



Homecare



Workplace Violence

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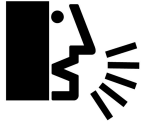
This Material was developed by the
SEIU Education and Support Fund (ESF)

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This material was produced under grant number SH-20861-SHO from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor. It does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organization imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

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What is Workplace Violence?



Purpose of Section 1

To understand workplace violence as a safety hazard in the homecare industry.



Objectives of Section 1

By the end of this section you will be able to:

- ✓ Name some of the dangers that homecare workers face;
- ✓ Define workplace violence and sexual harassment;
- ✓ Identify, through risk mapping, some of the hazards homecare workers deal with everyday;
- ✓ Identify real life examples of workplace violence you may face.

TASK

1 What is your group's response to a co-worker who makes this statement?

“I’m not worried about workplace violence. Nothing could ever happen to me at my client’s home. I never keep lots of cash on me. If something happens, I know I can protect myself.”

Use the **Factsheets A, B, C, D, AND E** to help you complete this Task.

Write your response here.



SECTION ONE

FACTSHEET

A

Targeting Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is a growing concern to service-sector workers. Within the last few years workers have paid increased attention to this issue.

Workers are demanding more protection from on-the-job assaults, and employers and government agencies are aware of these concerns.

Employers must develop and implement effective workplace violence prevention programs.

Government agencies must provide information about workplace violence and prevention strategies to employers and employees. In particular, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) will respond to safety complaints filed by workers, and issue citations where appropriate.

Workplace violence is a complex subject. The more workers know about workplace violence, the better prepared we are to stop workplace violence.



SECTION ONE

FACTSHEET

B

The Extent of the Problem

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that there were 69 homicides in the health services from 1996 to 2000. Although workplace homicides may attract more attention, the majority of workplace violence consists of non-fatal assaults.

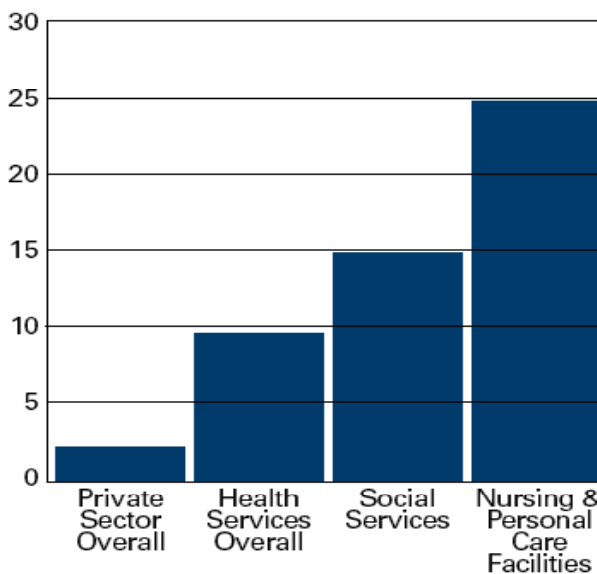
In 2000, 48 % of all non-fatal injuries from occupational assaults and violent acts occurred in the health care industry (hospitals, nursing and personal care facilities and residential care services).

Even though these numbers are really high, the actual numbers are probably much higher. Many violent incidents are not reported by health care workers. There are many reasons why workers do not report including: workers believe the assaults are part of the job, workers may fear that their employer will retaliate against them, or workers believe that reporting will not benefit them.

Being assaulted is not part of any job description. All incidents of violence should be reported, no matter how major or minor the injuries are.

Incidence rates for nonfatal assaults and violent acts by industry, 2000

Incidence rate per 10,000 full-time workers



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2001). *Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, 2000*.

Factsheet Source: <http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3148.pdf>



SECTION ONE

FACTSHEET

C

Why Workplace Violence is Increasing?

There are many reasons why workplace violence is increasing.

- There is a high level of violence in our society.
- Workplace violence is increasing because people's behavior has become more aggressive and stress levels are high at work.
- Human and social services are being reduced and many people are jobless and desperate.
- Deadly weapons such as guns are more available, and they are more likely to be used – against workers as well as other people.



What is Workplace Violence?

Workplace violence is behavior that **verbally or physically threatens, attacks or injures workers**. This can include physical assaults, threatening behaviors and/or verbal abuse. Workplace violence extends along a spectrum of severity, ranging from harassment and threats to assault, murder and terrorism.

What is considered a workplace?

A workplace is any location, either permanent or temporary, where you are assigned to work.

This can include buildings and their surroundings (for example, parking lots).

This also can include field locations, clients' homes, and traveling to and from work assignments.

Violence is a Multi-Factored Problem

Violence, wherever it occurs, is a multi-factored problem, with each incident involving three primary factors:

- **Perpetrator (the source of the violence),**
- **Victim,**
- **The circumstances that bring them together**



SECTION ONE

FACTSHEET

E

THE SPECTRUM OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

HARASSMENT	THREATS	ASSAULT	MURDER	TERRORISM
Bad	→	→	→	→ Worst

Workplace violence also includes any act that may result in injury (physical or psychological) or death. Examples are:

- Beatings/Stabbings/ Shootings
- Suicides or near suicides
- Rapes
- Psychological/ Emotional abuse or threats
- Threatening or obscene phone calls
- Domestic violence
- Intimidation
- Harassment
- Disorderly conduct such as shouting, throwing or pushing objects, punching walls or slamming doors
- Being followed, sworn at, or shouted at
- Inappropriate remarks such as abusive or offensive language, gestures or other discourteous conduct, delusional statements



TASK **2**

What does violence look like in home-care?

Purpose: To risk map the specific levels and types of violence we face.

In your groups, share your experiences with violent situations you have been exposed to:

- 1. Discuss the specific levels and types of violence you have faced on the job.**
- 2. Draw a poster describing and showing an example of the violent situations.**
- 3. List on the poster the levels and types of violence drawn**
- 4. Prepare to share your poster and experience with the whole class.**

Use the **Factsheets F, G and factsheets from task 1** to help you complete this Task.



SECTION ONE

FACTSHEET

F

TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Perpetrators of Workplace Violence

Type 1	STRANGER A person no one knows
Type 2	PATIENT, RESIDENT, CLIENT OR CUSTOMER Person receiving services
Type 3	CURRENT / FORMER CO-WORKER OR BOSS Workers at the workplace
Type 4	PERSONAL RELATION Some personal relationship with a worker or workplace



SECTION ONE

FACTSHEET

G

Levels of Workplace Violence

To understand workplace violence we can divide it into distinct **levels of violence** to determine how hazardous workplace violence is to workers.

<p>LEVEL 1 VIOLENCE</p>	<p>FATAL ASSAULTS Workplace violence that leads to death.</p>
<p>LEVEL 2 VIOLENCE</p>	<p>PHYSICAL ASSAULTS Workplace violence that leads to injury but not death.</p>
<p>LEVEL 3 VIOLENCE</p>	<p>VERBAL ASSAULTS Workplace violence that does not result in observable physical injury, but can result in psychological or physiological damage to workers, particularly if this level of violence is a common occurrence.</p>

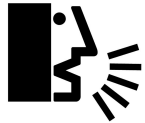


SUMMARY: **WORKPLACE VIOLENCE**

1. Workplace violence is behavior that verbally or physically threatens, attacks or injures workers. Workplace violence extends along a spectrum of severity, ranging from harassment and threats to assault, murder and terrorism.
2. Violence involves three primary factors: the perpetrator (the source of the violence), the victim, and the circumstances that bring them together.
3. We divide workplace violence into levels of violence:
 - **fatal assaults** (workplace violence that leads to death);
 - **physical assaults** (workplace violence that leads to injury but not death);
 - **verbal assaults** (workplace violence that does not result in observable physical injury, but can result in physical and psychological damage to workers, particularly if this level of violence is a common occurrence).
4. We divide workplace violence into distinct types according to the source – known as the perpetrator – of the violence:
 - **Stranger** (The person causing the violence is a stranger and comes to the workplace to commit a crime.)
 - **Client or Resident** (The person causing the violence is the recipient or the object of a service provided in the workplace.)
 - **Current or Former Co-worker or Boss** (The person causing the violence has an employment-related relationship with the workplace.)
 - **Personal Relation** (The person causing the violence has some personal relationship with a worker in the workplace.)
5. Remember violence can and start with harassment and can lead to much more.

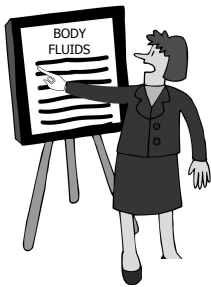


Could this really happen to me?



Purpose of Section 2

To practice how to handle potentially violent situations in the workplace.



Objectives of Section 2

By the end of this section you will be able to:

- ✓ Learn more about workplace violence through case studies;
- ✓ Identify the two types of sexual harrasment in the workplace;
- ✓ Diffuse and manage potentially bad situations

TASK 1 Case studies

Sometimes we find ourselves in bad situations. Here is our opportunity to look at some real life cases and see how would we resolve them. You should focus on what to do, your employers policy and procedure, and ways to preventing this from happening in the future.

Read the following 3 case studies and answer the questions below each case study.

Use your **own experience** as homecare workers and **Factsheets A, B and C** to put together a group response to the questions following each role-play.

HomeCare

Case-Study 1

Marie a home care worker had been caring for her client Mrs. Barker for several years. Mrs. Barker is rarely visited by her family, and treats Marie as if she was one of her kids. Mrs. Barker has a son who only comes around when he needs money, and is believed to be using drugs. When he comes around, Marie feels very uncomfortable. On his last visit, it was clear he was under the influence of drugs. He came over yelling, demanding money. He ransacked the apartment looking for his mother's purse. Unsuccessful, he turns to Marie and asks to borrow money in a threatening way. Marie says no, and the son refuses to leave. Marie wonders what to do next.

In your groups, put yourself in Marie's position and think about what she should do

- 1. What steps Marie should take to address this problem?**
- 2. What could she do to prevent this from happening in the future?**



HomeCare

Case-Study 2

Sheryl, a home care worker dreads going to her 2nd assignment. She takes the train to get to her client's home in the late evening. Sheryl's 2nd client lives in a dangerous area and she feels unsafe every time she arrives at her building. She often witnesses drug dealers and drug users going in and out of the building. There are often fights in the hallway; the police make arrests here all the time. One evening, Sheryl was very tired after working her morning shift and arrived at her 2nd client's home. While getting off the elevator, a man approached her and demanded a cigarette. She replied that she does not smoke and kindly walked to the apartment. The man tries to block her pathway to the apartment demanding money. Sheryl runs into the apartment locks the door; she is shaken up and now wonders what to do next.

In your groups, put yourself in Sheryl's position and think about what she should do

- 1. What steps Sheryl should take to address this problem?**
- 2. What could she do to prevent this from happening in the future?**



HomeCare

Case-Study 3

Joanne had been assigned a new client. She took the assignment knowing very little about her client. She goes to her client's home to perform her duties and is greeted by Mrs. Lowitzski the client's daughter. Mrs. Lowitzski had just finished arguing with her mother and was eager to leave. After getting vague information, she is left alone with her client Mrs. Waterberry. After a few hours, Mrs. Waterberry started shouting at Joanne and using racial slurs demanding a cigarette. Joanne politely said she did not smoke. Mrs. Waterberry yells, "I don't care if you smoke, just get me a cigarette." Joanne remains calm and says "Mrs. Waterberry, I see you're in need of a cigarette. Please let me finish what I am doing and I will get you some cigarettes" Mrs. Waterberry replies." You work for me, I tell you what to do, do what I say or there will be big trouble in this house." Shocked, Joanne thinks to herself, "what should I do....?"

In your groups, put yourself in Joanne's position and think about what she should do:

- 1. What steps should Joanne take to address this problem?**
- 2. What could she do to prevent this from happening in the future?**





SECTION TWO

FACTSHEET

A

Controlling your Behavior

As we know, there are a variety of responses to aggressive behavior, including aggressive, violent or non-violent behavior.

Some of your responses are instinctive; other responses are learned.

It takes practice and insight to respond safely and appropriately to aggressive behavior.

The goal in this discussion is two-fold: to protect yourself and others from violence, and to calm (if possible) the aggressive individual.

Above all, try hard to remain in good control of your own emotions and actions.



SECTION TWO

FACTSHEET

B

**Intervening Against
Potential Violence**

Note: The information below gives advice (and the reason behind the advice) for deescalating potentially violent behavior.

*INTERVENTION
TECHNIQUE*

*REASON FOR
INTERVENTION*

Face each client from the side, Do not stand face-to-face with a potentially violent person.	Decreases the chances the violent person will direct their anger at you
Leave plenty of space between yourself and the client.	Reduces anxiety and the opportunity for assault.
Speak slowly, directly, in a normal tone of voice, using simple statements.	reduces anxiety, communicates control, increases the client's self-esteem, and offers negotiation.
Acknowledge nonviolent behavior. When the client sits down to talk, try stating, "Thank you for sitting with me, I can listen better this way."	focuses on the client's strength and maintains client's self-esteem.



SECTION TWO

FACTSHEET

B

Intervening Against Potential Violence (continued)

Center your statements on the issues concerning the client.	deflects attention away from the worker who has become the target for the violent behavior.
When responding to the client's anger at not being allowed to do or get what they want, try saying, "I'm interested in understanding how terrible that is for you, Mr. Lewis."	avoids challenging the client and expresses interest in the client's perspective.
Express clear expectations of control. For example, "I expect you can control yourself."	Is clear and emphasizes the client's ability to control own behavior.
It is probably best not to touch clients when they are upset and posing an immediate danger.	shows respect for the client and maintains a comfortable distance, thereby reducing the client's sense of threat.

From: "Intervening in Violence in the Psychiatric Setting," in Psychiatric Nursing, H.S. Wilson and C.R. Kreise, editors, 1996.



What should you do?

What should you do when facing an angry or hostile client, visitor, family member or co-worker?

- Stay calm and maintain (or gain) physical distance. (Do not stand directly in front of the other person.)
- Signal someone that you need help. (Use an alarm system or prearranged code words.)
- Listen attentively. Ask open-ended questions and use a low voice.
- Maintain reasonable eye contact.
- Be courteous and patient, but set limits on the offensive behavior. Ask the person to talk to your supervisor.
- Keep the situation in your control.
- Watch for a reasonable chance to move to a safer area.
- Use delaying tactics to give the person time to calm down.
- You may need to summon help or local police for immediate assistance.



TASK **2**



Now, we will look at a real scenario concerning sexual harassment. This scenario will be acted out as a role play. A few volunteers will be needed to act out the different roles.

While the volunteers are preparing, the rest of the group should review **factsheets D,E,F,G,H,I,J and k.**

When the role play is finished, your groups should be prepared to answer the following questions.

1. What type of sexual harassment was demonstrated "**Quid Pro Quo**" or "**Hostile Environment**".
2. What did the worker **do well** in this situation?
3. What would you have **done differently**?



SECTION TWO

FACTSHEET

D

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment happens in every kind of work environment, at every level.

Superiors and subordinates, co-workers and clients, patients and visitors: the sources of harassment are quite varied.

And every race, gender, age group and sexual orientation can become a target.

The victim does not have to be of the opposite sex.

In fact, the victim does not have to be the person harassed, but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.



What is Sexual Harassment?

What is the definition of sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is unwanted, repeated sexual attention at work. It may be expressed in the following ways:

- Unwelcome touching or patting
- Suggestive remarks or other verbal abuse
- Staring or leering
- Requests for sexual favors
- Compromising invitations
- Physical assault
- Offensive work environment (pinups/pornography)



Two Types of Harassment

Sexual Harassment falls into two categories:
“Hostile environment” and “Quid-Pro-Quo.”

- ❖ **A hostile environment** results from ongoing behavior that’s offensive, such as an employee blocking a co-worker’s path or making sexual comments.

- ❖ **Quid-pro-quo** (this-for-that) harassment occurs when an employer or supervisor offers an employee a job, promotion, or benefit in exchange for sexual favors.



Sexual Harassment is Illegal

Sexual harassment is another form of assault.

Even if a worker is never physically injured, the stress of repeated verbal abuse, or a fear of impending violence, can result in serious health problems.

Those who have experienced severe harassment cite a long list of physical symptoms including headaches, backaches, nausea, stomach ailments, fatigue, and sleep and eating disorders.

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and it is illegal under **Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**.

Specifically, sexual harassment is illegal if:

- Your job or promotion depends on saying yes to sexual demands.
- You are harassed solely because of your gender and this harassment creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Examples of such conduct include sexual jokes, leering and staring and pornographic displays.

Note: The federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.



Prevention of Sexual Harassment

To prevent sexual harassment we must:

- Maintain an updated sexual harassment policy. This policy should send a clear message: sexual harassment will not be tolerated.

Elements of a Sexual Harassment Policy:

- The policy is in writing and widely distributed through an employee handbook and orientation materials.
- The procedures for complaints – how they are reported, recorded and investigated – are clear and concise.
- Supervisors begin investigations as soon as possible after a formal complaint is made.
- Discipline and counseling procedures are clearly outlined. Discipline can range from verbal and written warnings to formal suspension or dismissal. If appropriate, counseling and/or sensitivity training should be included as an option for the harasser.
- Confidentiality is maintained as much as possible.
- The policy is explained in periodic training sessions.



Stopping Sexual Harassment

I

Stopping harassment by the boss

When management harasses a worker the course of action is very straightforward: a grievance is filed against management on behalf of the worker, or initiate an organizing method to correct the problem.

Stopping harassment by a co-worker, client, client's family member, visitors, etc.

- Say no, clearly. State frankly that you find the harasser's behavior offensive. Firmly refuse all invitations. If harassment persists, write a memo asking the harasser to stop; keep a copy.
- Document the harassment. Detail what, when, and where it happened, and include your response. This information is vital when a pattern of offensive conduct must be proven.
- Meet with the harasser. Explain to the harasser that if his or her behavior continues, the union may have to act against his or her interests, by filing a grievance with management or seeking legal support on behalf of the victim.
- Investigate and document. Talk to co-workers to be sure that the case is legitimate, and document all incidents. Look for witnesses and other harassment victims.
- Educate & agitate. Organize discussions on sexual harassment. Find out if others experiencing the problem. Use a petition, posters, buttons and flyers to send a strong message to management that workers will not accept hostile working conditions. File a grievance against management for its failure to provide a harassment-free work environment.
- File a police report



SECTION TWO

FACTSHEET

J

Sexual Harassment can be Stopped

Although sexual harassment in the workplace is against the law, it is still very common.

Studies show large percentages of women (and to a much lesser extent men) report sexual harassment at some point during their work lives.

Dealing with sexual harassment may be difficult, but ignoring sexual harassment does not make it go away.

Note: The best people to handle sexual harassment may be workers of the same gender and sexual orientation as the person who has been harassed, as well as the person who is the harasser. At any rate, everyone working in this area needs specialized training to handle these complaints.



SECTION TWO

FACTSHEET

K

Domestic Violence in the Workplace

Domestic violence is abusive behavior that is physical, sexual, and /or psychological, and intended to establish and maintain control over a partner.

Domestic violence usually involves male and female violence, but it can occur in any gender or same sex combination.

Domestic violence usually occurs in the home of the perpetrator and the victim, particularly at the beginning of the domestic violence cycle.

But a lot of domestic violence occurs outside the home, and much of that violence occurs in a workplace.

A workplace is often the place for domestic violence to occur since it is a particular location with predictable patterns, allowing the violent perpetrator to plan a confrontation when the victim is no longer living with the perpetrator in a domestic relationship.



CLASS SUMMARY

As one big group, let's list the top 5 things learned in section 2

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Violent Incident Report Forms

The following items serve merely as an example of what might be used or modified by employers in these industries to help prevent workplace violence.

A reportable violent incident should be defined as any threatening remark or overt act of physical violence against a person(s) or property whether reported or observed.

1. Date: _____ 2. Specific Location: _____
Day of week: _____
Time: _____
Assailant: Female _____ Male _____

3. Violence directed towards: _____ Patient _____ Staff _____ Visitor _____ Other
Assailant: _____ Patient _____ Staff _____ Visitor _____ Other
Assailant's Name: _____
Assailant: _____ Unarmed _____ Armed (weapon)

4. Predisposing factors: _____ Intoxication _____ Dissatisfied with
_____ Grief reaction care/waiting time
_____ Gang related _____ Prior history of violence
_____ Other (Describe) _____

5. Description of incident: _____ Physical abuse
_____ Verbal abuse
_____ Other

6. Injuries: _____ Yes
_____ No

7. Extent of Injuries:

8. Detailed description of the incident:

9. Did any person leave the area because of incident?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unable to determine

10. Present at time of incident: _____ Police
_____ Name of
department

11. Needed to call: _____ Police
_____ Department

____Hospital security officer

11. _____Hospital security

12. Termination of incident:
Incident diffused ____Yes ____No
Police notified ____Yes ____No
Assailant arrested ____Yes ____No

13. Disposition of assailant:
____ Stayed on premises
____ Escorted off premises
____ Left on own
____ Other

14. Restraints used: ____Yes____No
Type: _____

15. Report completed by: _____ Title: _____
Witnesses: _____
Supervisor notified: _____ Time: _____

Please put additional comments, according to numbered section, on reverse side of form

*

This form was taken from: Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Health Care And Social Service Workers, OSHA Publication 3148, 1996.

Violent Incident Report Forms*

The following items serve merely as an example of what might be used or modified by employers in these industries to help prevent workplace violence.

(Sample/Draft - Adapt to your own location and business circumstances)

Confidential Incident Report

To: _____ Date of Incident: _____

Location of Incident: _____

Map/sketch on reverse side or attach

From: _____ Phone: _____ Time of Incident: _____

Nature of the incident: (xx all applicable boxes)

- Assaults or violent acts: Type "1" Type "2" Type "3" Other
 Preventative or warning report
 Bomb or terrorist type threat (special checklists attached Yes or No)
 Transportation accident
 Contacts with objects or equipment
 Falls
 Exposures
 Fires or explosions
 Other

Legal counsel advised of incident

Yes No

EAP advised

Yes No

Warning or preventative measures

Yes No

Number of persons affected

(For each person complete a report; however, to the extent facts are duplicative, any person's report may incorporate another person's report.)

Name of affected person(s): _____

Service date: _____

Position: _____

member of labor organization

Yes No

Supervisor: _____

has supervisor been notified

Yes No

Family: _____

has been notified

Yes No

Lost work time Yes No

Anticipated return to work _____

Third parties or non-employee involvement Yes No (include contractor and lease employees, visitors, vendors, customers)

Nature of the incident

Briefly describe: (1) event(s); (2) witnesses with addresses and status included; (3) location details; (4) equipment/weapon details; (5) weather; (6) other records of the incident (e.g., police report, recordings, videos); (7) the ability to observe and reliability of witnesses; (8) were the parties possibly impaired because of illness, injury, drugs or alcohol (were tests taken to verify same ___Yes ___No); (9) parties notified internally (employee relations, medical, legal, operations, etc.) and externally (police, fire, ambulance, EAP, family, etc.)

Previous or related incidents of this type ___Yes ___No
or by this person ___Yes ___No
Preventative steps ___Yes___No
OSHA log or other OSHA action required ___Yes ___ No

Incident Response Team:

Team Leader _____
Signature Date

*This form was taken from: Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Health Care and Social Service Workers, OSHA Publication 3148, 1996.



Why take the risk?

Purpose of Section 3

To understand that workplace violence is a health and safety hazard that can be controlled and prevented.



Objectives of Section 3

By the end of this section you will be able to:

- ✓ Identify factors that put home care workers at risk for workplace violence.
- ✓ Identify different types of controls to prevent workplace violence.
- ✓ Understand post-incident response and reporting procedures

TASK **1** "Risky Business?"

On the next page, there is a list of 10 most common risk factors faced by health care workers in the home. Please mark on this chart the top 3 risk factors you believe are most common, based on your experience and **the risk factors**.

Then, share your choices with the rest of your group. Use the stickers to mark your top 3 choices of the group on the large paper.

Every group will share their results with the rest of the class.

In your group, answer these two questions.

- Question 1.
What are the most common risk factors identified by the whole group? Why?
- Question 2.
Are there any risk factors that were not picked by the group? Why?



Risk Factors

Common Risk Factors	Top 3 Risk Factors
Working alone with client	
Working with violent, confused or mentally unstable clients	
Managing combative, disoriented and uncooperative clients	
Lack of training to recognize and manage hostile behaviors	
Working at night or early morning	
Poorly lit areas in/around client's home	
Possibility of people having weapons	
Availability of drugs and/or money in client's home	
Access to home or building not controlled	
Presence of gang members, drug/alcohol users, etc	



Prevention is Key



Purpose

To discuss different ways for preventing work-related injuries among home care workers

TASK

2 Identifying Different Kinds of Solutions

A solution to a health and safety problem is often called a “control,” because it aims to control and reduce the risks that are associated with the work. There are three main kinds of controls for any health and safety problem:

1. Equipment;
2. How the job is organized; and
3. Personal protective equipment.

Some controls work better than others. In this task, you will discuss what kinds of health & safety solutions can protect home care workers.

First, using your own experience and **Factsheets A,B,C,D,E,F,G and H** list examples of possible ideas and health & safety solutions that could prevent home care workers from being injured on the job. Put each idea into the appropriate category below:

Engineering Equipment	Administrative How the Job Is Organized	PPE Personal Protective Equipment



Please think about and answer these questions:

Question 1.

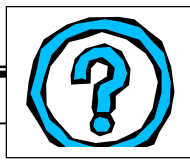
What could you do to get some of these controls put in place?

Question 2.

Are there different organizations or people that can help make your workplace safer and more secure?

Question 3.

Are there any types of personal protective equipment that could help protect you from an incident of workplace violence?



Why are homecare workers at risk?

There are many reasons why home care workers are at risk of being assaulted at work. Some of those reasons are:

- Always working alone with a client
- Exposure to violent, confused or mentally unstable clients
- Managing combative, disoriented and uncooperative clients
- Lack of training to recognize and manage escalating hostile/aggressive behavior
- Working at night or early morning
- Large, distant and poorly lit areas surrounding the client's home and areas of transportation (parking areas, bus stops, etc.)
- Possibility of clients, their families or visitors possessing weapons
- Availability of drugs and money in work areas
- Access to the client's home or building is not controlled or secure
- Presence of gang members, drug/alcohol users or distraught clients, family members, or others in the home or community



SECTION THREE

FACTSHEET

B

HAZARD PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Once we have identified risk factors, we should begin to think about ways to control the hazards we face in our workplace.

For every health and safety problem we have three options to control the hazards we face:

- 1. Engineering controls** are our first option. The work environment is changed to make it safer. For example, equipment and security devices may be installed to improve safety and security.
- 2. Administrative and work practice controls** change the way work is organized or how work is done. Training and education is an important part of this option.
- 3. Personal Protective equipment** is our last option. This is safety gear that the worker wears. Often this does not remove the danger or fix the real source of the problem.

We will take a better look at each of these control options on the following pages.



SECTION THREE

FACTSHEET

C

ENGINEERING CONTROLS

Engineering controls change the work environment to make it safer. In home care we face unique challenges when we would like to make changes in our work environment.

This is a list of suggestions that could be put in to effect in the home. You may need to talk with your client, client's family, building superintendent or manager, the local police department, etc. to alert the proper people to changes that should be made. A safe and secure work environment protects everyone who lives that apartment, building and community.

Some Examples of engineering controls include:

- Installing alarm systems and other security devices in the client's home or building
 - Providing closed circuit video, curved mirrors and good lighting in hallways and public areas outside the home
 - Secure entrances and exits, make sure only people with keys enter by having functioning call boxes for visitors
- Make sure there are clear exit paths in the home, in case you need to get away



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ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS

Other controls are things that you can do to make your work safer.

Administrative controls (Employers):

- Should state clearly to all clients that violence is not permitted or tolerated
- Require and encourage reporting of all incidents, no matter how severe the injury
- Allowing for the use of a buddy system when personal safety may be threatened or instruct workers not to enter a situation when they feel unsafe
- Provide safety education for employees. This includes a variety of training topics (see Factsheet E for more information)
- Establish procedures to decrease the risk of robbery
- Require field staff to prepare a daily work plan and keep a contact person informed of their location throughout the day
- Provide workers with hand held alarms, noise devices or pepper spray

Administrative controls (workers)

(see checklist on next page for more ideas)

- learn how to recognize, avoid or diffuse potentially violent situations
- follow procedures for alerting supervisors to any concerns about safety or security
- when starting with a new client, collect information about the client's home location and neighborhood
- report all violent incidents in writing to the supervisor, even if there were no injuries



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HOMECARE PERSONAL SAFETY CHECKLIST

- Know the area you are going into, before you make your first visit.
- Get a map or directions to your client's home, if necessary
- If using public transportation, learn your routes and fares in advance
- Make sure you have the client's address and phone number
- Let someone know your expected arrival and departure times (family members, etc.)
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Ask a "buddy" to escort you to a client's home, if you feel unsafe
- Visit clients in high-risk neighborhoods in the daylight, if possible
- If you are uncomfortable, ask the patient or a family member to meet you outside and escort you into the home
- Carry some kind of alarm, noise device or cellular phone with you
- Have emergency numbers with you
- Do not take valuables or lots of money with you into the home.
Avoid wearing expensive jewelry, watches, carrying a large purse, etc.
- If a client threatens you, leave immediately and call your supervisor. If necessary, call 911
- Report all violence incidents to your union and supervisor, even if there were no injuries.

Remember, your safety comes first.



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Training and Education

Training and education ensure that all staff members are aware of potential security hazards. Training should cover such topics as:

- The agency's workplace prevention plan and policy
- Risk factors that cause or contribute to violence
- Early recognition of escalating behavior or recognition of warning signs that may lead to assaults
- Ways of diffusing volatile situations or aggressive behavior, managing anger, etc.
- Policies and procedures for reporting and record keeping
- Operation of safety/ communication devices such as personal alarm systems, cell phones, etc.

Workplace violence prevention training should take place **BEFORE** an incident occurs. Prevention begins with preparing workers to identify hazardous situations and react to them properly, when necessary.



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RECORD KEEPING AND EVALUATIONS

Keeping track of all violent incidents, perpetrators and locations of incidents is extremely important.

Reviewing records helps us to see patterns and identify problem areas.

Workers must be able to report incidents of workplace violence without fear – this information could be helpful in preventing future incidents of violence.

Evaluation is another important part of preventing workplace violence.

We must make sure that the policy is effective and that changes are being made to prevent violent acts.

Workplace violence prevention programs should be evaluated annually.

Input from all employees is very valuable in identifying problems with a workplace violence prevention program.

Examples of incident reporting forms are on the following pages.



After an Assault Follow Up

Provide support for assaulted workers:

- Ensure care of the victim.
- Clean the work area, if needed.
- Debrief the assault incident as promptly as possible. Trauma counseling should be conducted by an appropriately qualified staff member, or an outside counselor should be offered to all those involved in, or who witnessed, the incident.
- Report the assault. An assault report form should be completed and filed.
- Consider filing a police report.
- Investigate the assault. The assault report form will serve as a starting point for the investigation.
- File a worker's compensation claim.
- Offer on-going employee assistance program (EAP) services, and post-trauma debriefing services as needed.



Summary

1. There are many reasons why home care workers are at risk of being assaulted at work.
2. Once we have identified risk factors, we should begin to think about ways to control the hazards we face in our workplace.
3. For every health and safety problem we have three options to control the hazards we face: 1) engineering controls 2) administrative controls 3) personal protective equipment
4. Workers must be able to report incidents of workplace violence without fear – this information could be helpful in preventing future incidents of violence.
5. There should be follow-up after any worker is assaulted on the job. This means providing medical care and counseling services to the victim and any witnesses involved.
6. Workplace violence can be prevented. There are many options for making your workplace safer and more secure. Violence and abuse is not part of any job.