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 background 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 of 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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