

Preventing violence in the workplace

by

Charles E. Labig, PhD

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The author of this book, Charles Labig, PhD, is a corporate psychologist, and he has extensive clinical experience in the psychology of violence.

As Dr. Labig tells us in his introduction, "Violence in the workplace is the kind of subject we don't want to think about. We want to believe it happens only to other people". He is aware that even thinking about violence where we work can cause us to become extremely uncomfortable and apprehensive. Yet he also feels that such emotions can be somewhat surmounted by proper preparation and knowledge.

According to the author, "Workplace violence is the fastest growing type of murder in the United States, and it is increasing at an alarming rate". No workplace - not even a library - can offer guarantees of complete security. As he emphasizes, it is extremely difficult to predict violent incidents. Therefore, caution needs to be exercised to prevent it from even starting to develop. One cannot rely too heavily on predictive clinicians or other experts - but rather must make some judgments according to each particular work situation.

Next, Dr. Labig lists common sources of violence on the job - everything from potential robbers to stalkers. Often, scary thought though it is, the violence does not come from strangers, but rather from fellow workers. Problems at home or problems on the job can precipitate violent and unexpected reactions.

The author goes into detail regarding the liability and legal issues that can come into play in these situations. Each state, he tells us, has special laws that govern the problems of violence at work. And it would be well for supervisors to be clear - ahead of time - as to what can happen and what should be the appropriate response.

Yet negative though the whole problem is, there are ways to deal with it. Dr. Labig explains in detail such ideas as fostering a harmonious work environment, developing policies and procedures for dealing with violence, setting up a crisis plan, and implementing effective security techniques.

Many times, some simple methods can head off terrible actions. For example, we are told, it is very wise to train all employees in any workplace to see how various responses to violence can and should be dealt with. We are also given quite an extensive survey to see how well our institution has taken necessary steps to prevent violence. Also with this exercise we can find specific areas and ways to improve.

This book, as Dr. Labig tells us, is one "attempt to demonstrate what can be done to make company workplaces safer for all employees...once employers understand how violence comes about, it is then easier to see many of the ways it can be prevented".

Truly, no one wants to think about such things happening in OUR library. But, as in so many other circumstances, much harm can be prevented if time and thought are taken to prepare for the worst. This is not a fun book - but a very practical one.

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. 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. Workplace violence (WPV) or occupational violence refers to violence, usually in the form of physical abuse or threat, that creates a risk to the health and safety of an employee or multiple employees. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health defines worker on worker, personal relationship, customer/client, and criminal intent all as categories of violence in the workplace. These four categories are further broken down into three levels: Level one displays early warning signs of In general, violence in the workplace can result in the occurrence of any event which, implicitly or explicitly, negatively affects the performance, safety, health or physical or psychological well-being of a person in circumstances related with their work (Di Martino et al., 2003;Fletcher et al., 2000). In this sense, these situations may not occur in the workplace and may involve behaviors as varied as, for

example, homicide, physical or verbal abuse or threats (Fletcher et al., 2000; Mayhew & Chappell, 2001). In turn, the forms of violence that do not involve physical contact