

HR INSIGHTS

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Clark & Associates of Nevada, Inc.

Tips for Preventing or Reducing Workplace Violence

Statistics show that violence continues to be a problem in the workplace. Employers have a duty to provide a safe working environment for both their employees and their visitors and to not negligently hire or retain potentially violent employees. The following tips will help you prevent or reduce workplace violence.

Hiring Process

The following strategies can be used during hiring:

- Verify information on all new hires through reference checking.
- Consider using drug testing to weed out unfit job applicants.
- Screen applicants by conducting background checks. Condition offers of employment upon the completion of background checks, drug tests or medical exams.

Worksite Analysis

Conduct a worksite analysis and risk assessment. Review workers' compensation records and illness claims to identify patterns of assault and other workplace violence. Understand industry experience and specific job exposures.

Employment

The following tactics can help minimize workplace violence:

- Create an atmosphere that promotes open communications, allows employees to have adequate control over their work and provides support and recognition.
- Have a clear, written policy protecting employees from harassment, threats and intimidation. Policy should include that any complaints of harassment or threats will be investigated and appropriate steps taken, including discipline and discharge.
- Establish a grievance/complaint procedure.
- Establish an employee assistance program (EAP).
- Offer outplacement counseling to employees being laid off or terminated.

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Security Measures

Consider the following security measures: monitoring systems, limited access key cards, employee identification cards, emergency warning systems, security guards, visitor sign-in policies, security escorts for those working late and safe rooms in case of emergencies.

Training and Education

The following strategies can be used to educate employees on how to recognize workplace violence:

- Train employees how to recognize hazards and respond to incidents of violence.
- Educate employees on the zero-tolerance policy, the importance of a safe workplace and how to get help.
- Train employees how to recognize a potentially violent employee. The following are potential warning signs:
 - Changes in behavior
 - Sensitivity to feedback
 - Sarcasm
 - Slip in job performance
 - Easily irritable
 - Tardy or absent often
 - Angry remarks
 - More emotional than usual
 - More errors than usual
 - Threats
 - Using a raised voice or profanity
 - Alcohol or drug use

Response Team

Put a team together and develop a plan on how to assess and address a threatening situation in case the need ever arises. Your team should consist of human resources, security, and medical and legal personnel. Investigation and post-incident analysis by the team will help shape future responses.

Training and Education

Develop a crisis plan that could include an outline on reporting incidents of workplace violence and instructions on who to notify. The plan should include:

- How to assess the situation
- Getting help
- Warning employees
- Securing the workplace
- Involving the police and gathering information to assist the investigation
- Follow-up activities like debriefing employees, resuming operations and long-term planning



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