workplace violence and bullying
- Open the lines of communication
- Develop a reputation for zero-tolerance with regard to an intimidating work environment

What Your Company Can Do (cont.)

- Write a violence response protocol make it visible to all employees
- Document all facts related to a violent or escalating episode
- Follow up with immediate consequences
- Institute a termination procedure specifically for violence
- Make sure all entrances and loading docks are secure
- Know who is in the building at all times
- Consider implementing identification badges and sign in procedures
- Examine parking lot(s) to see whether there might be a benefit to hiring security personnel
- Include your EAP in these discussions to help insure support should the need arise

Importance of Pre-screening

- Institute a rigorous method of pre-employment screening
- Contact all references
- Test for substance abuse
- Do a back ground check – including researching public records that may show previous arrests of convictions related to violent behavior
- Conduct at least two interviews
- Fingerprint applicants

What You Can Do

If confronted by a very angry employee or potentially violent situation:

- Do not respond with anger
- Talk softly and gently
- Use reflective listening
- Empathize
- Talk about EAP
- Document in detail
- Talk to a supervisor, manager or HR rep
- Have a safety plan

Cost of Workplace Violence

Estimated cost of workplace violence to U.S. businesses at \$36 billion per year

- Medical and psychiatric care
- Lost business and productivity
- Repairs and clean up
- Higher insurance rates
- Increased security costs
- Loss of valued employees

Workplace Bullying

According to the *FBI*:

- Workplace Bullying is *repeated mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators*

Workplace Bullying takes one or more of the following forms:

- Verbal abuse
- Offensive conduct/behaviors (including nonverbal) which are threatening, humiliating, or intimidating
- Work interference — sabotage — which prevents work from getting done

Bullying Warning Signs

- Nit picking, sarcastic putdowns and criticizing
- Undermines target's value and potential
- Humiliation, belittling, yelling at target in public
- Threatening, intimidating
- Marginalizing, ignoring or sidelining co-worker
- Taking credit for your work
- Piling work onto employee unnecessarily
- Takes pleasure in employee's fear
- Has unrealistic goals or deadlines
- Rallies others to ridicule co-worker
- Starts cruel rumors
- Tries to get the target fired
- Uses profanity

Impact on the Company

Costs to the company that result from bullied employees who experience:

- Cardiovascular problems
- Impaired immune system
- Debilitating anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder

Impact on Employees

An "unhealthy" workplace can have many effects

- increased absenteeism
- increased turnover
- increased stress
- increased costs for employee assistance programs
- decreased productivity and motivation
- decreased morale

Source: "[Violence in the Workplace Prevention Guide](#)" CCOHS, 2001

Who Gets Targeted?

Targets are...

- independent and confident on the job
- more technically skilled than their bullies
- experienced workers that junior employees turn for advice
- popular and intelligent
- ethical and honest
- social, empathetic and have non-confrontational personalities.

Targets will “take it”

Why Bullying Persists

- Element of personal shame involved
- Majority of bullies (72%) are bosses
- Some managers direct bullies to target particular employees
- Fear that complaints will lead to retaliation or reprisal.
- Fear of loss of job
- No good protocol in place to deal with bullies
- Mediation is often used which exacerbates the situation

Develop a policy against workplace bullying: Part 1

- A definition workplace bullying including a broad list of bullying behaviors
- A course of action to take after the claim of workplace bullying has been made
- An outline of the immediate consequences for violators of the policy
- A clear message that workplace bullying is prohibited and will not be tolerated
- Assurance that no reprisals will be made against reporting workers
- Clearly stated declaration that the policy encompasses everyone involved in the organization from bosses down

Develop a policy against workplace bullying: Part 2

- Distribute the policy to all employees
- Make it visible so all employees can see it throughout the workplace
- Make sure it is posted on the businesses' website emailed to employees
- Take all complaints seriously
- Be respectful of the target employee. It feels risky to him/her to disclose bullying.
- Encourage reporting of all incidents of bullying

What to do if you are targeted

- Keep a detailed log of all bullying episodes
- Seek the advice of a trusted mentor
- Talk to your manager, supervisor or HR person
- ONLY if it is safe, talk to the bully in a calm manner
- Describe what has been happening and how it is affecting you.
- Tell the bully to stop
- Don't allow the bully to undermine you

Summary

- Bullying must be treated with zero tolerance
- No one should ever feel subjected to intimidation, fear or humiliation in the workplace or anywhere!
- Do not allow anyone in your company to bully
- Take action immediately
- Review EAP Resources

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