



PharMerica



Combat Workplace Violence

During the Pandemic

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What You'll Learn

Even prior to COVID-19, cases of workplace violence were on the rise. From threats and intimidation to assault and shootings, violence has been a growing concern among employers in all industries. And workers in healthcare settings face significant risks. From 2002 to 2013, the rate of serious workplace violence incidents was more than four times greater for healthcare workers compared to those in private industry. As tensions mount over the financial repercussions and psychological stressors of the pandemic, violence could spike as well, especially in the hard-hit long-term care industry.

Learn ways your facility can improve staff safety and patient well-being.



9% of nurses are concerned
for their physical safety at work.

– American Nurses Association Health Risk Appraisal

The Threat of Workplace Violence

The World Bank recently said the global economy will experience the deepest recession since the Second World War following COVID-19 and the shutdown measures to contain it. Economic hardship, workplace stressors in long-term care, and a heightened sense of fear are placing an **enormous strain on individuals.**

Americans bought about two million guns in March 2020, according to a New York Times analysis of federal data, the second-busiest month ever for gun sales. – New York Times



Verbal expressions of anger include:

Arguing ● Cursing ● Yelling ● Sarcasm

– American Psychological Association

As the pandemic increases the emotional toll on individuals' lives, the risk of violence rises as well. In addition to sadness, depression, and anxiety, one of the common emotions experienced during COVID-19 is anger. According to an article in *Psychology Today*, anger is associated with a variety of violent acts, including homicide, aggravated assault, rape, domestic violence, child abuse, bullying, torture and terrorism. **And one-sixth of violent crimes occur in the workplace.**

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health describes **four main types of workplace violence**.

- **Criminal Intent:** In these cases, there is no relationship to the business and violence typically occurs in connection with another crime like robbery.
- **Patient/Client/Visitor:** Disgruntled individuals who the organization serves are the most common cause of violence in healthcare settings.
- **Personal:** This category of violence involves a perpetrator who does not have any connection to the business except for their relationship with an employee outside of work, such as a spouse.
- **Worker-on-Worker:** These types of incidents involve current or former workers who engage in violent acts in the workplace against an employee.

When an incident of violence occurs against a worker in a facility, the ramifications can be extensive. Not only may employees suffer injuries that require medical treatment or cause them to miss work, according to OSHA, violence can lead to other issues. **For example:**

- **Caregiver fatigue, injury and stress are correlated with a higher risk of medication errors and patient infections**
- **Injuries and stress are common factors behind caregivers leaving the profession**

While not all violence in the workplace can be prevented, there are steps facilities can take to help minimize the threat.





Promoting Safety in Your Facility

To reduce the risk of workplace violence during the pandemic, here are some steps facilities can take to protect those in their environment.

- **Have a Workplace Policy:** Establish a written zero-tolerance policy that outlines your stance on violence, the conduct expected of employees, and consequences for violation, and share it with all workers. To demonstrate leadership support, administrators and front-line supervisors should reiterate that violence is unacceptable and will result in consequences.

- **Provide Training:** Facilities should lead training on how to recognize and report warning signs like changes in behavior, de-escalation techniques, and what to do in case of emergency.

- **Record Incidents:** Keeping track of any incidents can help identify trends, training needs, and opportunities for improvement to prevent similar problems in the future.

Install Security Systems: Conduct regular assessments to evaluate all facility areas inside and out as well as security measures in place or that should be considered like silent alarms, video surveillance, and locks on doors.

- **Identify Risk in Hiring and Firing:** Train hiring managers on how to conduct effective background investigations and reference checks when hiring as well as how to terminate employees, including topics such as handling employee grievances and conflict resolution.

Since workplace violence can adversely affect the health and well-being of everyone in a facility, preventing incidents will not only improve the working conditions of staff, but the living conditions of patients as well.

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