



PART II

Background Information

Fact Finding/Investigating

The information in this section provides guidance for the organization's planning group. It is not technical information for professional investigators nor is it a summary of fact-finding or investigating procedures. Rather, it is intended to provide the employer with a general overview of fact-finding/investigating considerations. It is also important to note that this section discusses investigations that are administrative inquiries as distinct from criminal investigations.

Introduction

Generally, workplace violence involves criminal conduct and considerations should be given to reserving criminal prosecution as an option.

Why investigate?

An employer may decide to investigate an incident in order to:

- Prevent recurrence,
- Reduce risk and control losses,
- Determine if a policy violation has occurred,
- Determine the facts of the incident,
- Identify parties involved, and
- Design appropriate responses.

Determining the facts of an incident such as what, how, why it happened, and who was involved is the only way to determine the cause of the incident and ultimately to prevent its recurrence.

The investigation can also determine what needs to be done to deal with the aftermath of an incident. The facts can assist counselors, legal staff, facilities and security managers, insurance adjusters, and others to determine what needs to be done to get the organization back to full operation as quickly as possible.

It is important that the employer decide what the purpose of an investigation will be and what the employer intends to do with that information. The scope and the resources devoted to an investigation should be relative to its purpose.

Who will conduct the investigation?

Immediately after deciding that an investigation must be conducted, determine who will conduct the investigation. Is there an incident response team or someone in-house with the necessary qualifications and resources, or is it necessary to contract an outside investigator or professional? If in-house, consider that the investigation must be fair and objective and performed as quickly as possible. The employer's or organization's planning group should identify investigation resources before the need for an investigator arises.

The employer needs to make a determination whether the investigation will be handled criminally and/or administratively. An investigation must obtain all relevant facts before they become distorted, tainted or otherwise compromised. Witnesses can forget, and interaction with other witnesses often results in mingled or distorted memories of the event. Employers should also consider collective bargaining provisions that often specify time limits for investigations and any resultant disciplinary action. Having a list of potential investigators ahead of the need can speed up the investigation and improve the quality of the results.

In unionized workplaces, the interview of an employee may require that the investigator provide Weingarten warnings, in which the employee is informed that he or she may have a coworker present during any questioning that could result in discipline (Refer to Appendix B). Also, it is important that investigations undertaken in union shops be conducted in accordance to the specific bargaining agreements or memorandums of understanding that apply.

In any event, it will be necessary to demonstrate the voluntariness of any statement obtained from a witness in order for that statement to be later used in any disciplinary action. It is recommended that the investigator take steps to document the consent of the witness to participate in the interview.

Employers are encouraged to seek advice from legal counsel prior to any investigation and have legal counsel available for the investigator or investigation team.

Criminal Investigations

In some cases, a criminal case may arise out of an administrative investigation. The police or other criminal enforcement agency may have previously determined that no active criminal investigation will be conducted or may indicate that administrative inquiries may proceed regardless of any potential criminal case, but there still remains the possibility that the facts obtained during the investigation may result in a criminal investigation. Investigators should be aware of this possibility and act appropriately.

In most public sector cases, until a government investigator believes that a criminal act may have occurred, no Miranda warnings are necessary. They are not required in private sector investigations. The findings of the case may still be turned over to law enforcement authorities without significantly compromising the case. However, once a public sector investigator believes that the findings can result in criminal action against the person being interviewed, it is recommended that the person be given an option to participate in the interview after being warned that any statements he or she makes may be used against him or her in criminal proceedings.

In an interview conducted by a government official or agent, the option not to participate in the interview is exercised by the person's invocation of his or her Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination. Note: Since the person is not legally in custody, he or she is not entitled to an attorney, unless union contracts otherwise dictate.

Investigators in state or county organizations should determine with their prosecutorial agency whether *Kalkines*¹ warnings (Refer to Appendix C) are necessary in each particular investigation during which testimony will be compelled from individuals. In potentially violent situations, it is often difficult to determine whether the misconduct is a criminal offense. When there is any doubt, check it out.

Administrative Investigations

A thorough and professional investigative product is the result of thorough, professional preparation and procedures. Personally obtaining information from individuals will constitute a significant part of any investigation. An awareness of the skills and techniques necessary for effective interviewing is required.

In preparing for and conducting investigations, experienced professional administrative investigators have found the following approaches to be effective.

Before the Investigation

Employers must ensure that the investigator is:

- Aware of the purpose and scope of the investigation;
- Familiar with any company policies, collective bargaining agreement(s), procedures or rules related to the incident or investigation;
- Aware of who will see the investigative report, including whether the report will or can be made public; and
- Aware of who to keep informed of status and interim findings throughout the investigation.

¹ Derived from *Kalkines v. United States*, 473 F.2d 1391 (1973)

In order to facilitate timely and thorough investigations, a letter signed by the employer or other top management official should be drafted that:

- authorizes the investigation,
- introduces the investigator as having the authority to obtain necessary information and interview witnesses, and
- requests (or requires) the cooperation of employees.

Reviewing available information

The investigator, after thoroughly reviewing the information that gave rise to the investigation, is probably ready to begin the investigation process. Discrepancies or deficiencies in the information should be noted so they can be addressed during the interviews.

Selecting an interview site

Since the investigator is conducting an official investigation, he or she should conduct as many interviews as possible in an official environment, i.e., in workspaces (instead of restaurants, cars, or private homes). Privacy is the most important consideration in selection of an interview site. The investigator should guarantee that the room will be available for the entire interview, so that there is no disruption of the interview once it begins. The interview room should be comfortably furnished, with as few distractions as possible.

Scheduling the interview

Depending on the circumstances of the situation, the investigator may or may not want to contact the individual in advance. In either event, the investigator should advise the individual of the general nature and purpose of the interview. If the individual declines the interview, the investigator should attempt to dissuade the individual and, if unsuccessful, ascertain and record the reasons for the declination. If the individual fails to appear more than once for the interview, the investigator should follow whatever policy has been decided upon ahead of time.

Allowing the presence of additional persons

There may be instances when the investigator or the individual being interviewed wishes to have an additional person present. In cases involving bargaining unit employees, see the discussion in the next section. Investigators sometimes prefer to have an organization representative present when interviewing the subject of the investigation. In any event, the investigator should follow whatever policy has been decided upon ahead of time.

Adhering to the law regarding bargaining unit employees

The provisions of law set forth in 5 USC 7114 (a)(2)(B), commonly known as Weingarten rights (Refer to Appendix B), cover any examination of an employee by a representative of the employer in connection with an investigation. A recent court decision extended Weingarten rights to non-bargaining unit employees.

If the investigator or employer representative believes that an investigation may result in disciplinary action, the affected employee must be informed of their Weingarten rights to have union or other representation present during the interview. If an employee reasonably believes that an investigation may result in disciplinary action, even if the investigator or employer representative does not concur, and the employee requests union or other representation, the investigator has three options:

1. Immediately terminate the interview,
2. Continue the interview with the employee's representative present, or
3. Give the employee the option of proceeding with the interview without a representative or terminating the interview.

Since interpretation of this law is very complex, consult with your human resources department, labor relations specialists, or legal counsel when faced with such situations.

Taking notes

Since watching an investigator take notes can be intimidating to some people, it is important to establish rapport before beginning to take notes. The investigator should concentrate on observing the individual during the interview. Note-taking should not unduly interfere with observation. Note-taking materials should be positioned inconspicuously and not become a focus of attention. The investigator should learn and exercise the skill of taking adequate notes while still observing the individual and without distracting the person being interviewed. In some cases, it may even be useful to have a second investigator or other official present to take notes.

The investigator should explain the purpose of note-taking. The notes are intended for the investigator's use in preparing a report and are not a verbatim transcript of the interview. The investigator can modify or cease note-taking so long as the information can be recorded in adequate detail after the interview.

Some investigators may choose to audiotape interviews. It is recommended that the investigator do so with the full knowledge and cooperation of the employee being interviewed. Experienced investigators are aware of the pros and cons of using such devices and can choose what is best for the type of investigation being conducted.

Maintaining control of the interview

Questions developed ahead of time can be memorized or possibly read from a list; however, they should not be recited in a perfunctory manner. The investigator should know in advance the topics of concern to be covered, and should maintain a singleness of purpose during the interview, resisting any efforts to shorten the interview or drift from the topics of concern.

Developing rapport

The investigator should have a comfortable style that projects professionalism and competence. The investigator's style should generate rapport with the person being interviewed. An open approach that conveys a willingness to communicate generally fosters rapport. Rapport is evident when the individual appears comfortable with the investigator and is willing to confide personally sensitive information. Continuing rapport can oftentimes be maintained if the investigator does not become judgmental when disagreeable conduct or information is disclosed. The investigator who can project empathy when appropriate to do so often gains special insight but, at the same time, no investigator should get personally involved with the case.

Handling hostility

If the investigator feels threatened by the individual being interviewed, the investigator should stop the interview and report the situation to the appropriate authorities.

Investigators may encounter argumentative individuals. When this type of hostility is encountered, the investigator can seek to defuse it by explaining the purpose of the interview and that the interview is a required part of the investigation. Reminding the interviewee that the investigator has full authority to conduct the interview and that the interviewee is required to cooperate may lessen the reluctance.

Recognizing and acknowledging the person's hostility and the reason for it will sometimes let both parties reach the mutual understanding that the interview will proceed (whether or not the topics under discussion are related to the hostility).

If, after repeated attempts in various ways, an individual refuses to answer a specific question, the investigator should attempt to learn the reason. The investigator should record the refusal to answer any question and the reason. If the individual wants to terminate the interview, the investigator should attempt to learn the reason and to dissuade the individual by addressing the concerns. If the individual persists, the investigator should conclude the interview.

Interview Techniques

This section contains questioning, listening, and observing techniques and suggestions.

Questioning techniques

Questioning usually proceeds from general areas to specific issues. For example, comments on the dates and location of the incident are usually obtained before comments on the circumstances surrounding the event.

The investigator should usually frame questions that require a narrative answer. Soliciting "Yes" or "No" responses restricts the individual from providing information. Such responses are helpful when summarizing or verifying information, but they should be avoided when seeking to elicit new information.

The investigator should use questioning techniques that result in the most productive responses from the person being investigated. This requires that the investigator exercise judgment based on observation of attitude, demeanor, and actions during the interview. These may change at times during the interview. The investigator should be continuously alert to such changes and should modify questioning techniques accordingly.

Non-confrontational approach. The non-confrontational approach is best. Here are some examples:

- If a person refuses to answer follow-up questions about an issue, the investigator notes the refusal to answer and moves on to the next area of questioning. However, the investigator then comes back to the issue later.
- If a person raises his or her voice in the interview, the investigator maintains a calm, level voice, or lowers his or her voice.

Direct and non-direct questions. A direct question calls for a factual or precise answer. Direct questions are ordinarily used when covering background data.

Here are some examples of direct questions:

- *Who told you that he made a threat?*
- *When did you notice that he had a gun?*
- *What were the circumstances surrounding the argument?*

Non-direct questions are usually more appropriate in discussing opinions and feelings because they allow more latitude in responding.

Here are some examples of non-direct questions:

- *What led you to say that?*
- *What made that unusual?*
- *Has this happened before to anyone?*
- *What was your reaction when he yelled at you?*

Assumptive questions. Assumptive questions assume involvement in the activity under discussion. The investigator can use assumptive questions when involvement has already been admitted, either at some other time or earlier in the interview. Assumptive questions allow the investigator to assist the individual in describing the degree of involvement, particularly when it is difficult to respond narratively. The investigator puts the individual at ease when using assumptive questions by demonstrating that the investigator is not shocked by the conduct being discussed.

Here are some examples of assumptive questions:

- *Have you made similar statements to others?*
- *Is it fairly routine for you to carry a knife to work?*

Summarizing questions. Summarizing questions are used to verify what has been said in summary form. The investigator uses summarizing questions to give the individual an opportunity to hear what the investigator understood. In concluding each segment of the interview, the investigator should pause after asking a summarizing question to allow the individual to respond and verify, correct, disagree with, or amplify a previous response.

Here are some examples of summarizing questions:

- *In other words, it was not what he said, but the tone of his voice, that scared you?*
- *You're telling me that you were only joking when you said you'd blow up the place?*
- *Have I got this straight? You did not think he would actually carry out his threat?*

Listening techniques

Investigators should not be intent on listening for the end of an answer only so that they can get to the next question. The meaning and sense of the answers will be ignored and lost. Careful attention to each response is what provides the basis for the next appropriate question, not a checklist of questions.

The person being interviewed may be signaling a problem with the area under discussion by not immediately responding to a question. The investigator should be patient and let the person respond. The urge to complete a statement for the person with an assumption of what the person was going to say should be suppressed.

Listen to the whole response for its substance, inferences, suggestions, or implications that there is more to be said, or some qualification to the answer. Answers that are really non-answers, such as that's about right, or you know how it is, are not helpful because they are not definitive. Do not accept this type of response. Press for more specificity. Some people may attempt to avoid responding by blaming a faulty memory. Follow-up questions that can stimulate responses are, "Do you mean you're just not sure?" and, "But you remember SOMETHING about it, don't you?"

Investigators should both listen and think intensely throughout the interview, measuring what is being said with what is known from a review of what is already known. Compare new information to other statements made in the interview, and any other information in the investigator's possession.

Observing techniques

Questioning and listening are not the only communicative aspects of the interview. Actions may strengthen the credibility of the spoken word or contradict it. Body movement, gestures, and other observable manifestations provide clues to truth and deception. The investigator should be alert to behavior changes throughout the interview and assess the significance of those changes. While no single behavior indicates truth or deception, clusters of behavior patterns may be valuable clues to the truth of what is being said. These patterns should prompt the investigator to pursue a certain or broader line of questioning.

Other Considerations for the Planning Group

Here are other fact finding/investigating issues that the employer or organization's planning group should address:

1. Company or organizational policy procedures should be formulated ahead of time regarding such matters as no-shows, whether to allow tape recording of the interviews, and whether to allow the presence of additional persons during the interviews. Procedures should be based on sound legal analysis.
2. Keep in mind that routine, administrative details can't be ignored. Prior to beginning the actual investigation, the investigator should be given all administrative details, e.g., who gets the report and whom to contact regarding other administrative matters such as the investigator's pay, parking, and overtime.
3. Consider giving the investigator the list of factors any adjudicatory panel or body will consider in making credibility determinations if the investigation leads to a case before the panel or body. Usually these factors would include:
 - The witness' opportunity and capacity to observe the event or act in question;

- The witness' character;
 - Any prior inconsistent statement by the witness;
 - A witness' bias, or lack of bias;
 - The contradiction of the witness' version of events by other evidence or its consistency with other evidence;
 - The inherent improbability of the witness' version of events; and
 - The witness' demeanor.
4. Every step of the investigation should be objective, impartial, and unbiased.
 5. The investigative report should contain:
 - An Introduction into the Purpose and Scope of the Investigation;
 - Findings of Fact and/or Chronology of Significant Events;
 - An Analysis of the Facts;
 - Conclusions and Recommendations of the Investigator; and
 - Supporting Documentation, such as
 - Statements of witnesses and
 - Documentary evidence.
 6. Consider whether regular briefings should be scheduled to inform key persons of the status of the investigation. The investigator should be prepared to make a presentation of his or her findings before the employer and/or other appropriate staff.

Threat Assessment and Management

Introduction

The information in this section provides guidance for organizations once an initial investigation has determined that a valid concern exists related to potential violence. This information is intended to assist organizations in assessing the degree or level of risk so that an appropriate plan of action can then be implemented.

It is important for an employer to understand that, while all concerns about workplace violence should be taken seriously and acted upon, a workplace homicide perpetrated by an employee is a rare occurrence. However, acts of physical and emotional harm and property damage are relatively common.

What is Threat Assessment and Management?

Threat Assessment and Management (TAM) is the term used to describe a set of investigative and operational techniques that can be used by organizations to identify, assess, and manage the risks of violence by potential perpetrators. The threat assessment and management process entails the following steps:

1. **INCIDENT INVESTIGATION:** Fact gathering about an incident or concern, the perpetrator(s), and potential victim(s). An incident may involve a direct or conditional threat, intimidation, provocation, or violence directed toward property or persons. Concerns may arise as a result of behavior and comments that while not rising to the level of an incident, nonetheless represent the presence of warning signs or pre-incident indicators.
2. **THREAT ASSESSMENT:** An investigative process and situational evaluation leading to an opinion about the seriousness of a situation at a particular time. Threat assessment involves development of intelligence about a situation, and analysis of the information by those trained and experienced in this field.
3. **THREAT MANAGEMENT:** The goal of threat management is to use threat assessment information to develop a violence abatement plan. This plan's purpose is to decrease the likelihood of violence and to protect the safety of people in the organization. Threat management is a dynamic process that changes as more information is developed from the threat assessment inquiry.

How Can Threat Assessment and Management Help?

The goal of threat assessment and management is to better understand the nature of a situation, and those factors that may lead toward deterioration of the situation and escalation of violence. Threat assessment and management provides the organization with situation-based options in order to reduce the probability that violence could occur.

Threat assessment develops and organizes case information so that management of the incident can proceed cautiously. Threat assessment seeks to identify information about potential lethality and imminent risk levels, aiding in the development of response options. The following chart provides some response options based upon the determined risk level.

Hypothetical Response Options in Threat Assessment and Management

		Imminent Risk Level		
		High	Medium	Low
Lethality Level	High	Arrest; Hospitalization	Security Alert; Fitness for Duty Evaluation; Temporary Removal from Workforce, Pending Investigation	Security Alert; Fitness for Duty Evaluation
	Medium	Security Alert; Fitness for Duty Evaluation; Temporary Removal from Workforce, Pending Investigation	Security Alert; Possible Fitness for Duty Evaluation; EAP Referral; Temporary Removal from Workforce, Pending Investigation	EAP Referral
	Low	Fitness for Duty Evaluation; EAP Referral	EAP Referral	Monitor Situation

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Threat Assessment and Management Resources

Threat assessment is an evolving technical field. It is important to find a qualified professional to assist an organization if the need arises. A qualified threat assessment specialist should have education and specialized training or documented experience and qualifications in the field of threat assessment and management. The specialist should also be experienced in working with workplace incidents and be knowledgeable about mental health factors contributing to violence, as well as about employment practices and criminal laws. Refer to Part III for a listing of local threat management specialists.

In consultation with the threat management specialist, there are many resources to consider when conducting the investigation and making a determination for intervention. Depending upon the individual circumstances and level of threat, these resources may be called upon as deemed helpful or necessary.

They include: coworkers, managers, targeted persons or victims, associates of subject, associates of targets, mental health assessors, psychiatric/psychological treatment, security equipment vendors, security services, private investigators, attorneys, EAP program, law enforcement, outplacement services, Alternative Dispute Resolution, court, union, Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD), public relations consultant, and management consultant. Refer to Part III for a listing of local resources.

Fitness for Duty Evaluation

A Fitness for Duty Evaluation is used to evaluate a subject's potential for violence and to provide information to help manage potentially explosive situations. It is a component of the risk management process. These evaluations are conducted by licensed and specially trained psychologists or psychiatrists and enable the employer to obtain additional information on the psychological state of the employee in question. Fitness for Duty evaluations consist of the following elements:

1. Review of relevant database. This may include interviews with informants and examination of personnel and/or other records.
2. Psychological assessment. The employee of concern undergoes extensive psychological testing and interviews.
3. Management report. Based upon the database review and psychological assessment results, recommendations are forwarded to management in order to mitigate the threat of violence.

Refer to Appendix E for a sample of a Fitness for Duty/Threat Assessment Evaluation.

Security Services and Private Investigators

These professionals can obtain information on the background, current activities, plans and intentions of an individual in question, and provide organizations with expertise and experience in protecting persons and property.

Outplacement Services

These are comprised of a continuum of services intended to prepare and assist people in finding employment. Outplacement services may be used to smoothly transition an individual to other employment situations that are less likely to engender problem behaviors from the individual. By reducing the financial impact of job loss, the probability of violent episodes may be reduced. Outplacement services commonly include resume writing, job interview skill development, training in the job application process, recruitment placements, knowledge of how and where to locate job openings, and motivational and confidence-building workshops.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

EAPs are work site based programs designed to assist work organizations in addressing productivity issues, and to assist employee clients in identifying and resolving personal concerns. They may be particularly helpful in identifying situations requiring consultation with threat assessment professionals. Part II: Section 4, contains further information about EAPs.

Management Consultants

Management consultants may be able to assist with organizational issues related to prevention, intervention, and response to actual and potential incidents of violence; they may also coordinate the other listed resources and assist with the media and business network issues.

Threat assessment assistance

As the case studies in Part IV illustrate, many cases involving disturbing or threatening behavior can be handled expeditiously and effectively by a supervisor with the assistance of one or more members of the organization's incident response team. The key for organizations is to be able to distinguish the kinds of threats or concerns that can be effectively evaluated and handled internally from those concerns that may require the external expertise and assistance available through threat assessment and management professionals. It is recommended that the organization identify experts in threat assessment ahead of time, in case a situation requires more expertise than the organization's incident response team members can provide.

Gathering information

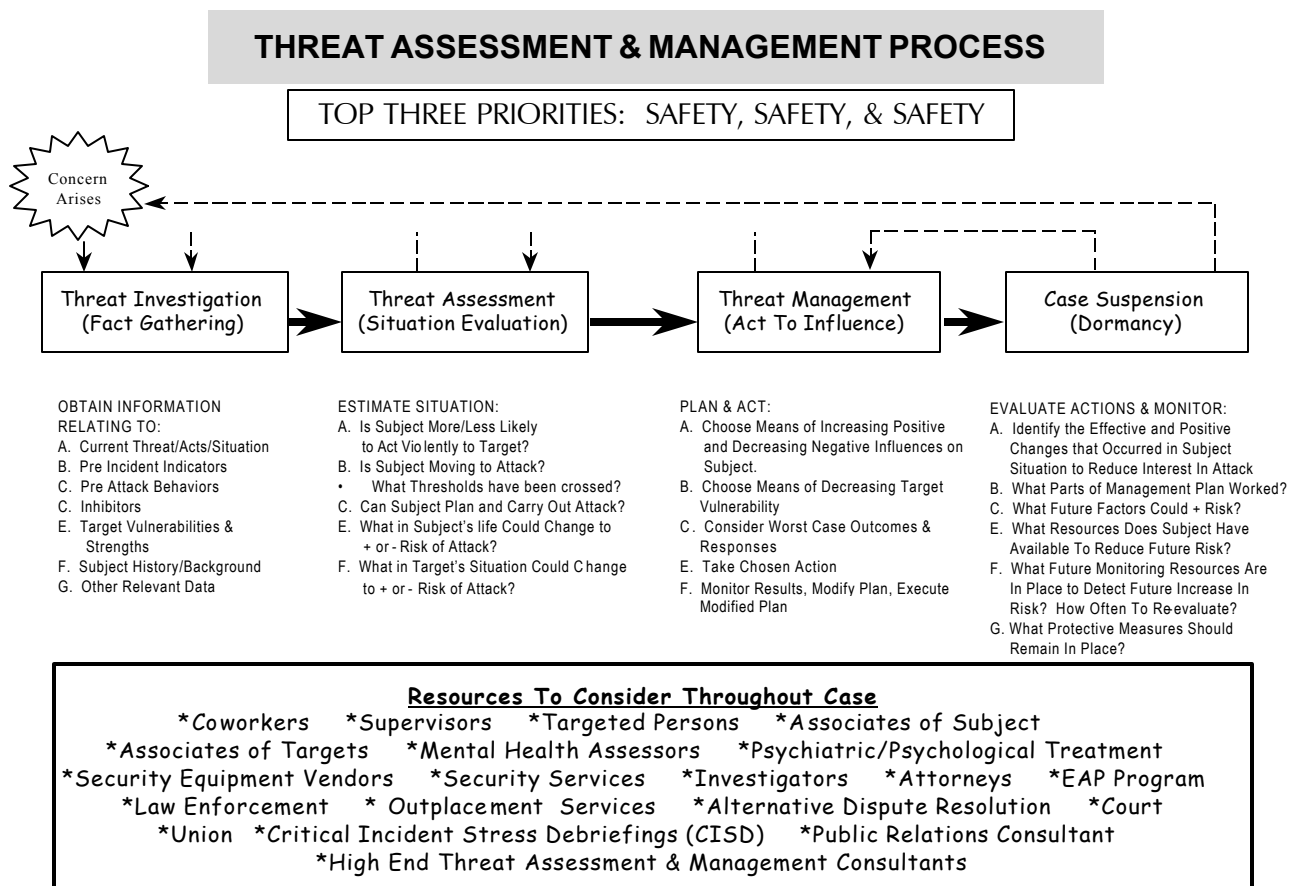
It is prudent to delineate who will gather which types of information when disturbing behavior is witnessed or threats are made. Multiple sources of information need to be consulted to better understand the person's behavior.

In some cases, the organization's incident response team can collect current and reliable information (which would include an investigative report) and then consult with a threat assessment professional to develop options for managing the situation. In other cases, the organization's incident response team uses a threat assessment professional to conduct the initial investigation, assess the risks, and make recommendations for managing the situation.

Threat assessment investigations differ from criminal or employee misconduct investigations in that the purpose of the threat assessment investigation is to provide guidance on managing the situation in a way that protects the organization's employees.

The research article in Appendix D helps to further explain the process of threat assessment as well as workplace considerations for managing a threat. Members of the employer's planning group and/or incident response team should educate themselves about threat assessment and management, whether responding with internal resources to a concern or seeking the assistance of a threat management specialist.

Threat Assessment and Management is a process. The following diagram charts the various stages of that process.



Employee Relations Considerations

Overview

Having an understanding of the employee relations issues that come into play in violent and potentially violent situations is important for workplace violence prevention. It helps in coordinating an effective response, in determining whether outside resources will be needed in certain situations, and in ensuring that appropriate disciplinary actions are taken.

In many organizations, the human resources staff coordinate the organization's workplace violence prevention program. One reason is that most reported incidents will result in some type of disciplinary action. Another reason is that, since the goal of the workplace violence prevention effort is to deal effectively with problem behavior early on, reporting incidents to the human resources office can result in swift action which stops the unacceptable behavior before it can escalate.

This section will discuss:

- Options available to remove potentially dangerous employees from the work site;
- Taking appropriate disciplinary action in response to violent, threatening, harassing, and other disruptive behavior;
- Responding to an employee who raises a medical condition/disability as a defense against the misconduct; and
- Mandatory evaluation.

Removing an Employee from the Work Site

In situations where a disruption has occurred on the job, a supervisor may consider reassignment of an individual to a different work area or schedule until a definitive course of action is decided. Where there is a belief that the potential for violence exists, a supervisor may need to keep an employee away from the work site to ensure the safety of employees while conducting further investigation and deciding on a course of action.

Place the employee on excused absence or a leave of absence during the investigation. Whether such leave is paid or unpaid is dependent upon the organization's policy and/or collective bargaining agreement, if applicable.

Organizations should monitor the situation and move toward longer-term actions (as discussed below) when it is necessary, appropriate, or prudent to do so.

Disciplinary Actions

After the completion of the investigation and when the organization possesses the relevant information regarding violent, harassing, threatening, and other disruptive behavior, the organization must determine the appropriate disciplinary action. Such action is dependent upon the organization's policy and/or collective bargaining agreement, if applicable, and may include:

- Verbal counseling;
- Warning;
- Written warning;
- Suspension; and/or
- Termination.

Non-Disciplinary Actions

When the facts of the investigation support it, referral to counseling, EAP, mental health assistance, or other non-disciplinary responses may be appropriate.

Disabilities as a Defense Against Alleged Misconduct

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has issued important guidance that specifically addresses potentially violent misconduct by employees with disabilities. It advises that an agency may discipline an employee with a disability who has violated a rule (written or unwritten) that is job-related and consistent with business necessity, even if the misconduct is the result of the disability, as long as the agency would impose the same discipline on an employee without a disability. The guidance specifically states that nothing prevents an employer from maintaining a workplace free of violence or threats of violence.

Evaluations

In conjunction with any disciplinary action, an organization may consider consultation with its EAP, threat assessment professional, or management consultant. Some organizations may require employees to undergo evaluations as a condition of continued employment. A Fitness for Duty evaluation is based upon information about the workplace situation, as well as a psychological evaluation of an employee. The organization requesting an evaluation should expect the psychologist to examine personnel records, the position description, disciplinary files, investigative reports, and a description of the behavior of concern. For a sample of a Fitness for Duty/Threat Assessment Evaluation, refer to Appendix E.

Consultation with legal counsel is recommended.

Employee Assistance Program Considerations

Introduction

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) participation can be important to the success of an employer's workplace violence prevention program. The EAP's role generally begins with participation on the organization's planning group where decisions are made about the role the EAP will play in the workplace violence prevention program. EAPs usually play an active role in early prevention efforts, sometimes participate on the incident response team, often are involved in "initial" risk assessment and intervention efforts, and generally assist with organizational recovery after an incident of workplace violence has occurred. This section will provide an overview of the EAP and then discuss considerations specific to workplace violence.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Defined

An Employee Assistance Program is designed to assist (1) work organizations in addressing productivity, policy and organizational issues, and (2) employee clients in identifying and resolving personal concerns including, but not limited to: health, marital, family, financial, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress, or other personal issues that may affect job performance. EAP services may be performed by in-house programs (internal) or by contracted providers and programs (external). EAP providers and programs should always have established formal EAP policies and procedures.

Overview of the Employee Assistance Program

EAPs provide short-term counseling and referral services to contracted work organizations. These programs are staffed by professional counselors (preferably certified CEAP or other licensed professional counseling specialists) who are available to discuss problems that can adversely affect job performance, conduct, and reliability. EAPs can help employees deal with alcoholism or drug abuse problems and additionally help employees with other problems such as marital or family issues. EAP counselors often refer employees to other professional services and resources within the community for further information, assistance, or long-term counseling. EAPs differ in their structure and scope of services as defined in their contracts.

Though employee and family counseling is a primary function, EAPs also generally provide other workplace services such as management consultation, education and training, post-trauma services, organizational assessments, and policy development and consultation.

Confidentiality is an important issue for EAPs. Employees who seek EAP services are afforded considerable privacy by laws, policies, and the professional ethics of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) professionals. EAPs will inform employees in writing about the limits of confidentiality on their first visit.



Employer workplace violence prevention planning group members should familiarize themselves with the structure, scope, and special considerations of their own EAP. As the planning group explores the range of services provided, it may identify needs for expanding the EAP's existing array of services. EAP professionals should advise the organization's planning group on the relevant laws, policies, and professional ethical constraints under which they operate. This will allow cooperative arrangements to be worked out for an appropriate EAP role and definition of the specific circumstances, if any, under which EAP services will be made mandatory or as a condition of employment.

The Employee Assistance Program's Role in Dealing with Workplace Violence

Role in early prevention efforts

EAPs can assist in policy and strategy development and help determine the EAP's role on the organization's workplace violence incident response team. EAPs bring a special expertise to the planning process. They are in an optimal position to assist with many of the activities conducted by the planning group.

- **Promotion of the EAP.** The effectiveness of a workplace violence prevention program is greatly enhanced in an organization with an active, well-known EAP presence. Employers with active programs promote the EAP by issuing periodic statements from top management endorsing the program and reminding employees of the services offered by the EAP, having counselors attend staff meetings to familiarize agency employees with the counselors, and having counselors give special briefings and seminars for managers, employees, and union stewards.
- **Information dissemination.** EAPs often provide booklets, pamphlets, and lending libraries of books and videos about such topics as domestic violence, stress reduction, and dealing with angry customers.
- **Early involvement in organizational change.** When a workplace is facing reorganization, restructuring, or other organizational change which may have an impact on employees, the Employee Assistance Program can help to, through individual or group sessions, keep information flowing, keep feelings under control, prevent potential outbursts, provide constructive outlets for feelings, and help employees plan for the future.
- **Employee and supervisory training.** Much of the employee training described in Part I: Section 3 may be conducted by EAP staff, and many EAPs also have specific expertise in workplace violence prevention. For example, counselors can train employees on such topics as dealing with angry coworkers and customers, conflict resolution, communications skills and awareness and prevention of workplace violence. EAP counselors can also train supervisors to deal with problems as soon as they surface and to remain focused on workplace behavior without diagnosing the employee's problem.

EAPs are key elements of a violence prevention program because EAP staff are trained to assist employees in resolving personal and work-related problems, and in consulting with employers about good business practices of maintaining a healthy and respectful workplace.

Participation on an incident response team

EAP staff are sometimes asked to be a part of the employer's incident response team or to consult on a particular incident or individual of concern. EAPs can contribute to the team process by offering expertise in assessing behavior, knowledge of the company climate, familiarity with community resources, and, most likely, past experience in managing work-related violence.

- **Consultation with supervisor when incident is reported.** Depending on the type of incident reported, it is often important for a counselor, along with a human resource specialist and security officer, to be part of the incident response team that consults with the manager. In some situations, such as potential suicides, the EAP can play a major role. In other situations, such as dealing with an employee who frightens co-workers, but who has not actually done or said anything warranting discipline, the EAP can assist the response team or management in working with the supervisor to plan an effective response.
- **Initial risk assessment with recommendations.** Depending upon the background and expertise of the provider, the EAP can be an excellent first step to assess risk and to make recommendations for further action and follow-up. Although it is important to understand that EAPs will base their assessment only on information provided to them by the employer and employee(s) in question, they are in a good position to assess whether or not an employee requires further evaluation by a threat assessment specialist. Since EAPs are predominantly a voluntary and confidential service, it is essential that the employer decide, prior to EAP involvement, under what circumstances they may wish to require EAP feedback. In order for the EAP to provide assessment and recommendation information back to the employer, they must first be able to obtain a signed release of information from the employee. Employees may be reluctant to sign a release unless it is made a condition of their employment by the employer.

- **Response/Intervention.** The EAP professional can help with conflict resolution in situations that are reported early enough for such an intervention. The counselor can work with the victim, giving advice and guidance, or with the perpetrator, helping to defuse the anger or hostility that could lead to violence. The counselor can help clarify options and procedures for situations in which substance abuse or mental illness seems to be a factor. For example, states differ in their laws regarding civil commitment for psychiatric treatment. The counselor can explain to other team members the EAP role in such a situation, and can coordinate with other community resources to develop contingency plans for various emergency situations. These and other examples are illustrated in the case studies in Part IV.

Follow-up to a violent or traumatic incident

Many EAPs are prepared to respond promptly to a variety of needs that may exist after a violent or traumatic incident. Prompt interventions with employees who have had particularly stressful experiences are sometimes necessary. Initial crisis intervention and subsequent debriefing sessions, typically conducted two or three days after the incident, are services commonly provided by EAPs. The EAP staff can also act as consultants to management in helping the organization to recover.

- **Individual interventions.** Though most employees will need only brief or group intervention, provision should be made for the few who may need longer term professional assistance. Strategies for identifying these employees and guiding them as smoothly as possible from emergency-centered interventions to more extensive mental health care should be included in the planning.
- **Crisis intervention and debriefing services.** Employers should inquire whether or not their EAP staff has training and experience in crisis intervention and debriefing services. The EAP may approach these responsibilities in different ways, depending on the size and experience of its staff. In some cases, internal EAP resources may be sufficient, but in others, additional staffing will be necessary. EAP staff who do not have expertise in traumatic incident counseling may wish to develop in-house expertise or keep close at hand the phone numbers of resources to contact should an incident occur. Potential sources of additional help, for example, private contractors or community mental health resources, might be explored.
- **Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD).** Many EAPs have been trained to participate on CISD teams. See discussion of the CISD process on page 75.

- **Acting as consultants to management.** Since management bears the brunt of responsibility after a violent incident, and can find itself dealing with unfamiliar challenges under high stress, the EAP can be very helpful in facilitating an optimal response. It can provide managers with information on traumatic events and can assist them in analyzing the situation and developing strategies for the organization's recovery. An effective EAP needs to be familiar not only with post-disaster mental health care, but also with management practices that facilitate recovery and with other resources which may need to be mobilized.

In thinking about recovery, there is a temptation to focus narrowly on care-giving responses such as debriefings and counseling discussed above. Essential as these services are, they are only part of the picture. The way the manager conveys information, schedules responsibilities, sets priorities, and monitors employee performance after a violent or traumatic incident can play a vital role in helping or hindering recovery. Some EAPs have experience in providing this type of consultation.

Other EAP Considerations for the Planning Group

Should the EAP take the incident report?

Before deciding upon whether to use an EAP, threat assessment specialist or security consultant, Hawaii employers should obtain current information and pricing for these services.

It is not recommended that the EAP take incident reports on workplace violence. Confidentiality requirements prohibit EAP counselors from disclosing information received from clients, except in the case of imminent harm to self or others. EAP counselors could be held legally liable and face criminal or civil actions for breaking confidentiality when imminent danger is disputed. Also, having a counselor in the position of informing other members of the intervention team about a report could lead to serious misunderstandings among employees about the EAP's ability to maintain confidentiality and therefore harm the credibility of the EAP. It sometimes takes years to build the EAP into a viable program trusted by employees and the dual role could diminish this viability.

Sometimes the EAP counselor will be the person who first hears about an incident involving threatening behavior, even though the employer has identified another individual or system for employees to report concerns. Managers and employees often feel comfortable telling the counselor about a situation that frightens them. The EAP will always encourage employees to report their concerns to management and for those who may be reluctant to do so, will offer to report for them if they are willing to sign a release of information form. It is important for an employer to understand that if an employee does not wish to report an incident and the incident is not considered "imminent harm" as defined by law, then the counselor will honor client confidentiality.

***Should the EAP be first
intervenor?***

This decision depends upon the EAP expertise and the mutual agreement between the employer and EAP provider. Many EAPs are the first point of contact for concerns of workplace violence incidents and are comfortable offering assessment and assistance to both the employee and to the employer. Employers should consider the following prior to referring an individual to the EAP for intervention:

1. EAPs base their risk assessments upon information obtained from supervisory reports and interviews with referred employees. These risk assessments are not as extensive as the Fitness for Duty Evaluations provided by threat assessment specialists which take into consideration psychological testing, informant reports, and other background information.
2. Employees who are management-referred may then perceive the EAP as aligned with the employer and as adversarial. This perception could then harm the EAP's reputation as being a voluntary confidential resource for personal assistance.

***Should the EAP perform
psychological exams?***

Psychological exams are generally outside of the EAP's realm of practice. EAPs are geared to provide quick assessment and short-term counseling and referral services. Comprehensive psychological examinations, in particular those required when evaluating Fitness for Duty determination, should be conducted by trained mental health specialists with psychological testing and interview expertise.

Workplace Security

Introduction

This section will provide general ideas and considerations that can help the organization planning group gain an understanding of some of the law enforcement and security issues involved in developing a workplace violence prevention plan.

Sometimes meeting with the local police is helpful to establish a plan or procedure regarding law enforcement response in the event of potential violence or hostile incidents. Establishing a relationship with local police officers will enhance the organization's workplace violence prevention program planning and everyone's understanding of the law enforcement role should an incident arise.

Security Planning

Organizations should consider using internal security resources when available or security consultants to conduct a security assessment of their workplace. They can assist with the evaluation of the physical layout, risk/exposure factors, information security, and warning systems. For employers with fewer than 250 employees, HIOSH can conduct a free workplace violence risk evaluation for non-employee incidents (see page 94 for HIOSH contact information).

Security Assistance

During the planning phase, security professionals can:

- Identify types of situations they can address, and when and how they should be notified of an incident;
- Indicate whether their officers have arrest authority;
- Identify their jurisdictional restrictions, and alternative law enforcement agencies that may be able to provide assistance;
- Identify threat assessment professionals who can assist the agency in its efforts to protect threatened employees;
- Advise on what evidence is necessary and how it can be collected or recorded, so that law enforcement can assess the information and decide what action to take, if appropriate;
- Explain applicable laws;
- Suggest security measures to be taken for specific situations; and

- Arrange for supervisor/employee briefings or training on specific workplace violence issues such as:
 - Personal safety and security measures;
 - Types of incidents to report to law enforcement/security;
 - Types of measures law enforcement/security may take to protect employees during a violent incident, e.g., explanations of what it means to “secure the area,” “secure the perimeter,” and “preserve evidence”;
 - Suggestions on how to react to an armed attacker;
 - Suggestions for dealing with angry customers or clients;
 - Suspicious packages;
 - Bomb threats;
 - Hostage situations; and
 - Telephone harassment and threats.

When potentially violent situations arise, law enforcement/security professionals can work with the incident response team to:

- Provide an assessment of the information available to determine whether law enforcement intervention is immediately necessary; for example, whether a criminal investigation is appropriate and whether a threat assessment professional should be consulted;
- Identify what plan of action they deem appropriate; and
- Determine who will gather what types of evidence.

Physical Security Measures

In all cases, physical security measures should be considered in the planning process. Some safety measures may be implemented at little or no cost. These include closed circuit cameras, silent alarms, metal detectors, two-way mirrors, electronic access systems, emergency internal code words, barriers to prevent cars from driving too close to the building, extra lighting in the parking lots, and escorts to and from parking lots after dark. Organizations should survey physical security measures and procedures and make recommendations for modifications and improvements as necessary.

If the organization is in leased space, the employer should consult with the landlord to determine the extent of any protective measures offered by the building.

Physical Security Survey

A physical security survey can provide better protection for employees and visitors by pinpointing high-risk areas in the workplace where potential problems or emergency situations might occur. The survey is a comprehensive, detailed, technical on-site inspection and analysis of the current security and physical protection conditions. (See sample checklist in Appendix F.)

Survey findings should be the starting point for solutions. It is crucial that these solutions are actually implemented whenever feasible.

The following are some examples of ways to improve security in an office and/or building:

- Control access to the workplace (i.e., locking doors).
- Ensure key or card control access that does not allow for sharing of access codes.
- Use signage to indicate secure areas.
- Issue all employees photo identification cards and assign temporary passes to visitors, who should be required to sign in and out of the building.
- Brief employees on steps to take if a threatening or violent incident occurs. Establish code words to alert coworkers and supervisors that immediate help is needed.
- Install silent, concealed alarms at reception desks.
- Post a security guard at the main building entrance or at entrances to specific offices.
- Install a metal detector or CCTV (closed-circuit television) camera or other device to monitor people coming in at all building entrances.

The following are some examples of methods to improve security in “front-line” offices that deal with the public:

- Ensure a clear view of all customer service areas.
- Arrange office furniture and partitions so that front-line employees in daily contact with the public are surrounded by “natural” barriers (desks, countertops, partitions) to separate employees from customers and visitors.
- Provide an under-the-counter “panic button” to signal a supervisor or security officer if a customer becomes threatening or violent.

- Establish an evacuation plan that may include a safe haven for employees and/or customers to escape to if they are confronted with violent or threatening people.
- Provide an access-control lock on access doors.
- Mount closed circuit television cameras for monitoring customer service activity from a central security office for the building.

Upon completion of the survey and the implementation of security measures, organizations must train employees about their responsibility to adhere to the procedures. Managers must ensure compliance with the plan.

Computer Security

Organizations should address ways to safeguard computer systems. There have been cases where employees have sabotaged computer equipment, computer systems, and computer records. Therefore, whenever a threat of sabotage is suspected, procedures should be initiated to prevent the person from having access to the facility's computer system.

It is important to act quickly whenever there is reason to believe that an employee or ex-employee may commit such an act. It is standard practice to collect IDs, building passes, keys, and parking passes when employees leave their jobs. Often, however, no one thinks to block access to computer systems or networks.

Some organizations, when terminating employees, bar them from the premises and eradicate their passwords to computer systems that are accessible from outside the premises.

Examples of Useful Handouts for Employees

This handout summarizes actions that may be helpful in a hostile or threatening situation. It is recommended that the employer develop training that is appropriate to the particular work setting.

Coping With Threats and Violence

It is recommended for an angry or hostile customer or coworker who may be shouting, swearing, and/or threatening:

- Keep the situation in your control by not responding in kind.
- Stay calm. Listen attentively.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Lower voice tone.
- Be courteous. Be patient.
- If behavior persists or escalates, signal a coworker or supervisor that you need help.

If issue escalates:

- Have someone call security or the police if necessary. Do not make the call yourself.

If it escalates or a weapon is involved:

- Stall for time.
- Keep talking but follow instructions from the person who has the weapon.
- Don't risk harm to yourself or others. Don't be a hero.
- Never try to grab a weapon.
- Watch for a safe chance to escape to a safe area.
- Increase your physical distance if possible.

Phone Threat Checklist

The Phone Threat Checklist is based on a similar form used by California State government offices. It should be near all phones likely to receive calls from the public.

The Checklist allows employees to document telephone threats in an organized way. Once the checklist is completed, it should be routed to the employer's Security Department or Threat Management Teams for review.

Additionally, the Checklist's questions 5 through 9 have assisted employees in getting to the heart of callers' complaints. It is possible for employees to defuse callers' anger and frustration by allowing them to explain why they are mad and what help they would like.

Sometimes upset callers do not realize that their words are coming across as threatening. When callers are directly asked question 9, they may be startled. Some have been known to apologize and then become reasonable.

Of course, if the call is in fact intended as a threat, completing the form with the caller's own words will be strong evidence for later consideration by the employer's Threat Management Team, Security Department, or even Law Enforcement.

Prior to distribution, the "Notify" box should be filled in with the name, telephone and fax numbers of the person or office within the organization that should be notified when telephone threats are received.

Employees should also be advised to call for emergency police assistance if they believe that they or others are in imminent danger of harm.



Phone Threat Checklist

1. Date of Call	2. Time of Call	3. Caller I.D.
-----------------	-----------------	----------------

4. Exact Words of the Caller:

ASK THE CALLER (ASK THE QUESTIONS IN THE FOLLOWING ORDER)

5. Who are you talking about (where do you think you are calling)?	
--	--

6. Why are you making these comments?	
---------------------------------------	--

7. Is there any other way to help you?	
--	--

8. What is your name and telephone number?	
--	--

9. Are you really threatening someone?	
--	--

Note the Following

10. <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	11. Estimated Age: _____	12. Accent? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Description:
---	--------------------------	--

13. Speech Pattern <input type="checkbox"/> Slow <input type="checkbox"/> Excited <input type="checkbox"/> Disguised <input type="checkbox"/> Broken <input type="checkbox"/> Normal <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid <input type="checkbox"/> Loud <input type="checkbox"/> Slurred <input type="checkbox"/> Sincere <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

14. Background Noises

15. Additional Comments

Name of Person Receiving Call: _____

Office: _____ Phone: _____

<i>NOTIFY</i>

Organizational Recovery After a Traumatic Incident

Introduction

Despite the best-laid prevention plans, deadly violence in the workplace can and does happen. Just as employers develop policies and procedures designed to head off these occurrences, employers must be equally prepared to deal with the aftermath of such incidents. Quite often management's focus will be on getting the operational side of the office back in working order. However, just as important is attending to the impact such incidents can have on personnel. This section will provide information designed to assist management with helping an organization to recover after an incident of workplace violence.

Management Steps to Help an Organization Recover

Listed below are several initial steps management can take when an incident of workplace violence occurs.

Ensure a management presence in the work site

Managers need to spend ample time with their employees, in the workplace or wherever they may be. Employees need to be reassured of management's concern, and they need to be able to ask questions. Senior management should ensure that immediate supervisors are supported in this role, relieved of unnecessary duties, and not pulled away from their subordinates to write lengthy reports or prepare elaborate briefings. Senior management also needs to be directly involved in the aftermath of an incident of workplace violence so that employees get the message that their employer cares.

Share accurate and appropriate information with employees

Employees will have many questions, and they need the answers, often more than once, so accurate and appropriate information needs to be shared. Staff meetings, where employees can hear and process the information together, will help to dispel rumors and speculation. Develop strategies for on-going information dissemination.

Include union leadership

Bargaining union representatives can help in reassuring and supporting employees after an incident. They can also assist in communicating information to their members.

Bring in crisis response professionals

Before an incident ever occurs, the planning group should identify trained mental health professionals, Employee Assistance Programs, or Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) providers and other resources in the community who would be available to respond in the event of an incident. It should not be assumed that all mental health specialists are experienced in trauma and crisis. It is important to ask ahead of time what kind of specialized training and experience the professionals have in dealing with trauma, crisis, and workplace violence. When an incident occurs, involve these emergency mental health consultants as soon as possible.

They will generally meet with management first and then with line employees. Based on what the consultants learn, qualified EAP or trauma specialists will offer services such as debriefings and defusings (see discussion of these processes later in this section) and informal counseling, often at the work site.

Provide counseling support for employees and family members

A family is as affected by trauma as an involved employee, and family support is crucial in assisting employees in resolving the effects of trauma. Not only should employees be supported on site by mental health professionals experienced in trauma, but they and their family members should be provided with contact information on counseling resources or be referred to an employee's health benefit plan to manage the ongoing effects of the violent or traumatic incident.

An EAP or other contracted mental health trauma professional is able to provide assessment and appropriate referral to both employees and their family members. Additionally, if there was loss of life or serious injury, a human resources representative should be assigned to a family in order to assist them with benefit needs.

Support informal processing of the event

The formal debriefing doesn't end the recovery process. Provide opportunities for employees to talk informally with one another when they feel a need to discuss the experience. A comfortable break area and flexibility about break times may be all that is needed.

Support care-giving within work groups

Keep work groups together as much as possible, and try not to isolate employees from their normal support groups at work. Show respect and support for employees' efforts to care for one another.

Handle critical sites with care

Initially, the site of a violent incident will be secured as a crime scene. After the authorities are finished with it, management needs to be sensitive to a number of issues. It is helpful if employees don't have to come back to work and face painful reminders such as bloodstains or broken furniture. But on the other hand, the area should not be so "sanitized" that it gives the appearance that management is pretending nothing happened. If someone has died, that person's work area will be a focus of grieving, and it needs to be respected as such. Employers should involve their employees in making decisions about how these events and loss of life, if applicable, should be acknowledged. The following are some ways that Hawaii's employers have recognized individuals and workplaces in the aftermath of violence.

- Placing lei and cards at the workstation.
- Conducting a memorial service at the workplace.

- Scheduling a blessing.
- Establishing or naming a company event or practice in honor of those employees lost.

Buffer those affected from post-event stresses

Effective coordination with the media and timely dissemination of information can help reduce media pressure on those who are the most vulnerable. Employers may wish to consult with or utilize the services of a professional public relations individual or firm who is skilled in media management. Assistance with benefits and other administrative issues can reduce the burden on victims and families and special efforts should be made for this information to be readily accessible. Employers should also consider increased workplace security to protect employees from media inquiries.

Help employees face feared places or activities

Returning soon, if only briefly, to a feared site can help prevent lasting effects such as phobic responses. Having a friend or loved one along, or being supported by close work associates, may make the first step much easier.

Be mindful of significant milestones

Remember to acknowledge and prepare for significant milestones of a traumatic event, such as a year anniversary. An organizational response to such milestones, such as a memorial or other ritual, will help in the recovery process.

Remember the healing value of work

Getting back to work can be reassuring, and a sense of having a mission to perform can help the group recover its morale. But the return to work must be managed in a way that conveys appropriate respect for the deceased, the injured, and the traumatized.

The Critical Incident Stress Management Process

Formal crisis intervention processes for victims of critical incidents, such as workplace violence, have been used and recommended by mental health professionals for years. One such process is Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), pioneered by Dr. Jeffrey Mitchell of the University of Maryland. Most mental health experts who provide CISM services in Hawaii have been trained in the Mitchell model.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) and Defusing

The CISD and defusing processes may be defined as group meetings or discussions about a traumatic event, or series of traumatic events. The CISD and defusing processes are solidly based in crisis intervention and educational intervention theory. A CISD is generally scheduled 1-3 days after an event and runs 2-3 hours in length. The defusing, a shortened version of the CISD, is designed to take place immediately after an event (within the first few hours), and takes 30 minutes to an hour.



The CISD and defusing processes are designed to:

- Mitigate psychological impact of a traumatic event;
- Prevent subsequent development of a post-traumatic syndrome; and
- Serve as an early identification mechanism for individuals who will require professional mental health follow-up subsequent to a traumatic event.

Impact of Trauma and Violence

There is great variation in the way people react after a traumatic incident such as an event of workplace violence. Two individuals experiencing the same incident may have entirely different responses. One person may have no difficulty returning to work and resuming his or her normal routine, while the other may be physically and emotionally devastated.

The most common reactions people have after a traumatic incident include: loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, confusion, feeling helpless, scared or unsafe. Some people develop physical symptoms like headaches, nausea, dizziness, and nervousness. A traumatic incident can also trigger memories of past experiences, like the death of a family member, which can intensify these stress reactions. These reactions may last a few days, weeks, months and occasionally longer depending upon the severity of the trauma.

Unfortunately there is no way to determine who will have difficulties recovering from a traumatic incident and who will not. When a significant event has occurred at the workplace, therefore, it is recommended that the employer mandate attendance at either a defusing or a debriefing. Mental health experts can help an employer determine whether or not a debriefing is necessary. Employees who have participated in these processes often express afterwards that it was helpful to be able to talk about the impact of the event and to feel the support of others. Many also feel a sense of relief upon learning that their reactions are normal and that there are specific ways to alleviate some of their uncomfortable symptoms.

Guidelines for Employers

1. Establish your CISM resources for trauma and violence support before an incident occurs.
2. Select EAP or mental health personnel who are trained in debriefing and experienced in working with crisis or trauma.
3. Post-incident and at the time of intervention assign one mental health team to coordinate all mental health assistance, if you have several groups responding, e.g., Police, Red Cross, EAP.

4. Allow interventions, i.e., defusing or debriefings, to occur during paid work time if at all possible and require that all affected employees attend.
5. Ensure that enough time (1-3 hours) is set aside for defusing and debriefings and that they are scheduled in a private area where there will be no interruptions from the work environment.
6. Consider added security measures to reassure employees and to provide some protection from the surge of media inquiries.
7. Consider the services of a professional public relations firm to deal with the media and to protect the company image.
8. Consult with a labor attorney for direction in employee and company response during a criminal investigation.
9. Consult with mental health experts about whether or not some individuals may need time off from work.
10. Follow-up with employees to ensure that they are continuing to cope in the aftermath of an event.

Response Evaluation and Debriefing

A post-incident debriefing and evaluation of the organization's response efforts are important in identifying the quality of the response to the threat, "lessons learned," and mitigation strategies. The information developed through the event period will be important in evaluating the response plans, and will be valuable in plans adjustment, and identification of required resources for future response actions. The precise documentation of the event may serve as the foundation for historical, legal, and evaluative purposes.

In conclusion, as mentioned earlier, both critical incident stress debriefing and defusing are among the most utilized processes under the CISM umbrella. Neither model should be employed by anyone other than trained mental health professionals and other trained CISM team personnel.

