



Victim Services of Waterloo Region

Workplace Violence Fact Sheet no. 6

Dealing with the Aftermath

The effects of violence do not disappear once a violent incident is over, and are unlikely to affect only the person directly attacked. The safety of all employees must be considered. With employer support and assistance healing is more likely to occur, and more easily.

Emotional distress has the ability to spread, to maintain and increase its level of distress in the workplace. Early intervention can work to slow or prevent this. In the immediate aftermath, emergency assistance can offer coworkers comfort, information, support and assistance. It is also a way of spotting those in need of additional assistance and easing their access to future psychological assistance. Crisis workers can also, if included in the information loop, help to prevent the rumours that spread from a lack of information and the fear that it generates.

Setting out procedures for crisis intervention and debriefing in advance can be especially helpful. Be sure to include who will carry out these tasks, and practise and evaluate them before an incident takes place. Take into consideration lines of communication, assembling employees after an incident to ensure they are accounted for and out of physical danger, and whether to debrief individually, or in small or large groups.

Workplace violence programs should provide comprehensive treatment for victimized employees and those who have witnessed an incident and may be traumatized. Ensure that injured personnel receive prompt

medical intervention and psychological evaluation after an incident takes place, even if it is not severe in nature.

Consequences for Victims

- ❑ Physical injuries.
- ❑ Short and long term psychological trauma.
- ❑ Fear of returning to work.
- ❑ Changes in relationships with coworkers and family.
- ❑ Feelings of incompetence, guilt or powerlessness.
- ❑ Fear of criticism by supervisors or managers.

A strong follow-up program will help to alleviate these feelings and concerns.

Assistance Options

- ❑ Trauma-crisis counselling.
- ❑ Critical incident stress debriefing.
- ❑ Employee assistance programs.
- ❑ Referrals to company or external psychologists, psychiatrists, clinical nurse specialists or social workers/agencies to provide counselling.
- ❑ Employee counselling services, peer counselling or support groups.

It is important to ensure that the persons assisting the victim have a background dealing with violent incidents and an understanding of the issues and consequences surrounding them.

Cont'd on reverse...

Keep in mind that no one should be forced to utilise the services of a counsellor if they do not feel comfortable doing so. Encourage, but do not press the issue. Some may not want any intervention, may be fine after the initial intervention, or may choose to access services after the initial incident.

Suggestions for Employers

As well as adopting a plan, employers should:

- ❑ Communicate the policy to employees at all levels of the company.
- ❑ Survey employees to get their ideas about the incidence of violence, possible risks and suggested preventative measures.
- ❑ Give support to violence prevention measures.
- ❑ Provide violence prevention training for managers, supervisors and employees on a regular basis.
- ❑ Practice the plan.
- ❑ Provide physically secure work spaces and adopt staffing policies that will help keep employees safe on the job.
- ❑ Establish relations with police, social service and mental health providers, and other government and private agencies that can assist in threat assessment, threat management and crisis management.
- ❑ Place workplace prevention and training on the agenda of chambers of commerce, industry and trade associations and other employer organizations.

- ❑ Evaluate the workplace violence prevention plan periodically or when workplace circumstances change or a violent event has occurred.

In General – What Doesn't Work when Dealing with Workplace Violence

- ❑ One-size fits-all approach.
- ❑ Rigidity, inflexibility.
- ❑ Denial of problem.
- ❑ Lack of communication with key parties.
- ❑ Lack of collaboration
- ❑ Ignoring respect.
- ❑ Lack of clear, written policy.
- ❑ Lack of careful evaluation of job applicants.
- ❑ No documentation.
- ❑ Lack of awareness of cultural diversity issues.
- ❑ Passing around “bad apples”.
- ❑ Lack of organization-wide commitment to safety.

When violence occurs at work, it affects everyone. With careful planning companies can create a violence prevention plan that is suited to their company's needs. In order for the plan to be effective it must be evaluated and updated regularly. Care must be taken to educate employees, involve them in the process and to create a positive workplace culture. This effort will likely pay off in lowered incident numbers and quicker healing following the incidents that do occur.



Victim Services of Waterloo Region

phone: 519.585.2363 fax: 519.579.5593 email: victimservices@wrps.on.ca
division 1: 134 Frederick St., Kitchener, ON
division 2: 176 Hespeler Rd., Cambridge, ON N1R 6V7