

## Workplace Violence

Office workers everywhere experience acts of workplace violence—sometimes never giving them a second thought. Hostilities such as physical and verbal assaults, threats, coercion, intimidation and all forms of harassment constitute acts of workplace violence.

### Warning Signs of Violence

- Numerous conflicts with supervisors and other employees.
- Change in mood or attitude.
- Statements indicating desperation over family, finances or other problems.
- Drugs and/or alcohol use. Often people with substance abuse problems will act out in the workplace.
- Intimidating, belligerent, harassing, bullying or other inappropriate and aggressive behavior.
- Direct or veiled threats of harm.
- References to weapons.
- An employee who consistently leaves his/her workday early without authorization, or presents numerous excuses for shortening the work day, should set off an alarm. This is a significant sign if an individual is typically prompt and committed to a full work day.
- Inability to concentrate. If an employee is suddenly unable to concentrate, this may indicate that he/she is distracted and in trouble. A manager should be notified to try to encourage the employee to seek assistance.

## What You Should Do

Talk to your supervisor immediately if you observe unusual behavior in others. Never underestimate the potential for a co-worker to act out violently. Being proactive can help prevent an incident of workplace violence.

- Your goal is to help defuse the person's anger so that he/she can cool down and talk calmly and rationally.
- Maintain your composure. You cannot help someone calm down if you are emotional.
- Try to signal for help from a co-worker who can then contact management, the police or paramedics.
- Listen attentively. Hostile individuals who feel that they have your attention are sometimes less likely to act out physically.
- Maintain eye contact. This also helps to calm the person because the individual feels that he/she has your attention.
- Be courteous and patient until help arrives.
- If the person is threatening you with a weapon, follow his/her instructions and stall for time.
- Never try to intercept the weapon or act aggressively against the individual. You do not want to risk harm to yourself or others.



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