

Workplace Violence Prevention Program Guidelines

Written By _____
Last Updated _____

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Introduction

On June 7, 2006 New York State enacted Article 2 Section 27-b of the New York State Labor Law entitled The Workplace Violence Prevention Act for Public Employees. This law requires public employers to develop and implement a Workplace Violence Prevention Plan, employers with 20 or more full time employees must develop their plan in writing. Schools covered under the school safety plan requirements of the education law are exempt from this requirement.

The law required that the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) promulgate regulations detailing implementation of the provisions of the law. NYSDOL has drafted 12 NYCRR Part 800.6 “Public Employer Workplace Violence Prevention Programs” (WVPP) to fulfill that obligation. The Department received comments from a number of public employers and public employee unions prior to preparing the regulation for publication in the State Register. The proposed regulation was published for the second and final comment period in the State Register on 9/19/2007. There is a 45 day period in which interested parties may comment on the regulation, and a public hearing is scheduled for November 20, 2007. Although the regulation will not be in its final form until after that time, the framework in the regulations should be used to guide the establishment of public employer workplace violence prevention programs. The regulations are based on the requirements in Section 27-b and incorporate many of the related principles found in successful Safety and Health Management Programs.

How to Use this Guide

The guide may be used to assist public employers and public employees in understanding key steps in establishing a public employer WVPP. A critical starting point is establishing a process that includes the key stakeholders in an agency, reviewing requirements in the law and draft regulations, evaluating existing agency programs, and then working to address gaps identified in the review. This guidebook is designed to assist public employers and public employee union leaders so that they can build programs that comply with the law and beyond that, reduce injuries, costs, and associated negative impacts on agency operations that are caused by workplace violence.

The guide is a tool to help in tailoring programs to the actual needs and conditions of different types of public employment covered by the law. Different interventions should be developed based on the type of work that is being performed and type of exposures that are experienced. Public employees work in field service, institutional, and administrative settings located in rural, suburban, and urban areas. Conducting a comprehensive risk assessment, with input from those at risk, is critical to developing an effective WVPP.

What is Workplace Violence?

12 NYCRR PART 800.6 defines workplace violence as “Any physical assault, threatening behavior, verbal abuse occurring where the public employee performs any work-related duty in the course of his or her employment”.

Various high profile cases affecting the New York State public sector included:

- The death of four Watkins Glen social service workers who were murdered by a client whose check was being garnished for non payment of child support
- The murder of a Buffalo mental health intensive case manager by a patient during a home visit
- The stabbing of a state public relations officer in her office by a citizen who was enraged by certain state policies

High profile events like these represent a tiny fraction of workplace violence incidents. The majority of incidents in the public sector workplace include assaults and verbal and non-verbal threats from customers, patients, clients, co-workers and inmates. It is very important that those who are establishing WVPP's understand the different types of violence and the varying types of responses they require.

Typology of Workplace Violence

The typology of workplace violence was developed by California OSHA, and it describes the relationship between the perpetrator and the target of workplace violence:

Type 1 Criminal Intent: Violent acts by criminals who have no other connection with the workplace but enter to commit a robbery or other crime. An example of a type 1 workplace violence incident is the hostage taking and robbery committed at a New York State Department of Motor Vehicles License and Violation Center in November 2004.

Type 2 Customer/client/patient: Violence directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, students, inmates or any others whom the public employer provides a service to. This is the predominant type of violence in an institutional type setting typical to healthcare and social services.

Type 3 Co-Worker: Violence against coworkers, supervisors, or managers by a present or former employee.

Type 4 Personal: Violence in the workplace by someone who doesn't work there, but has a personal relationship with an employee. This refers to domestic violence situations and is usually perpetrated by an acquaintance or family member while the employee is at work.

Elements of an Effective Workplace Violence Prevention Program

The main components of any effective safety and health program can be applied to the prevention of workplace violence. These include:

- Management commitment and employee involvement
- Risk Evaluation
- Hazard control
- Workplace Violence Prevention Policy
- Employee training
- Record keeping system
- Program evaluation

Getting Started

Successful agency plans usually start by forming a planning group, task force, or using an existing safety and health committee. 12 NYCRR PART 800.6 requires the participation of the Authorized Employee Representative. In addition to union involvement, getting input from staff, who have the most direct experience with the problem of workplace violence, will help ensure that the risk assessment and hazard controls are relevant, useful, and effective. The draft regulation's minimum requirements are:

“The Authorized Employee Representative is given an opportunity to contribute information, assist with analyzing statistics, conduct the workplace risk evaluation and determination, and participate in incident reviews.”

Union involvement is particularly effective where there are existing labor-management or health and safety committees. Involving unions up-front, before decisions are made, often leads to more effective programs and prevents adversarial outcomes. Additionally, unions often express employees' concerns and bring significant expertise and resources to the table. For example, a number of public employee unions have professional health and safety staff, training grants, and experience in developing violence prevention programs. Labor/Management cooperation demonstrates the agency's and union's commitment to the success of a workplace violence program.

Although there is no ban on using existing committees or forums, employers should consider whether existing committees will allow adequate resources for the scope of work that needs to be performed to build an effective WVPP.

The Workplace Violence Prevention Policy Statement

The regulation requires the employer to post a Workplace Violence Prevention Policy Statement in a conspicuous location where employee notices are normally posted. The policy statement can be a one page document that briefly summarizes the employer's commitment to staff safety and health, the WVPP goals and objectives, how to report an incident and specifically to whom, and the process the employer will use to ensure employee and union participation in the program. A sample Workplace Violence Prevention Policy Statement is contained in Appendix 1 of these guidelines.

Program Development

The WVPP needs to include a description of the factors identified in the risk assessment and the methods the employer will use to prevent workplace violence. There is no "one size fits all" WVPP that is effective. The unique risks associated with different types of operations should form the basis of the final program. Employers are encouraged to integrate existing policies and procedures into their WVPP, especially if they have proven to be effective.

An employer that has more than one location under its jurisdiction can often share the base plan agency-wide. However, to complete the program each site must perform certain elements of the risk evaluation, such as an environmental security inspection. Additionally, employers should demonstrate that they have implemented specific control measures based on the assessment that are intended to protect employees from the risks associated with their jobs.

The Workplace Violence Prevention standard is performance-based and not prescriptive. The intent is to allow employers flexibility in determining the appropriate methods they choose to employ. Upon completion of the required elements, the employer is responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of the WVPP through periodic review and investigation of incidents and reports.

Risk Evaluation and Determination

The employer is responsible for assessing the employees' work environment for the risk factors (hazards) they are actually or potentially exposed to. 12 NYCRR PART 800.6 requires the participation of the Authorized Employee Representative during this process. The following are key methods of conducting the risk evaluation:

1. A review of the employee accident and illness statistical information may help identify trends and the types, causes, and severity of injuries. Public employers in New York State are required to maintain the SH 900 Log of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses. This may be a useful source of information. Some public employers maintain their own databases, as well as various types of incident reporting databases. Additionally, where physical assaults are a frequent occurrence, evaluating workers' compensation experience and costs may be useful.
2. A physical workplace evaluation should consider the need for security improvements based on the type of setting and other occupational factors. For example, is money kept at the location? Is it operated round the clock, seven days a week? Is it located in a high crime area? This part of the assessment will look at building access, lighting, door locks, alarms, isolated spaces, etc. Appendix 3 of these guidelines includes model Workplace Security Checklists that can be tailored to the physical evaluation of your buildings and grounds.
3. Employers may generate additional risk and prevention information by conducting staff surveys and/or focus groups. If a survey is used, it is important to consider how the data will be used when drafting the questions. Responses should be confidential, and the survey should be simple to complete. Allowing it to be completed at work will facilitate a high response rate. Focus groups are small groups of staff, where a neutral facilitator generates a rich discussion of perceived risk factors and solutions. A sample employee survey and focus group guidance are in Appendices 4 and 5, respectively.
4. A review of existing policies, for example: violence prevention, crisis response, restraint and seclusion, critical incident management, domestic violence in the workplace, workplace conflict, and relations with criminal justice authorities. Gaining input from clients, patients, and customers may also provide valuable information on risk factors for workplace violence.

Throughout the risk evaluation process, the group should document its findings. These records may be used to guide the development of the written WVPP and also to document the risk assessment process and its conclusions.

Implementation of Prevention Control Measures

The employer is responsible for analyzing the risk evaluation data to determine appropriate control measures that will prevent or reduce workplace violence. It is advisable to involve the committee that assisted in the development of the risk assessment data when creating the policy statement and in the review process when determining the implementation of control measures. It is a good idea to implement feasible control measures as soon as they have been identified. However, some hazard controls will require research, budgetary, or long term planning (capital projects). It is important to document such planning.

There are three main types of control measures, referred to as the “hierarchy of control measures”, as follows:

- 1) Engineering controls eliminate or reduce the hazard through substitution or design. Examples include:
 - a. increased lighting
 - b. designing secure building access
 - c. security hardware
 - d. eliminating isolated work areas
 - e. eliminating “cash on hand” or installing drop safes

- 2) Administrative or work practice controls eliminate or reduce the hazard by changing organizational policies and procedures. Examples include:
 - a. increased staffing
 - b. employment of security personnel
 - c. developing building access control procedures
 - d. cross-shift communication to share information regarding agitated clients
 - e. providing information on criminal history and violence information on clients, inmates, customers
 - f. elimination of long customer wait times
 - g. provision of personal alarms
 - h. provision of cell phones for field workers
 - i. training

- 3) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) examples include:
 - a. gloves, respirators, hard hats, and bullet proof vests (For the most part, this type of intervention is not relevant to workplace violence prevention)

The employer has a responsibility to address all risk factors that their employees are potentially exposed to. When considering the most appropriate control measures, an effort should be made to try to eliminate the hazard whenever possible. When total elimination is not possible, try to change the way the job is being performed, assigned or scheduled to reduce the hazard. Training should not be relied upon as the only control measure, and interventions should have a balanced approach to changing individual worker versus organizational behavior.

The Workplace Violence Prevention Program (WVPP)

The written WVPP program must include:

- a list of the risk factors found during the workplace evaluation
- the control methods the employer will use to prevent workplace violence incidents
- a copy of the policy statement
- a description of the employer's risk evaluation and determination process
- the employer's critical incident management or crisis counseling program and how employees may access it
- a description of the workplace violence reporting system and how the data are analyzed
- a detailed description of training programs that the employer is providing to address the various risk factors
- a description of agreements with law enforcement agencies, as needed
- WVPP annual review dates

Upon completion of the written WVPP, the employer is responsible for ensuring the policies are implemented and are fairly enforced within the workplace.

The written program and copies of the risk assessments will be made available to employees, their authorized representatives and the Department of Labor upon request.

Employee Information and Training

Employee training is required upon completion of the WVPP and annually thereafter. Retraining is required any time there is a significant change to the program, a risk factor or work control. Training topics should include at least the following:

- Requirements of the workplace violence regulation
- Details of the risk factors identified in the risk assessment and the organization's procedures for conducting the risk assessment
- How to obtain a copy of the WVPP and where it is kept
- How employees can protect themselves, report threats and incidents, and suggest improvements to the program
- Description and details of the employer's written Workplace Violence Prevention Program
- How to obtain post-incident crisis counseling
- Training on dealing with potentially violent clients, patients, co-workers and inmates should be provided. Examples of existing programs include Preventing and Managing Crisis Situations (PMCS), Community Mental Health Worker Safety Training, and Strategies for Crisis Intervention and Prevention (SCIP).
- In general, video or computer-based training alone is not a sufficient method for delivering violence prevention training

- How to initiate an emergency alerting system for imminent danger situations or when staff needs emergency assistance. Alerting systems are commonly found in high-risk settings such as prisons, emergency rooms, and psychiatric hospitals. Examples of these systems include personal alarm devices, codes, drop phones, and panic alarms. Assigning and training appropriate personnel to respond is a key component of these systems.

Recordkeeping

The record keeping requirements outlined in 12 NYCRR Part 801, Recording and Reporting Public Employees' Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, must be used for workplace violence incidents.

In addition to Part 801, the employer needs to create an incident reporting system to ensure that all threats and workplace violence incidents are reported to management. These reports will provide written notification when a violence incident occurs so that management can develop an appropriate response. Also, the Incident Report will create a historical record that can be used in the annual risk assessment and program evaluation. A sample incident reporting form is attached as Appendix 2 of this document.

Employers can tailor their recordkeeping practices to the needs of their violence prevention program. The purpose of maintaining records is to enable the employer to monitor its on-going efforts, to determine if the violence prevention program is working, and to identify ways to improve it. Employers may find the following types of records useful for this purpose:

- Records of employee and other injuries and illnesses at the establishment
- Records describing incidents involving violent acts or threats, even if the incident did not involve an injury or a criminal act (Records of events involving abuse, verbal attacks, or aggressive behavior can help identify patterns and risks that are not evident from the smaller set of cases that actually result in injury or crime.)
- Written risk evaluation
- Recommendations of police advisors, employees, or consultants
- Up-to-date records of actions taken to deter violence, including work practice controls and other corrective steps
- Notes of safety meetings and training records

Program Effectiveness and Evaluation

The employer, with the Authorized Employee Representative, shall evaluate the effectiveness of the WVPP, at least annually or after serious incidents. The employer should attempt to describe within their WPP the triggering event that will initiate a review for example repeat incidents within a short time frame, an injury requiring more than basic first aid. The review should focus on incident trends and the effectiveness of the control measures. The review should also assess whether the reporting and record keeping systems have been effective in collecting all relevant information.

Discrimination

Employees will not be discriminated against for bringing forth a safety and health concern, for filing a complaint or for participating in or causing any proceeding or inspection relating to this program.

Post-Incident Response

Post-incident response and evaluation are important parts of an effective WVPP. This involves developing standard operating procedures for management and employees to follow in the aftermath of a violent incident. Such procedures may include the following:

- Assure that injured employees receive prompt and appropriate medical care (This includes, but is not limited to, providing transportation of the injured to medical care. Prompt first aid and emergency medical treatment can minimize the harmful consequences of a violent incident.)
- Report the incident to the appropriate authorities as required by applicable laws and regulations
- Inform management about the incident in writing
- Secure the premises to safeguard evidence and reduce distractions during the post incident response process
- Prepare an incident report immediately after the incident, noting details that might be forgotten over time (Appendix 2 contains a sample incident report form that an employer may use or adapt for its own purposes.)
- Address the need for appropriate treatment for victimized employees (In addition to physical injuries, victims and witnesses may suffer psychological trauma, fear of returning to work, feelings of incompetence, guilt, powerlessness, and fear of criticism by supervisors or managers.)

Post-incident debriefings and counseling can reduce psychological trauma and stress among victims and witnesses. An emerging trend is to use Critical Incident Stress Management to provide a range or continuum of care tailored to the individual victim or the organization's needs

After the occurrence of a workplace violence incident or annually; the employer, with the participation of the Authorized Employee Representative, will conduct a review of the workplace violence prevention plans.

APPENDIX 1

(Employer's Name) Workplace Violence Prevention Policy & Incident Reporting

(Employer's Name) is committed to the safety and security of our employees. Workplace violence presents a serious occupational safety hazard to our agency, staff, and clients. Threats, threatening behavior, or acts of violence against employees, visitors, guests, or other individuals by anyone on (Employer's Name) property will be thoroughly investigated and appropriate action will be taken, including summoning criminal justice authorities when warranted. All employees are responsible for helping to create an environment of mutual respect for each other as well as clients, following all policies, procedures and program requirements, and for assisting in maintaining a safe and secure work environment.

This policy is designed to meet the requirements of NYS Labor Law 27b and highlights some of the elements that are found within our Workplace Violence Prevention Program. The process involved in complying with this law included a workplace evaluation that was designed to identify the workplace violence hazards our employees could be exposed to. Other tools that were utilized during this process included establishing a committee made up of management and Authorized Employee Representatives who will have an ongoing role of participation in the evaluation process, recommending methods to reduce or eliminate the hazards identified during the process and investigating workplace violence incidents or allegations. All employees will participate in the annual Workplace Violence Prevention Training Program.

The goal of this policy is to promote the safety and well-being of all people in our workplace. All incidents of violence or threatening behavior will be responded to immediately upon notification. (Employers Name) has identified response personnel that include a member of management and an employee representative. If appropriate, the (Employers Name) will provide counseling services or referrals for employees.

All (Employers Name) personnel are responsible for notifying the contact person designated below of any violent incidents, threatening behavior, including threats they have witnessed, received, or have been told that another person has witnessed or received.

Designated Contact Person:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Phone: _____

Location: _____

APPENDIX 2

Workplace Violence Incident Report

Today's Date _____

Date of Incident _____

Time of Incident _____

Case Number _____

Employee Name _____

Title _____

Workplace Location _____

What was the employee doing just prior to the incident?

Incident Description (Minimally include names of involved employees, extent of injuries and names of witnesses):

Provide information on preventative actions that the public employer has taken or is considering as a result of the incident to prevent against further like occurrences:

After the occurrence of a workplace violence incident, the public employer shall consider global (all public employer worksites) prevention enhancements, which may be necessary to properly protect employees.

The employer is responsible for maintaining copies of reports which shall be used when the program is reviewed and updated.

Appendix 3

Workplace Security Checklists

Facility: _____
Address/Work Location: _____
Assessment Done By: _____
Date of Assessment: _____

Security Control Plan

Has a Security Control Plan been developed? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, is it in writing? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, does it include?
A. A Policy Statement Yes ___ No ___
B. Evaluation of work areas Yes ___ No ___
C. Identification of control methods considered:
 1. Engineering Controls Yes ___ No ___
 2. Work Practice Controls Yes ___ No ___
D. Training Yes ___ No ___
E. Evacuation and Floor Plan Yes ___ No ___

Is the Security Control Plan accessible to all employees? Yes ___ No ___
Is the Security Control Plan reviewed and updated when a task
 has been added or changed and at least annually? Yes ___ No ___
Have you coordinated your Security Control Plan with the
 local law enforcement agency? Yes ___ No ___

A. Policy Statement

Is the Workplace Violence Policy statement clearly written? Yes ___ No ___

B. Work Area Evaluation

Are all areas being evaluated? Yes ___ No ___
If no, which ones are not? Comments:

C. Control Measures

1. Engineering Controls

If appropriate, have the following engineering controls been implemented:

A. Door control(s) Yes ___ No ___
B. Panic buttons Yes ___ No ___
C. Door detectors Yes ___ No ___
E. Closed circuit Yes ___ No ___
F. Stationary metal detector Yes ___ No ___
G. Sound detection Yes ___ No ___
H. Intrusion panel Yes ___ No ___
I. Monitors Yes ___ No ___
J. Video tape recorder Yes ___ No ___
K. Switcher Yes ___ No ___
L. Hand-held metal detector Yes ___ No ___
M. Other _____

Have structural modifications (e.g. Plexiglas, partitions, etc.) been implemented?

Yes ___ No ___

If yes, comment, if no, what is needed?

2. Work Practice Controls:

If appropriate, have the following work practice controls been implemented:

- A. Desk clear of objects Yes ___ No ___
- B. Unobstructed office exits Yes ___ No ___
- C. Bare cubicles available Yes ___ No ___
- D. Reception area available Yes ___ No ___
- E. Visitor/client sign in/out Yes ___ No ___
- F. Visitor(s)/client(s) escorted Yes ___ No ___
- G. Counter top to separate clients from work area Yes ___ No ___
- H. One entrance used Yes ___ No ___
- I. Separate interview area(s) Yes ___ No ___
- J. I. D. badges used Yes ___ No ___
- K. Emergency phone numbers posted Yes ___ No ___
- L. Internal phone system Yes ___ No ___
- M. If yes, indicate:
 - a. Does it use 120 VAC building lines? Yes ___ No ___
 - b. Does it use phone lines? Yes ___ No ___
- N. Internal procedures for conflict (problem) situations Yes ___ No ___
- O. Parking lot well lighted Yes ___ No ___
- P. Other

Are Security Guards used at this facility? Yes ___ No ___

If yes, how many _____

- A. At entrance(s) Yes ___ No ___
- B. Building patrol Yes ___ No ___
- C. Are they from a contracted security agency? Yes ___ No ___

If no, has consideration been given to the local law enforcement response capability? Yes ___ No ___

Comments: _____

Workplace Violence Prevention Training

Has training been conducted? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, is it provided? Yes ___ No ___
1. Prior to initial assignment Yes ___ No ___
2. Annually thereafter Yes ___ No ___

Does training include:

A. Components of security control plan Yes ___ No ___
B. Engineering controls instituted at the workplace Yes ___ No ___
C. Work practice controls instituted at the workplace Yes ___ No ___
D. Techniques to use in potentially volatile situations Yes ___ No ___
E. How to anticipate/read behavior Yes ___ No ___
F. Procedures to follow after an incident Yes ___ No ___
G. Periodic refresher for on site procedures Yes ___ No ___
H. Recognizing substance abuse/paraphernalia Yes ___ No ___
I. Opportunity for Q&A with instructor Yes ___ No ___

Are training records kept? Yes ___ No ___

Floor Plan, Evacuation Plan

Are emergency evacuation plans current? Yes ___ No ___
Are floor plans posted showing exits, entrances,
location of security equipment, etc? Yes ___ No ___
Are emergency evacuation drills conducted annually? Yes ___ No ___

Conclusions:

Do employees feel safe? Yes ___ No ___

Comments: _____

Comments and Recommendations based on this evaluation:

Appendix 4

Sample Employee Questionnaire

Employee Survey on
Workplace Violence Hazard Assessment
(No Signature Needed)

Name (Optional)

Department/Unit

Date

Work Location (if at alternate worksite)

Please assess your department/unit over the last year. Circle TRUE (T), FALSE (F) or DON'T KNOW (?). Thank you for your honest assessment.

Management Commitment and Employee Involvement

1. Violence/threats are not accepted as "part of the job" by managers, supervisors and/or employees. T F
2. Employees communicate information about potentially assaultive/threatening clients or visitors to appropriate staff. T F
3. Management communicates information to employees about incidents of workplace violence. T F
4. Employees feel they are treated with dignity and respect by other employees and management. T F
5. Employees are basically satisfied with their jobs. T F
6. Employees are basically satisfied with management. T F
7. Employees are basically satisfied with the organization (i.e., mission, vision, goals). T F
8. Employees generally feel "safe" when they are at work. T F
9. Employees are familiar with the department's/unit's violence prevention policy. T F

Potential Risk Factors

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 10. Employees do not work in high-crime areas. | T | F |
| 11. Employees do not work with drugs. | T | F |
| 12. Employees do not work with cash. | T | F |
| 13. Employees do not work with patients or clients who have a history of violent behavior or behavior disorders. | T | F |
| 14. Employees do not work in isolated work areas. | T | F |

Hazard Prevention and Control

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 15. The department/unit has adequate lighting to, from and within the worksite. | T | F |
| 16. The employee parking garage is secure when arriving, leaving and during changes of shift. | T | F |
| 17. Access and freedom of movement within the workplace are restricted to those persons who have a legitimate reason for being there. | T | F |
| 18. Alarm systems such as panic alarm buttons, silent alarms, or personal electronic alarm systems are being used for prompt security assistance. | T | F |
| 19. Employees know to use security escort service after hours. | T | F |
| 20. After hours, the building is locked down with only one access point. | T | F |
| 21. Visitors are signed in and out. | T | F |
| 22. Exits are accessible and clearly marked. | T | F |
| 23. Employees are able to locate emergency equipment such as fire alarm boxes or emergency-generator outlets. | T | F |
| 24. Emergency equipment is accessible and free from obstruction. | T | F |

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 25. Employees are able to locate cellular phones, power-failure phones and/or radios for emergency communication. | T | F |
| 26. Employees know of the proper procedures if a bomb threat is announced. | T | F |
| 27. Employee emergency call-back list is up-to-date and available. | T | F |
| 28. Employees provide privacy to reflect sensitivity and respect for clients and visitors. | T | F |
| 29. Employees use the "buddy system" to work together if problems arise. | T | F |
| 30. Employees working in the field have cellular phones or other communication devices to enable them to request aid. | T | F |
| 31. Staffing levels are appropriate for department/unit functions. | T | F |
| 32. Reference manuals are up-to-date and available to employees. | T | F |
| 33. There is a grievance policy available to employees. | T | F |
| 34. There is a Safety Committee available as a resource to staff for any hazard concern. | T | F |
| Training | | |
| 35. Employees have received training on the company's workplace violence prevention program. | T | F |
| 36. Employees know how to ask for assistance by phone or by alerting other staff. | T | F |
| 37. Employees have been trained to recognize and handle threatening, aggressive, or violent behavior. | T | F |
| 38. Employees have been trained in verbal de-escalation techniques. | T | F |
| 39. Employees have been trained in self-defense/restraint procedures. | T | F |

Incidents and Reporting

40. This work unit/department has not experienced violent behavior and assaults or threats from strangers. T F
41. This work unit/department has not experienced violent behavior and assaults or threats from clients or customers. T F
42. This work unit/department has not experienced violent behavior and assaults or threats from others employed in the organization. T F
43. This work unit/department has not experienced domestic violence issues. T F
44. Employees are required to report incidents or threats of violence, regardless of injury or severity; the reporting system is clear. T F
45. Medical and psychological counseling services were offered to employees who have been assaulted or threatened. T F

Focus Groups

Focus groups provide a rich approach to gaining employee input in the development of workplace violence prevention programs.. Asking workers to describe their work, job hazards, and potential solutions can provide valuable information for all phases of the development of a program, as well as its evaluation.

Focus groups provide a forum for frontline staff to communicate their perceptions of risk and solutions in a safe, confidential and non-judgmental manner..

Focus Group Considerations

- Participation in focus groups is always voluntary
- Groups should be conducted in a confidential and non-judgmental manner. Participants must feel free to speak openly and honestly, without fear of retaliation.
- Select as facilitator someone with experience in running focus groups or leading group discussions, and who is considered safe or neutral by the focus group participants.
- Groups can be as small as four persons and as large as 10-12. It is a good idea to recruit more people than are needed in order to allow for attrition on the day of the group.
- Focus groups should last about 1 ½ hours. They can be a little longer, but not too much shorter.
- Focus groups are best attended when conducted at work on work time (or immediately before or after work).
- Refreshments may be served to make participants comfortable.
- It is important to involve the Authorized Employee Representative(s) in the planning of focus groups.
- Groups work best when participants have a common bond, such as job title, work location or some other common characteristic.
- It is usually a good idea to avoid having supervisors and their staff in the same group.
- It is important to record the key points raised by focus group participants. This may be done by having a person take notes or use flip charts. Sessions may also be audio recorded, though it is imperative that participants are informed of this so that they may opt out if they are uncomfortable.
- A focus group report or summary should be generated. If multiple groups are held, the report can cover more than one group. The report should not include any names or other personal identifiers.

Sample Focus Group Questions

Note: It is important to tailor the questions to the particular work setting, the example shown is appropriate for an institutional type setting

1. In your opinion, what are the three leading causes of violence on your unit and/or in your facility?
2. If you were the director, what practical steps would you take to reduce violence, provide safety to the direct care staff, and improve therapeutic treatment of patients?
3. In your opinion, what are the greatest barriers to implementing these practical steps?
4. Are you satisfied with the current violence prevention training in your facility?
5. Are there any other issues related to violence prevention that you would like to discuss?

Source: University of Maryland, School of Nursing