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Workplace Violence Prevention

for Supervisors/Managers

Presentation by:
MHN Training & Development

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Participant Handbook

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Learning Objectives

- Recognize the types and levels of workplace violence
- Understand what the organization can do to reduce the risk of violence
- Discuss strategies to address challenging behaviors and potential conflict situations
- Identify internal and external resources to enhance workplace violence prevention efforts

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Workplace Violence: A Growing Concern

- Why do employees and employers need to be concerned with workplace violence?

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What is Workplace Violence?

- Actual acts of violence against workers
- The *threat* of violence
- Behaviors can include:
 - Implied Threats (written or verbal)
 - Direct Threats (written or verbal)
 - Verbal Abuse (i.e., yelling, using profanity)
 - Physical Assault
 - Homicide
 - Other (i.e., hostility, bullying, harassment, stalking)

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The Realities of Workplace Violence (WPV)

- According to OSHA, an estimated 2 million people report some type of workplace violence per year
 - It is estimated that 25% of workplace violence goes unreported
- An average of 765 workplace homicides occur each year (based on data 1980-1992*)
- The annual comprehensive cost to businesses, including estimated losses, is now \$130 billion (in 2018, compared to \$36 billion in 1995*)
- For those experiencing injury from workplace violence, 20% required 31 or more days away from work to recover. 21% involved 3 to 5 days away from work.
- Lawsuits associated with workplace violence cost companies an average of \$500,000 for out-of-court settlements

*most recent large scale data available through NIOSH
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The Costs of Workplace Violence

- Lost productivity
- Turnover
- Increased workers' compensation claims
- Increased medical claims
- Increased absenteeism
- Lost work time
- Security
- Building repair
- Interrupted or lost business
- Salary continuation for injured/traumatized workers
- Increased lawsuits

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Types of Workplace Violence

- Type I: Criminal Intent
- Type II: Customer/Client Violence
- Type III: Worker-on-Worker Violence
- Type IV: Personal Relationship Violence

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Levels of Workplace Violence

- Level 1: Behavioral Disruptiveness
 - Belligerence toward customers/clients or co-workers
 - Refusal to cooperate with immediate supervisor
 - Bullying
- Level 2: Increasingly Menacing Behavior
 - Verbalizing wishes to hurt others; making suicidal threats
 - Sabotaging equipment and stealing property
 - Stalking
- Level 3: Physical Acts of Violence
 - Physical fights
 - Committing physical or sexual assault, arson, and/or murder

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Triggers to Workplace Violence

| | |
|---|--|
| • Job Stress | • Harassment |
| • Termination | • Racial, ethnic, gender, or lifestyle conflicts |
| • Lay-offs | • Domestic Disputes |
| • Job Performance Issues (i.e., counseling or disciplinary action) | |

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Management Responsibilities

- OSHA Guidelines/Regulations
 - OSHA General Duty Clause [29 USC 1900 5 (a) (1)]
 - Potential for fines and citations
- Management liabilities
 - Threat of lawsuits
- Obligation to employee protection
 - Rights to a safe work environment
 - Business imperative

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Identifying Workplace Vulnerabilities

- Internally within work groups
- Externally with the public
- Points of access/vulnerability
- Environmental risk factors

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Workplace Violence Prevention Strategies

- Environmental Interventions
- Behavioral Interventions
- Administrative Interventions

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Dealing with an Angry Person

- Give them your full attention
- Demonstrate concern
- Let them express their concerns (vent)
- Restate their concerns and validate them
- Ask for their suggestions on possible actions to resolve the situation
- Let them know what you can do
- Let them know when you will get back to them with a resolution (if applicable)
- Follow through on the complaint or concern

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General Prevention: What to Watch For

- Pathological blaming
- Chemical dependency
- Increased frustration with circumstances
- Interest in weapons
- Mental illness
- Threats of revenge
- History of violence
- Absence of emotional control
- Impaired neurological functioning
- Romantic obsession

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Guidelines and Training for Employees

- Know the policy for workplace violence incidents
- Alert supervisors to any concerns about safety
- Be familiar with procedures in handling and reporting safety or security issues
- Report all incidents immediately in writing
- Learn how to recognize and diffuse potentially violent situations
- Avoid traveling alone into unfamiliar locations
- Carry only minimal money and required identification into community settings

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Conflict/Confrontation Diffusing Techniques

- Respond calmly and quietly
- Do not take the behavior personally
- Ask questions
- Consider offering an apology
- Summarize what you hear the individual saying
- Calmly and firmly set limits
- Respectfully ask the individual to stop the behavior and state consequences if the behavior continues
- Do NOT touch the person

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Management's Prevention Strategies

- Communicate violence prevention policy and procedure guidelines
- Inform employees how to respond to threats/troubling behaviors
- Secure the workplace and/or provide communication devices
- Establish performance and behavior guidelines
- Know employee warning signs
- Identify common indicators of workplace problems
- Address performance/behavior concerns immediately as they occur
- Consult with HR
- Consult with EAP

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Partnering for Protection

- Organizational resources
 - Upper management
 - HR
- MHN EAP
 - Management Consultation
 - EAP referrals
- Law enforcement personnel
 - Local police
 - 911

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Threat Assessment & Response Team

- Human Resources
- Legal
- Security
- Safety
- Senior Manager
- EAP professional (MHN Management Consultation team)
- Law Enforcement
- Union/employee representative (as applicable)

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What are Your Policies and Procedures?

- Workplace Violence Policy
- Procedures for filing complaints/communicating threats
- Investigation process
- Threat assessment and response guidelines

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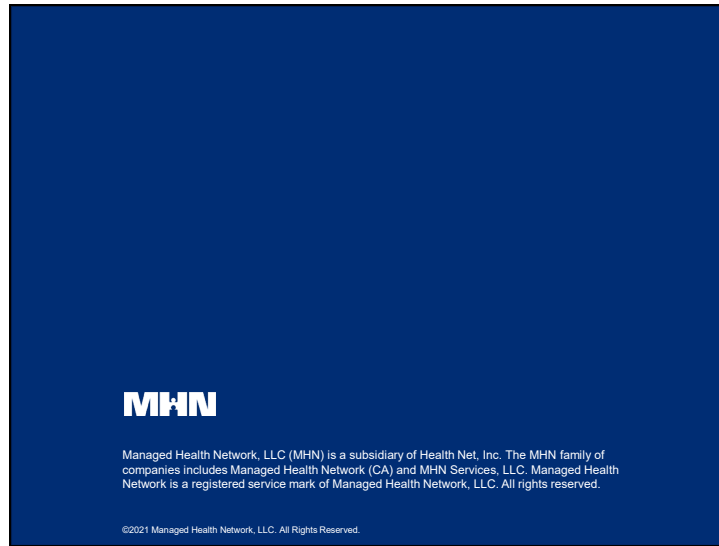
Resources

- MHN Online – www.MHN.com
 - Manager's Corner
- Readings/Articles:
 - Workplace Violence Prevention Strategies and Research Needs. DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No.2006-144.
 - Recommendations for Workplace Violence Prevention Programs in Late-Night Retail Establishments. OSHA Publication No. 3153.
 - Dealing with Workplace Violence: A Guide for Agency Planners. United States Office of Personnel Management Publication No. OWR-09.

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Handout A. Levels of Workplace Violence

Level 1: Behavioral Disruptiveness

- Belligerence toward customers/clients or co-workers
- Refusal to cooperate with immediate supervisor
- Spreading rumors and gossip to harm others
- Consistently arguing with coworkers
- Constantly swearing at others
- Making unwanted sexual comments

Level 2: Increasingly Menacing Behavior

- Verbalizing wishes to hurt others; making suicidal threats
- Sabotaging equipment and stealing property
- Stalking
- Refusal to obey company policies and procedures
- Increasing number of arguments with customers, vendors, co-workers and management
- Sending sexual, violent, or inappropriate notes to co-workers and/or management

Level 3: Physical Acts of Violence

- Physical fights
- Committing physical or sexual assault, arson, and/or murder
- Committing suicide
- Destruction of property

Handout B. Workplace Violence Prevention Strategies

1. Environmental Interventions

- Cash Control
- Lighting Control
- Entry and Exit Control
- Surveillance
- Other Security Measures (Employee photo identification badges, guard services, individual coded key cards for access to buildings and grounds)
- Signage indicating small amounts of cash on premises
- Clerk protection systems (bullet-proof glass)
- “Buddy” System, or daily work plan communicated to supervisor or co-workers (for isolated work stations)
- Communication devices (cell phones, two-way radios) for isolated workers

2. Behavioral Interventions

- Training on WPV responses
- Training on use of safety equipment
- Training on dealing with “problem persons”
- Training on WPV policies and procedures
- Training on how to observe and report behavioral changes in employees
- Provide Alternative Dispute Resolutions – such as ombudpersons, facilitation, mediation, interest-based problem solving, and peer review
- Threat Assessment Team –interdisciplinary team works with management to assess the potential for workplace violence, and as appropriate, develop and execute a plan to address it

3. Administrative Interventions

- Hours of operation (closing earlier in the evenings)
- Precautions during opening and closing
- Good relationship with the police
- Examining hiring process to screen prospective employees for propensity to violence
- Create a culture of support for workers who want to report potential WPV

Handout C. Workplace Violence Prevention: Behaviors to Watch For

Moderately Significant Criteria:

- Recent behavior changes
- Alienation
- Excessively bitter
- Mental health, substance abuse issues
- Irrationality
- Grandiosity
- Externalizes responsibility for behavior
- Raised in abusive family
- Sexual fetishes
- Recent significant self-esteem loss

Significant Criteria:

- Grudge over loss or threat of loss
- Recent loss of significant other
- Emotional mood swings
- Fascination with violence
- Self-destructive behavior
- Fascination with pornography
- Severe intoxication
- Fear of losing control
- Rages
- Abusive to opposite sex
- Symbolic dehumanization of others
- Post-Traumatic Stress from combat or other situations

Handout D. How To Respond To Disruptive, Threatening, Or Violent Behavior

STEP 1: General response to disruptive behavior (no threats or weapons)

- Respond quietly and calmly. Try to defuse the situation.
- Do not take the behavior personally. Usually, the behavior has little to do with you, but you are used as a target in the situation.
- Ask questions. Respectful concern and interest may demonstrate that aggression is not necessary.
- Consider offering an apology. Even if you've done nothing wrong, an apology may calm the individual and encourage cooperation. "I'm sorry that happened. What can we do now that will solve the problem?"
- Summarize what you hear the individual saying. Make sure you are communicating clearly. In crisis, a person feels humiliated and wants respect and attention. Your summary of the individual's concerns reflects your attention. Focus on areas of agreement to help resolve the concern.
- If this approach does not stop the disruption, assess whether the individual seems dangerous. If in your best judgment he/she is upset but not a threat, set limits and seek assistance as necessary.

STEP 2: Step 1 response ineffective, individual DOES NOT seem dangerous

- Calmly and firmly set limits. "Please lower your voice. There will be no disruptions in this office." "Please be patient so that I can understand what you need and try to help you."
- Ask the individual to stop the behavior and warn that official action may be taken. "Disruption is subject to disciplinary action. Stop or you may be reported."
- If the disruption continues despite a warning, tell the individual that he/she may be disciplined or prosecuted, state that the discussion is over, and direct them to leave the office. "Please leave now. If you do not leave, we will call the Police."
- If the individual refuses to leave after being directed to do so, state that this refusal is also a violation subject to discipline, exclusion from work, or arrest.

STEP 3: Step 1 response ineffective and the individual SEEMS DANGEROUS

- If possible, find a quiet, safe place to talk, but do not isolate yourself with an individual you believe may be dangerous. Maintain a safe distance, do not turn your back, and stay seated if possible. Leave the door open or open a closed door, and sit near the door. Be sure a co-worker is near to help if needed.
- Use a calm, non-confrontational approach to defuse the situation. Indicate your desire to listen and understand the problem. Allow the person to describe the problem.

- NEVER touch the individual yourself to try to remove him/her from the area. Even a gentle push or holding the person's arm may be interpreted as an assault by an agitated individual who may respond with violence towards you or file a lawsuit later.
- Set limits to indicate the behavior needed to deal with the concern. "Please lower your voice." "Please stop shouting (or using profanity) or I'll have to ask you to leave."
- Signal for assistance. The individual may be antagonized if you call for assistance so use a prearranged 'distress' signal to have another staff member check on you to determine how you are. If you need help, the co-worker should alert your supervisor and/or the police.
- Do not mention discipline or the police if you fear an angry or violent response.
- If the situation escalates, find a way to excuse yourself, leave the room/area and get help. "You've raised some tough questions. I'll consult my supervisor to see what we can do."

IN AN EMERGENCY

- For crimes in progress, violent incidents or specific threats of imminent violence, call 9-1-1.
- Immediately contact the police or have someone call for you if an individual makes threats of physical harm toward you, others, or him/herself;
- has a weapon; or behaves in a manner that causes you to fear for your own or another's safety
- Use a phone out of sight/hearing of the individual. The police will respond and take appropriate action.
- Do not attempt to intervene physically or deal with the situation yourself. It is critical that the police take charge of any incident that can or does involve physical harm.
- Get yourself and others to safety as quickly as possible.
- If possible, keep a line open to police until they arrive. If you cannot stay on the line, call 911 and the dispatcher will direct the police to you. The more information the police receive, the more likely they can bring a potentially violent situation to a safe conclusion.

Handout E. Workplace Violence: What Would You Do?

Case Study #1

Bill has come to you because he is very upset with his coworker, Ted. Bill claims Ted is “out to get him” and is worried about how Ted can influence his performance evaluation. He believes Ted is sabotaging his work. Bill has also indicated that Ted is spreading rumors about him to other members of the staff. When Bill was discussing his concerns with you he became red in the face, he clenched his fists and tightened his jaw. You happen to know that Bill is an avid hunter and has a collection of several guns in his home. What should you do?

Case Study #2

Michael, who had been a problem employee for the last two years, was terminated from his position. His immediate supervisor, Beth, has come to you expressing fear for her safety. Beth said Michael threatened to “make her pay for this” when she terminated him. That same night, when Beth went out to her car, there were scratches down both sides that were not there before. The scratches looked like they were made with a knife or some type of sharp object. Beth tells you that she is not only afraid for her safety, but she is also concerned that her husband might do something to Michael to “put him in his place”. What, if anything, should you do?

Case Study #3

You have been Sally’s immediate supervisor for six years and notice that she has suddenly become quiet and reserved. She used to tell stories to the work group on Monday morning about her weekend activities, but she no longer does so. In the last week, a couple of Sally’s coworkers have mentioned to you that Sally has been noticeably abrupt and snippy with them. They have also noticed a recurring smell of alcohol on her breath after lunchtime. The last time Sally turned in a request for sick leave, you questioned whether she had any more sick leave to take. It used to be that Sally was incredibly reliable and dependable. Since she got married a year ago, this has changed. What, if anything, should you do?

Case Study #4

Maria has been your office manager for 12 years. During this time she has often been late for work and sometimes arrives with bruises. The receptionist has told you in confidence that on some days her husband calls her as many as 25 times. He has shown up at the front desk, demanding to see her, and frequently waits by her car in the afternoon until she gets off of work. As other employees leave the office, he often says insulting things to them about Maria. How should you handle this situation?

Case Study #5

Todd has been seeking a promotion within his department for several years, but has been passed over each time. He jokingly told a coworker on Friday afternoon that he was going to plant a car bomb in the vice-president’s vehicle, which was parked in the underground garage beneath the office. On Monday morning, Todd phoned in his threat to blow up the building; security

confirmed that there was an explosive device and evacuated the building. Officials eventually determined that the car bomb was not real. How should you handle this situation?

Case Study #6

Bob supervises 14 employees at a small branch office. The organization may be making layoffs soon and all of the staff, including Bob, is concerned about their jobs. Management has said it will make a decision within six months, but also says that productivity will have to increase substantially to keep the office open. Bob starts disciplining staff he thinks are not working productively. When he meets with one employee, Mark, and informs him that he will be disciplined for poor work performance, Mark becomes angry and starts to shout at Bob. A week later, Bob suspends Mark for continuing aggressive, threatening behavior. At that point, Mark physically pushes Bob into a file cabinet and storms out of the office. What should you do?