

## Violence Prevention Program

Statistics indicate that incidents of workplace violence have steadily increased over the past several years, and can cost businesses a significant amount of money if not managed properly. Although homicides make the headlines, most incidents of workplace violence involve situations other than homicide. These situations include threats and verbal abuse, physical assaults, fistfights, domestic and romantic disputes, and harassment.

Most incidents of workplace violence can be categorized into one of three types:

1. Type I
  - In a Type I crime, the perpetrator has no relationship to the victim and usually enters the workplace to commit a robbery or other criminal act. Businesses at high-risk to Type I violence include gas stations, convenience stores, 24 hour restaurants, taxi and limo drivers, small hotels/motels, etc.
2. Type II
  - Type II violence is committed by a current or former client, customer, patient or prisoner. The person might be seeking revenge against the workplace or a specific person at the workplace. Other reasons for Type II violence include fear, anger, frustration, or mental illness. The health care and social services industries are at high-risk to Type II violence.
3. Type III
  - Type III violence is the most common type of workplace violence and affects all businesses. These incidents are committed by a current or former employee, spouse, lover, relative, or friend of a current or former employee. Examples of Type III violence include domestic and romantic disputes, fights, assaults, threats, and homicides.

A Violence Prevention Program provides businesses with a plan to prevent and deal with workplace violence. The Program should include:

- Management Commitment
- Company Policy
- Prevention Techniques
- Reporting & Handling Procedures
- Legal Concerns

### Management Commitment

For a program to be successful, management should be committed to preventing workplace violence. This means that management must provide visible support for the program and communicate a zero-tolerance for violence.

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**Company Policy:**

A comprehensive program should also include a written prevention policy. This policy should state that violence will not be tolerated and any disciplinary actions for violating the policy. It should also encourage victims of workplace violence to report all incidents of workplace violence. This policy should be communicated to all employees and visitors.

**Prevention Techniques:**

There are many prevention techniques that businesses can implement to help prevent workplace violence. These techniques can include, but are not limited to:

1. Pre-employment screening
  - The best way to prevent workplace violence is to not hire potentially violent people. Employers that use effective hiring practices often reduce the likelihood of hiring people who are more prone to exhibiting violent behavior. Some of the more effective screening practices are written job applications, interviews, reference checks, police/criminal background checks, and post job offer drug tests.
2. Supervisor and employee training
  - Training both employees and supervisors assures that they understand the company's Violence Prevention Program. Some of the more relevant topics to train employees and supervisors on include:
    - (a) The extent of workplace violence
    - (b) The company policy and disciplinary actions for violating this policy
    - (c) Warning signs of potentially violent people
    - (d) Reporting procedures
3. Workplace safety and security changes
  - Businesses can also make many changes to their existing workplace to reduce the likelihood of workplace violence from occurring. Most of these changes are very inexpensive and involve only minor modifications to the existing workplace. Some changes that all companies can make include:
    - (a) Install adequate lighting in all parking areas and entrances
    - (b) Encourage employees to walk in groups to their cars
    - (c) Lock all doors after business hours
    - (d) Implement proper sign-in procedures for all guests and issue visitor's passes
    - (e) Adopt proper cash handling procedures and other robbery prevention techniques
    - (f) Implement proper evacuation procedures
4. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
  - An EAP can be an excellent resource for helping employees and their families cope with a variety of problems. Some of the more common

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problems that EAPs specialize in include domestic abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, stress, and credit problems.

#### 5. Violence Prevention Team

- A Violence Prevention Team can be an excellent resource for helping larger and more vulnerable businesses prevent workplace violence. Typically, a Violence Prevention Team is responsible for developing and managing a company's Violence Prevention Program.

#### **Reporting/Handling Procedures:**

For the program to be a success, employees and supervisors must know how to report and handle incidents of workplace violence. In most cases, acts of workplace violence are reported to an employee's supervisor or designated individual.

#### **Legal Issues:**

There are many legal issues that businesses must be aware of. Three of the more pertinent legal issues are negligent hiring, negligent retention, and wrongful discharge.

Although some businesses are more at-risk to workplace violence, no business is immune! With an increase in the amount of stress and pressure placed on employees, acts of workplace violence will only increase in the future. As with any problem encountered in the business world today, the best solution is to develop a plan for handling the problem. A formalized Workplace Violence Prevention Program can help businesses reduce the chances of having a violent occurrence in their workplace. Great American is here to help. Contact your local Great American Insurance Loss Prevention Specialist or call 1-888-788-GAIC for more information.

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