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**Verbal De-Escalation & Workplace Safety**

**Personal Security at Work**

What is workplace violence?

* Any act of violence, against persons or property, threats, intimidation, harassment, or other inappropriate, disruptive behavior that causes fear for personal safety at the work site.
* It is not just violent acts. It does not just involve patrons.
* Workplace violence can affect or involve employees, visitors, and contractors.

How Can We Prevent Workplace Violence?

* + We cannot. We can only hope to minimize it and react based upon rational options.
  + Call 911 whenever you feel threatened, unsure of your safety or if you see a crime.

Considerations:

* Infectious virus/disease
* Mental/alcohol/drug impairment
* Weapon carry

Legally you can exclude disruptive guests as long as you do not discriminate.

* Race, color, sex, ethnic/national origin, religion, creed, sexual identity, etc.
* Ask / Tell / Make (call / text the police)

Safety Considerations

* Don’t put yourself in an unsafe position
  + Don’t turn your back on people, watch their hands
* Don’t get cornered, don’t corner them
  + Maintain a gap, an escape route (or two)
  + Put something between you and them (table, chair, counter, planter, rail)
  + If you crowd them, they may react poorly
* If you have to leave the desk and confront out in the open:
  + Ask the person to sit, and then you sit
  + If they want to stand, you stand as well
* Have a Witness, Be a Witness
  + 2 people, not more, unless violence or policy dictate
  + Raise your voice to attract a coworker’s attention
  + Call a manager for assistance, or
  + Call 911 as soon as you become concerned for your safety or the safety of others
    - It’s okay to call 9-1-1. This is our job. Don’t think it’s not important enough for us. If necessary, leave the line open.
    - If you call and the situation takes care of itself before cops arrive, do not feel that you have wasted our time. This is what we do. Avoid canceling us, unless you are absolutely sure the situation has been resolved.
* Remove/Separate from the Audience
  + Did the guest arrive with friends?
    - It’s safer to deal with one person at a time
    - It’s easier to de-escalate when they don’t have an audience
  + Step away with the witness to continue the discussion

Remain Calm

* Lower your voice, speak in a flat tone, watch your body language
* Let Some Things Go
  + Keep your ego in check. It’s not about winning
  + You can lose if you play their game
  + You don’t need a response to everything
  + Don’t get defensive
* Don’t Take it Personally
  + It’s probably not about you
  + Maybe they have unreal expectations about the services you can offer
  + As a front-line employee, you (unfortunately) have to take some heat because you’re the first person they see
  + But you do not have to take verbal abuse!

Techniques

* Rebuff
  + “Sir, if you are not going to speak to me in a respectful manner, you will have to leave.”
* Affirm
  + “In the past you’ve been a fair person…”
* Be Equal
  + “I’m treating you with respect, I’m just asking for you to treat me with respect.”
* Relate
  + “I don’t like it either when….” (deferring to rules that you did not create)
* Agree
  + Find something you can agree on
* Don’t offer false solutions
  + Be honest if you cannot help them
* Do not ask “How do you feel?”
  + Instead say “Help me understand what you are saying to me.”

Exit Strategies

* Pause/Disengage
  + Sometimes ignoring works well
* Respond Selectively
  + Only respond to informational questions (not abuse)
* Pick Your Battles
  + Don’t look for or force an apology
  + Decide on an acceptable outcome and stay focused on this as your goal

Close the Deal

Give them a face-saving exit

* Remember, it’s not about winning
  + Conclude with a deal both can live with if possible
* Establish a point of agreement
  + Don’t give in to demands

When you have run out of options, or the person is not accepting your solution:

* **“Is there anything else I can help you with?”**
* End the conversation politely

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Reacting to Violence

* Run - If you perceive an imminent threat of violence, get away. Do not wait for others to follow you.
* Hide - If flight is not an option, hide.
  + - Secure doors if possible
    - Take a hidden position away from windows
* Fight - Your only option may be to forcefully and purposefully attack the assailant. If you choose this course of action DO NOT HESITATE.

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As employees, you have the duty to protect the security of your workplace.

* Did someone follow you in through the employee entrance that you do not know?
  + Tell a manager to investigate
* Is there someone hanging around the property, especially during opening or closing?
  + Call the police

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**Relevant Laws:**

**5-3-3 Physical Harassment.**

No person shall, with intent to harass or annoy another, strike, shove, kick, or otherwise touch or subject an individual to physical contact.

**5-3-4 Threatening Bodily Injury.**

No person shall knowingly, by threat or physical action, place another in fear of imminent bodily injury.

**5-4-3 Trespass.**

No person shall:

1. Enter or remain upon land or premises other than a dwelling of another in defiance of a legal request or order by the owner or some other authorized person

**5-8-15 Deadly Weapons in City Buildings Prohibited.**

(a) No person, other than a peace officer, shall carry, bring or possess a deadly weapon in the city council chambers while the council is in session.

(b) No person, other than a peace officer, shall carry, bring or possess a deadly weapon in any public building owned by the city and open to the public if the city manager has posted a sign to that effect at every public entrance to the building.

**18-9-111. Harassment.**

(1) A person commits harassment if, with intent to harass, annoy, or alarm another person, he or she:

(a) Strikes, shoves, kicks, or otherwise touches a person or subjects him to physical contact; or

(b) In a public place directs obscene language or makes an obscene gesture to or at another person; or

(c) Follows a person in or about a public place; or

(d) Repealed.

(e) Directly or indirectly initiates communication with a person or directs language toward another person, anonymously or otherwise, by telephone, telephone network, data network, text message, instant message, computer, computer network, computer system, or other interactive electronic medium in a manner intended to harass or threaten bodily injury or property damage, or makes any comment, request, suggestion, or proposal by telephone, computer, computer network, computer system, or other interactive electronic medium that is obscene; or

(f) Makes a telephone call or causes a telephone to ring repeatedly, whether or not a conversation ensues, with no purpose of legitimate conversation; or

(g) Makes repeated communications at inconvenient hours that invade the privacy of another and interfere in the use and enjoyment of another's home or private residence or other private property; or

(h) Repeatedly insults, taunts, challenges, or makes communications in offensively coarse language to, another in a manner likely to provoke a violent or disorderly response.

(2) Harassment pursuant to subsection (1) of this section is a class 3 misdemeanor; except that harassment is a class 1 misdemeanor if the offender commits harassment pursuant to subsection (1) of this section with the intent to intimidate or harass another person because of that person's actual or perceived race, color, religion, ancestry, or national origin.

(3) Any act prohibited by paragraph (e) of subsection (1) of this section may be deemed to have occurred or to have been committed at the place at which the telephone call, electronic mail, or other electronic communication was either made or received.

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Officers have discretion to remove (warn), cite, or arrest.

We need your help to prosecute.

Can you describe the suspect to the police?

* Detail how we describe a person (top to bottom, outside to inside)

It is legal to photograph someone as long as you are legally allowed to be where you are.

Are you willing to go to court if they are charged?

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* Discuss ADA issues
* Dogs and miniature horse only
* Emotional support dogs are not ADA compliant

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**The Manager’s Role in Protecting Employees**

**Recognizing signs of workplace violence**

An active shooter may be a current or former employee. Alert H.R. if you believe an employee exhibits potentially violent behavior. **Get to know your neighbors/colleagues/guests.**

Signs of potential violence:

* Increased use of alcohol, marijuana and/or illegal drugs
* Unexplained increase in absenteeism and/or vague physical complaints
* Noticeable decrease in attention to appearance/hygiene
* Depression/withdrawal
* Resistance and overreaction to changes in policies/procedures
* Repeated violations of company policies
* Increased severe mood swings, and noticeably unstable or emotional responses
* Explosive outbursts of anger or rage w/o provocation
* Suicidal comments about “putting things in order”
* Paranoid behavior (“everyone is out to get me”)
* Increasingly talks of problems at home
* Escalation of domestic problems within the workplace; talk of severe financial problems
* Talk of previous incidents of violence, empathy with individuals committing violence
* Increase in unsolicited comments about violence, firearms, and other dangerous weapons and violent crimes.

What should management do?

* Sit down and talk to the employee. Say things like, “How is your job going?” or “Is there anything that I can do to help you or to make your job better?”
* Ask other employees how they are doing as well. Maybe many people are feeling the same way, but you just don’t know about it.
* If you are not the person’s manager, ask their manager for suggestions.
* If you’re not their supervisor, don’t try to counsel the employee – that is not your job. Refer the employee to the proper person that can handle this situation.
* Make sure that you report this person to the proper people. You may not be sure that this person may become violent, but it’s better to be safe than sorry.

How do you meet with a potentially violent employee?

* Don’t let the employee know that a meeting is scheduled. Take them by surprise so that they don’t have time to prepare.
* Have someone else present.
* When employees are being evaluated, make sure that good things are said about them as well.
* Never verbally attack an employee, including insults and yelling at them.
* Always remain calm when you talk.
* Maintain some distance between yourself and the employee.
* Make sure that security can be easily reached.
* Stay close to the door just in case you have to exit quickly.