

VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

A presentation by Sabine Lobitz

Contacts:

Phone: 608-924-9922

Email: sabinelobitz@yahoo.com

VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Sabine Lobitz

Community Response

Introduction

“...the greatest potential for improved crime control may not be in the continued enhancement of response times, patrol tactics, and investigative techniques. Rather, improved crime control can be achieved by:

1. Diagnosing and managing problems in the community that produce serious crime;
2. Fostering close relations with the community to facilitate crime solving;
3. Building self-defense capabilities within the community itself.”

[Mark Moor, Robert Trojanowicz, and George Kelling, *Crime and Policing – Perspectives on Policing*]

Overview

1. Evaluating the workplace environment
 2. Preplanning for critical incidents
 3. Dealing with angry, aggressive persons
 4. The lingering impact of critical incidents
-

II. Threatening Persons

1. CMI's
 2. Angry customers
 3. Intoxicated customers
 4. Cyclical individual (CPD)
 5. Disgruntled employees or family members
-
-
-

III. Threatening Persons: Perceived as significant threat, frequent contacts

1. CMI's
 2. Angry customers
 3. Intoxicated customers
 4. Cyclical personalities
 5. Disgruntled employees
-
-
-
-

IV. Perpetrator Profile:

The most likely perpetrator is a middle-aged white male who is withdrawn and questions his self-worth. He blames others for any problems that befall him and he may have drug dependencies and mental health problems, but they are not conspicuous.

1. History of violent behavior
2. Obsession with weapons
3. Carries concealed weapons
4. Excessive discussions of weapons
5. Makes direct or veiled threats
 - A. Zero-threat tolerance policies
 - B. Early intervention allows maintenance of self-esteem

6. Enjoys instilling fear in others
7. Obsessively involved with work
 - A. Discipline regarded as personal attack
 - B. "This job is my life!"
8. Little or no involvement with co-workers
 - A. Poor support systems
 - B. Dysfunctional relationships
9. Unwanted romantic interests in co-workers (stalking behaviors)
10. Paranoid behavior
 - A. Blames others for his/her fate
 - B. Conspiracies
11. Difficult time accepting criticism
12. Holds grudges
13. History of substance abuse
14. Stress exists away from workplace
15. Keen interest in the publicity of violent acts
 - A. Foreshadowing
 - B. Mechanisms to report incidents
16. Constantly tests limits of acceptable behavior
17. Stress in workplace
 - A. Discipline
 - B. Reorganization
 - C. Layoffs: Terminations should be handled with care – try to include E.A.P. personnel
 - D. Provide counseling
18. Depression: The National Institute of Mental Health has identified depression as a condition common to many employees who have committed a homicide on the job.
19. Depression:
 - A. Loss of energy and interest
 - B. Diminished ability to enjoy oneself
 - C. Decrease or increase in sleeping or appetite
 - D. Difficulty in concentrating
 - E. Indecisiveness
 - F. Slow or fuzzy thinking
 - G. Exaggerated feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or anxiety
 - H. Feelings of worthlessness
 - I. Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide

V. Workplace Stress

1. Causes
 - A. Downsizing
 - B. Pay reductions
 - C. Reorganization
 - D. Coercive management
 2. Symptoms
 - A. Chronic labor disputes
 - B. Increase in grievances
 - C. Increased injuries
 - D. Under-staffing
 - E. Excessive overtime
-
-

VI. Workplace Misperceptions

1. Women deal poorly with angry, aggressive personalities
 2. Men should intervene
 3. Informal backup
 4. Weapons are necessary
-
-
-
-
-

VII. Personal Pre-Planning

1. Be confident
 2. Eye contact
 3. Offensive personality
 4. Assess individual mannerisms
 5. Trust your instincts
 6. Report suspicious things/events
 7. High risk times
-

VIII. Organizational Pre-Planning

- 1. Special equipment
 - A. Speed dial phone
 - B. Tape dialers
 - C. Cellular phones
 - D. Computers
- 2. Standard practices
 - A. Documenting and reporting
 - B. Good hiring practices
 - C. Realistic preparation (restraining orders)

IX. Stages of Conflict

- 1. Verbal aggression
- 2. Losing control verbally
- 3. Physical attacks

X. Verbal Aggression

- 1. Intimate space
- 2. Workplace design
 - A. Barriers
 - a. Protect employees
 - b. Disturbed person feels safer
 - B. Comfortable waiting areas
 - C. Controlled access
- 3. Be sensitive to escalation
- 4. Be patient and courteous
- 5. Get help
- 6. Informal retreat (practical excuse)
- 7. Role playing

XI. Losing Control Verbally: Threats, Talking About Violence

- 1. External (physiological) indicators:
 - A. Face color
 - B. Rapid, shallow breathing
 - C. Tremors
 - D. Frequent changes in sitting posture
 - E. Clenching the fists
 - F. The parental finger
- 2. Body language
 - A. Patience
 - B. Empathy
 - C. Concern
 - D. Father Murphy
 - E. Jack Benny
- 3. Cope with by:
 - A. Actively listen and constructively verbalize
 - B. Be empathetic
 - C. Speak quietly, but firmly
 - D. Thought interruption
 - E. Allow ventilation
 - F. Act as negotiator
 - a. Limited discretion
 - b. Channel ventilation

XIII Imminent Physical Aggression

- 1. Move to areas of higher staffing
- 2. Retreat immediately
- 3. Notify law enforcement personnel
- 4. Acknowledge inferiority

Model Policy for Workplace Threats and Violence

Nothing is more important to (Company Name) than the safety and security of its employees. Threats, threatening behavior, or acts of violence against employees, visitors, guests, or other individuals by anyone on (Company Name) property will not be tolerated. Violations of this policy will lead to disciplinary action which may include dismissal, arrest, and prosecution.

Any person who makes substantial threats, exhibits threatening behavior, or engages in violent acts on (Company Name) property shall be removed from the premises as quickly as safety permits, and shall remain off (Company Name) premises pending the outcome of an investigation. (Company Name) will initiate an appropriate response. This response may include, but is not limited to, suspension and/or termination of any business relationship, reassignment of job duties, suspension or termination of employment, and/or criminal prosecution of the person or persons involved.

No existing (Company Name) policy, practice, or procedure should be interpreted to prohibit decisions designed to prevent a threat from being carried out, a violent act from occurring, or a life-threatening situation from developing.

All (Company Name) personnel are responsible for notifying the management representative designated below of any threats which they have witnessed, received, or have been told that another person has witnessed or received. Even without an actual threat, personnel should also report any behavior they have witnessed which they regard as threatening or violent, when that behavior is job-related or might be carried out on a company-controlled site, or is connected to company employment. Employees are responsible for making this report regardless of the relationship between the individual who initiated the threat or threatening behavior and the person or persons who were threatened or were the focus of the threatening behavior. If the designated management representative is not available, personnel should report the threat to their supervisor or another member of the management team.

All individuals who apply for or obtain a protective or restraining order which lists company locations as being protected areas, must provide to the designated management representative a copy of the petition and declarations used to seek the order, a copy of any temporary protective or restraining order which is granted, and a copy of any protective or restraining order which is made permanent.

(Company Name) understands the sensitivity of the information requested and has developed confidentiality procedures which recognize and respect the privacy of the reporting employee(s).

The designated management representative is:

Name: _____

Title: _____ Department: _____

Telephone: _____

Location: _____

CHECKLIST OF CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH WHO HAVE CAUSED SCHOOL-ASSOCIATED VIOLENT DEATHS

The National School Safety Center offers the following checklist derived from tracking school-associated violent deaths in the United States from July 1992 to the present. Follow this link to the [School Associated Violent Deaths Report](#). After studying common characteristics of youngsters who have caused such deaths, NSSC has identified the following behaviors, which could indicate a youth's potential for harming him/herself or others.

Accounts of these tragic incidents repeatedly indicate that in most cases, a troubled youth has demonstrated or has talked to others about problems with bullying and feelings of isolation, anger, depression and frustration. While there is no foolproof system for identifying potentially dangerous students who may harm themselves and/or others, this checklist provides a starting point.

These characteristics should serve to alert school administrators, teachers and support staff to address needs of troubled students through meetings with parents, provision of school counseling, guidance and mentoring services, as well as referrals to appropriate community health/social services and law enforcement personnel. Further, such behavior should also provide an early warning signal that safe-school plans and crisis prevention/intervention procedures must be in place to protect the health and safety of all school students and staff members so that schools remain safe havens for learning.

1. _____ Has a history of tantrums and uncontrollable angry outbursts.
2. _____ Characteristically resorts to name calling, cursing or abusive language.
3. _____ Habitually makes violent threats when angry.
4. _____ Has previously brought a weapon to school
5. _____ Has a background of serious disciplinary problems at school and in the community.
6. _____ Has a background of drug, alcohol or other substance abuse or dependency.
7. _____ Is on the fringe of his/her peer group with few or no close friends.
8. _____ Is preoccupied with weapons, explosives or other incendiary devices.
9. _____ Has previously been truant, suspended or expelled from school.
10. _____ Displays cruelty to animals.
11. _____ Has little or no supervision and support from parents or a caring adult.
12. _____ Has witnessed or been a victim of abuse or neglect in the home.
13. _____ Has been bullied and/or bullies or intimidates peers or younger children.
14. _____ Tends to blame others for difficulties and problems s/he causes her/himself.
15. _____ Consistently prefers TV shows, movies or music expressing violent themes and acts.
16. _____ Prefers reading materials dealing with violent themes, rituals and abuse.
17. _____ Reflects anger, frustration and the dark side of life in school essays or writing projects.
18. _____ Is involved with a gang or an antisocial group on the fringe of peer acceptance.
19. _____ Is often depressed and/or has significant mood swings.
20. _____ Has threatened or attempted suicide.

Developed by the National School Safety Center © 1998
 Dr. Ronald D. Stephens, Executive Director
 141 Duesenberg Dr., Suite 11, Westlake Village, CA 91362
 Phone: (805) 373-9977; Fax: (805) 373-9277

PERMISSION TO REPRINT FOR PROFESSIONAL PURPOSE AS LONG AS CREDIT IS GIVEN TO NSSC.

Click [here](#) to go to the National School Safety Center's home page.