

MARION COUNTY SAFETY MANUAL ANNEX D – WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Overview

For years workplace violence has been pushed to the back burner and ignored by many just because it hasn't occurred here yet doesn't mean it can't. Nearly 1,000 workers are murdered and 1.5 million workers are assaulted in the workplace each year. Employees cannot afford to ignore the possibility of workplace violence any longer.

Types of Workplace Violence

There are four (4) types of workplace violence and each type requires a different preventative measure.

1. Violence by Strangers: This is the most common type of workplace violence and involves an assailant who has no legitimate relationship to the business. This person usually enters the workplace to commit a robbery or other criminal act.
2. Violence by Customers/Clients: The assailant in these cases can be current or former customers or clients, including inmates and criminal suspects, of the business. The victims are workers who provide direct services to the public, such as law enforcement and healthcare providers.
3. Violence by Co-workers: The assailant can be a current or former employee, supervisor or manager. The individual is usually seeking revenge for what is perceived as unfair treatment.
4. Violence by Personal Relations: This person has a troubled relationship with an employee outside of work and will violently confront the worker at the employment site. These relations include current or former spouses, lovers, relatives, friends or acquaintances.

In the event that workplace violence should occur, employees shall notify 911 of the situation. The employee(s) will then notify their department head or supervisor who will notify the County Risk Manager.

How to Reduce/Prevent Workplace Violence

Below you will find a five (5) step plan for reducing and preventing workplace violence:

1. Understand the mindset of the potentially violent person: Try to put yourself in the aggressor's situation. Some people can deal with situations such as being fired better than others. Remember that even if the aggressor is wrong, he/she still has a compelling need to communicate their grievance at that moment.
2. Take the moral high road: Establish a cooperative atmosphere that is free of anger, fear or anxiety. Talk in a calm voice in an attempt to set an example of accepted behavior. Be truthful with the person as you do not want to lose credibility at this point.
3. Listen to the person without interruption, comment or judgment: Offer the person a private place to talk. Ask the person to have a seat and maintain full eye contact with the individual throughout the discussion. Show that you are interested in hearing what the person has to say. This will help you gain their trust and possibly reduce the likelihood of a violent situation.
4. Allow the person to suggest a solution: An aggravated person will be more likely to agree to a resolution that he or she has helped formulate. You may be surprised that the person's suggestions may be very reasonable.
5. Move toward a win-win solution: Make the situation seem favorable for both you and the aggressor. Try to get something for something. This will de-escalate the situation and hopefully allow for a calm resolution.

Training and Prevention

Department heads should take the time to train all employees on how to recognize potentially violent behavior, how to report it, how to defuse a potentially violent situation and what to do after workplace violence occurs. Training is the single most effective method of prevention.