

Your Company User Name: libertyresources

## Workplace Violence

Summer! Shouldn't it be the time of the year when people are relaxing with a bit of sun and fun, perhaps on one of those cherished and deserved stretches of earned vacation time. Unfortunately, some workers and ex-workers apparently are not in such a mellow mood, as episodes of workplace violence continue to emerge on the national scene.

Problems with episodes of workplace violence are by no means rare. Each year there are 1.5 million simple assaults, 400,000 aggravated assaults involving a gun or knife, 51,000 workplace rapes and 84,000 robberies.

Understandably, Human Resource Managers and other company officials dealing with workplace violence prevention efforts and/or the aftermath of a confrontation often experience considerable anxiety themselves, while attempting to deal with such vexing challenges. In turn, they need the support, knowledge and protocols necessary to manage such situation as effectively as possible. Consequently, we thought that this was a good time to review relevant operational principles.

### Organizational Factors

First and foremost, there must be recognition by CEO's, Human Resource Managers, Medical Directors, front-line supervisors and employees that no workplace is completely immune from the possibility of such episodes. Secondly, that means undertaking the proper planning, and designing the necessary workplace violence prevention policies and organizational response protocols.

Policies should provide definitions and examples of workplace violence and make it clear that such acts are strictly prohibited. Naturally, consequences should also be clearly spelled out. Supervisors and employees should receive adequate training regarding operational protocols pertaining to actual or potential workplace violence episodes.

*One intention of this newsletter is to help employers and employees navigate the consequences of addiction while pursuing holistic health solutions.*

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### Liberty EAP Problems Covered Include:

- Personal or job related stress
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Psychological problems
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Relationship problems
- Marital difficulties
- Family conflicts
- Parenting issues
- Child adjustment problems
- Career concerns
- Work-life adjustment matters

Through the use of our toll-free number, clients can readily access services and speak with our intake specialists.

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(800)835-5012  (315)451-5164  
<http://www.LibertyEAP.com>

People need to know what the early warning signs are and what roles they should play. The EAP can play an important role in providing training, helping to manage a potential threat, and by providing Critical Incident Stress Counseling.

Below, we summarize some of the early warning signs for an individual that may pose a risk of committing an act of workplace violence.

## Early Warning Signs

- Direct or veiled threats of harm.
- Intimidating conduct. This may include verbal intimidation such as harassing phone calls, threatening gestures or other patterns of behavior such as stalking.
- The individual tends to use work as a primary source of identity and self-esteem.
- The individual may be unable to take even constructive criticism of their work. They may tend to hold a grudge regarding their evaluation and repeatedly verbalize their discontent in a serious, vehement fashion.
- The individual may believe that others in the company are out to get them.
- The individual may display a sense of moral righteousness. They may view the organization, or key people within it, as not following the proper rules and procedures.
- The individual is often focused on, or obsessed with guns, and will likely own firearms.
- The individual may have a history of substance abuse.
- While the individual may not have a criminal record, they may well have a history of confrontation and intimidation in the workplace.
- The individual may have few social or family supports.

## Behavioral Sequence Leading to Violence

Typically, there is a sequence to violent behavior in the workplace. This sequence may begin with uncooperative behavior, followed by threats and intimidation, then escalating into violence. The person tends to deteriorate over time and then begins to withdraw from others. This process may begin with a significant traumatic event or series of smaller traumas. The problem or event is seen as impossible to solve and the individual casts blame on others rather than themselves. Gradually, the individual may conclude that violence is the only way to accomplish what they perceive as justice.

## A Team Effort

Most importantly, there needs to be the recognition that no company official should have to deal with potential workplace violence episodes alone. This is a task that truly needs to be a team effort. The Liberty EAP (1-800-835-5012) can help with valuable consultation as part of your company's threat management team, as well as providing input to help deal effectively with a crisis, once it has occurred.

## When a Crisis Occurs

Episodes of workplace violence, employee fatalities, serious accidents, acts of terrorism, or other unanticipated workplace tragedies can happen at any time. The manner in which management handles such situations will play an important role, not only for setting a “tone of human recovery,” but also for minimizing potential legal and financial consequences. Most such situations require immediate, effective intervention and leadership from Human Resource Managers or other designated personnel. It is also important to remember that EAP Professionals are available for consultation and intervention in the form of Critical Incident Stress Counseling by calling 1-800-835-5012.

There are some important principles that managers should keep in mind following a workplace crisis. They include:

- 1) Spend time gaining an accurate understanding of what happened and only communicate the facts as you acquire them. It is especially important to avoid communicating hunches or conjecture.
- 2) Refer to the incident with concrete language such as death, injury or shooting. Once you know the facts, avoid vague terms such as “incident” which tend to foster mistrust. Remember, over time most people will learn what really happened anyway.
- 3) Point out that different people will respond differently to a tragedy. Remind workers that it is advisable not to be judgmental of the reactions of others.
- 4) As noted above, consultation with the EAP can be an invaluable part of your workplace crisis response plan. You may need to talk about your own feelings regarding the situation, either with a colleague or an EAP counselor.
- 5) Allow employees the opportunity to talk about their feelings and concerns. Some people may want to talk in person, others on the phone. Liberty EAP counselors can provide both on-site and off-site services in such situations.
- 6) Begin to communicate a sense of healing and recovery as a process to be cultivated by a coherent team. Do your best to model this sense of healing in moving forward in an unmistakable but respectful, gradual manner.
- 7) Provide employees a sense of direction and structure, tempered with reasonable flexibility in progressing gradually back to a full work schedule. Simple, concrete tasks can often foster a sense of normalcy. Most people respond best to a temporal middle ground. Rushing them back to full production too quickly might foster a sense of alienation and resentment against management as uncaring. However, too much time removed from work can also be deleterious to a sense of recovery.

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# Managing Anger

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Anger is a natural emotion that is an integral part of our basic fight or flight survival mechanism. Genetic, physiological, cultural and family factors all influence the way we experience and manage this powerful emotion.

Effectively managing anger is one of the most important responsibilities a human being must learn to master. Our success in doing so influences our level of safety, the degree of violence in our lives, our academic and occupational success, as well as opportunities for enjoyment and peace of mind.

Below we offer some simple suggestions for managing anger effectively. However, if you find that you are angry much of the time, argue excessively, or are prone to violent conflicts, you might seriously consider contacting the EAP at 1-800-835-5012. Remember the EAP is both free of charge and confidential.

## Anger Management Tips

(1) The first step in dealing with anger is to develop an awareness of your own anger and accept responsibility for it. We have a tendency to say that someone or something “made” us mad. But in the final analysis it is our anger and we must take responsibility for it.

(2) Learning to recognize your own patterns of anger is also an important prerequisite in assuming responsibility for your anger. The following questions may be helpful:

- When do you get angry? What people or situations provoke your anger?
- Do you know you are angry right away or do you act first and only afterward realize you were angry?
- Do you stay angry for a long time in some situations but not in others?
- Does your anger sometimes help you get things you want?
- What does it take to cause your anger to cease? Are there specific things that someone else must say or do?
- Can you express your anger effectively but respectfully?
- Do you almost always express your anger, even over the smallest of slights?
- Have you ever felt addicted to your anger?

(3) Learning effective relaxation techniques can frequently help to reduce the agitation that fuels and sustains an angry response pattern. There are many ways to achieve relaxation that include breathing techniques, the use of imagery, postural adjustments, working out, music and changes to the environmental ambiance. Your EAP counselor can help you learn these techniques. Some simple steps you can try include:

- Breathe deeply, from your diaphragm. Try to imagine your breath coming up from your “gut.” Keep in mind that breathing from your chest won’t afford you the same level of relaxation as breathing deeply from your diaphragm.
- Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase such as “relax,” “mellow,” “peace,” “easy,” or “calm” while breathing deeply.
- Use imagery to visualize a relaxing experience, such as a serene nature scene.
- Non-strenuous, slow yoga-like exercises can also relax your muscles and make you feel much calmer.
- Spend some time alone regrouping. Closing the door and your eyes while listening to soft music for fifteen minutes can go a long way in helping some people rejuvenate.

(4) Work on learning how to communicate your grievances in a manner that is open to problem solving with the person with whom you are angry. If you happen to find yourself in a heated discussion, pause, take a deep breath, and direct

yourself to convey a message that might be productive rather than necessarily saying the first thing that comes into your mind. Try to avoid statements whose sole purpose is to hurt the other person.

(5) Try to cultivate a sense of humor that is not sarcastic. A good sense of humor can help defuse your anger and reduce perceived insults into more realistic proportions. Paradoxically, learning to laugh at yourself can help you take your own health and wellbeing more seriously.

(6) Be willing to bring closure to arguments and learn how to forgive. This means accepting some imperfection and recognizing your inability to control all situations and other people's reactions.

Please keep in mind that should you need assistance in learning to manage your anger more effectively, your EAP can help (1-800-835-5012).

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## When Violence Touches You

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### Common Stresses and Solutions

If you have been the victim of violence, you might be wondering what to do, how to recover and how to regain strength. Some people seem naturally resilient, but we have no way of knowing in advance how we will behave in or feel about a crisis. Your experience is your own.

You might have to deal with a wide range of negative emotions before you are on your way to recovery. You can help your own progress by identifying and acknowledging your feelings about the crime, learning the importance of making your own decisions again, and following suggestions for help.

### Acknowledge Your Feelings

You may find yourself wanting to deny that the violence happened. You may be angry at yourself, somehow blaming yourself for the crime. After all, if you accept that you were a victim and that someone was able to hurt you, you have to accept that it could happen again. Such feelings are frightening and make us feel inadequate to protect ourselves. In some ways it's easier to pretend that the violence never happened, or to direct anger toward ourselves for "letting it happen."

### Make Decisions

You might be called upon to make many decisions quickly. These decisions include cooperating with the authorities, hiring an attorney or choosing medical care. Make as many of your own decisions as you can. Try not to let others pressure you. The course of actions is yours to take. Sometimes it's very difficult for others to understand your decisions, especially when others are sure they'd do it another way. But, by making as many decisions as you feel you can handle, you'll be regaining self-esteem and control over your own life. The desire to make own decisions, if you are able, is a step to recovery.

## Getting Support

Those around you want to support and care for you at this difficult time. Understand that they, too, might have feelings of vulnerability that are brought on by your experience. Sometimes these feelings interfere with judgment and their ability to provide unconditional support. Take advantage of any positive support that others can give you, but if you feel the need, don't hesitate to talk to a professional counselor at the EAP (1-800-835-5012). Together, the people around you can help you regain self-esteem, a sense of control and resume a healthy life.

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# Liberty EAP

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