

Workplace Violence Prevention

Lesson 1: Objectives

At the end of the course, participants will be able to:

- ❖ Define workplace violence;
- ❖ List risk factors associated with violence in healthcare organizations;
- ❖ Identify workplace violence prevention measures;
- ❖ Detail how to keep safe when encountering verbal or physical violence or the potential for violence;
- ❖ Define lateral violence and its negative effects; and
- ❖ Describe the importance of reporting all incidences of workplace violence.

Introduction

Workplace violence is any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site. Workplace violence ranks among the top four causes of death in the workplace and is a major concern for employers and employees. Health care workers face significant risks of workplace violence. The rate of serious workplace violence incidents is more than four times greater in healthcare than in private industry. In fact, health care accounts for nearly as many serious violent injuries as all other industries combined. Many more assaults or threats go unreported. Forms of violence to health care workers include biting, kicking, punching, pushing, pinching, shoving, scratching, spitting, name calling, intimidating, threatening, yelling, harassing, stalking, beating, choking, stabbing and killing. Possible sources of violence include patients/residents, visitors, intruders, and even coworkers.

Lesson 2: Risk Factors

While no specific diagnosis or type of patient/resident predicts future violence, studies show that inpatient and acute psychiatric services, geriatric long-term care settings, high volume urban emergency departments and residential and day social services present the highest risks. Risk factors for health care workers include:

- Individuals in pain, who have been given a devastating prognosis, or whose disease is progressing;
- Individuals in unfamiliar surroundings;
- Working directly with people who have a history of violence, abuse drugs or alcohol, gang members, and relatives of patients/residents or clients;
- Individuals with altered mental status or mental illness;
- Patients in police custody;
- Transporting patients/residents and clients;
- Working alone in a facility or in a patient's home;

- Poor environmental design of the workplace that may block employees' vision or interfere with their escape from a violent incident;
- Poorly lit corridors, rooms, parking lots and other areas;
- Lack of means of emergency communication;
- Presence of firearms, knives and other weapons among patients/residents and their families and friends;
- Working in neighborhoods with high crime rates;
- Lack of policies and staff training for recognizing and managing escalating hostile and assaultive behaviors from patients/residents, clients, visitors, or staff;
- Working when understaffed—especially during mealtimes and visiting hours;
- High worker turnover;
- Inadequate security and mental health personnel on site;
- Long waits and overcrowded, uncomfortable waiting rooms;
- Unrestricted movement of the public within the facility; and the
- Perception that violence is tolerated, and victims will not be able to report the incident to police and/or press charges.

LESSON 3: Workplace Violence Prevention

Workplace violence comes at a high cost. In addition to the cost of workers compensation, increased insurance premiums, and lawsuits, workplace violence results in low staff morale and high worker turnover.

Your organization has a comprehensive workplace violence prevention program. The program has full support of management and includes worker involvement. Your organization has performed an assessment to identify existing and potential hazards that may lead to incidents of workplace violence and has committed to preventing or controlling these hazards. Recordkeeping and ongoing evaluation help determine the program's effectiveness and identify any deficiencies or changes that should be made. All staff members are informed of potential hazards and taught how to protect themselves and their coworkers.

LESSON 4: Keep Yourself Safe

Health care workers must be alert and ready to act when they encounter verbal or physical violence, or the potential for violence. Your response to defensive behavior is often the key to avoiding a physical confrontation with someone who has lost control of their behavior.

- Be empathic and nonjudgmental – Do not judge or discount someone's feelings.
- Respect personal space - If possible, stand 1.5 to three feet away from the person. If you must enter someone's personal space, explain your actions so the person feels less confused and frightened.

- Use nonthreatening nonverbals – Be aware of your gestures, facial expressions, movements, and tone of voice.
- Avoid overreacting - Remain calm, rational, and professional.
- Focus on feelings - How a person feels is the heart of the matter.
- Ignore challenging questions – When a person challenges your authority, redirect their attention to the issue at hand.
- Set limits - If a person's behavior is belligerent, defensive, or disruptive, give them clear, simple, and enforceable limits. Offer concise and respectful choices and consequences.
- Choose wisely what you insist upon – Decide which rules are negotiable and which are not.
- Allow silence for reflection – Give the person a chance to reflect on what's happening, and how he or she needs to proceed. And,
- Allow time for decisions - Give the person a few moments to think through what you've said.

Quiz Question:

Select all of the appropriate responses to defensive behavior.

Discount the individual's feelings

Be judgmental

***Stand 1.5 to 3 feet away from the person**

Put your hands in a fist

***Remain calm**

Defend yourself when asked challenging questions

***Offer choices and consequences**

***Give the person a chance to reflect on what's happening**

***Give the person a few moments to think through what you've said**

***Decide which rules are negotiable and which are not**

LESSON 5: Lateral Violence

Lateral violence is the deliberate and harmful behavior demonstrated in the workplace by one employee to another. Lateral violence is a significant problem in the nursing profession and includes name calling, threatening body language, fault finding, negative criticism, gossip, shouting, blaming, put-downs, rolling of the eyes, unfair assignments, refusing to work with certain people, sabotage and exclusion. Lateral violence negatively impacts both the work environment and the nurse's ability to deliver care. This violence has also caused many nurses to leave their profession. Nurses are encouraged to resolve personal and/or professional pain, build therapeutic relationships, and promote positive work environments. As nurses promote health in their patients/residents, they must also promote health in themselves and one another.

Quiz Question:

Select all of the ways lateral violence can impact the work environment.

- *Negatively impacts the work environment**
- *Negatively impacts the nurse's ability to deliver care**
- *Causes many nurses to leave their profession**

Builds therapeutic relationships

Promotes positive work environments

LESSON 6: Reporting

Violence against health care workers is grossly underreported. Many healthcare workers feel a professional and ethical duty to “do no harm” to patients/residents. Some will put their own safety and health at risk to help a patient/resident and consider violence to be “part of the job.” Healthcare workers also recognize that many injuries caused by patients/residents are unintentional and accept them as routine or unavoidable. Workplace violence is never acceptable. When violence occurs report it! Notify leadership, security, and, if needed, law enforcement.

Quiz Question:

Workplace violence is never acceptable.

***True** or False

LESSON 7: Joint Commission Requirements

(NOTE: This lesson may be removed for your organization.)

Intimidating and unprofessional behaviors can foster medical errors, contribute to poor patient/resident satisfaction and to preventable adverse outcomes, increase the cost of care, and cause qualified clinicians, administrators and managers to seek new positions in more professional environments. Safety and quality of care is dependent on teamwork, communication, and a collaborative work environment. To assure quality and to promote a culture of safety, healthcare organizations must address the problem of behaviors that threaten the performance of the health care team including workplace violence. Take a stand: No more violence to health care workers!

LESSON 8: Conclusion

(NOTE: You may wish to display the contact information for the appropriate personnel within your organization.)

Violence in the healthcare arena has reached an astonishing level. It is the responsibility of employees, employers, and corporate and government agencies to

provide protection for all healthcare staff. If you have questions regarding violence prevention programs at your organization, contact the appropriate personnel for guidance and assistance.

Test Questions (10 questions Pre-Test or 5 questions Post-Test)

Pool 1 (6 or 3 questions)

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Workplace violence occurs at the work site and is any act or threat of:
 - a. Physical violence.
 - b. Harassment.
 - c. Intimidation.
 - d. All of the above.

2. Workplace violence comes at a high cost to the organization through:
 - a. Workers compensation settlements.
 - b. Increased insurance premiums.
 - c. Lawsuits.
 - d. All of the above.

3. A potentially violent situation may be de-escalated by:
 - a. Staying calm.
 - b. Being empathetic.
 - c. Respecting personal space.
 - d. All of the above.

4. A potentially violent situation may be escalated by:
 - a. Putting your hands in a fist.
 - b. Offering choices and consequences.
 - c. Giving the person a chance to reflect on what's happening.
 - d. Giving the person a few moments to think through what you've said.

5. Lateral violence can impact the work environment in which of the following ways?
 - a. Builds therapeutic relationships.
 - b. Promotes positive work environments.
 - c. Negatively impacts the nurse's ability to deliver care.
 - d. Encourages the nurse to stay in their current profession.

6. As a victim of lateral violence, you should:
 - a. Use the PASS technique.
 - b. Talk about the incident with your coworkers.
 - c. Report the incident to your supervisor.
 - d. Threaten the offender.

Pool 2 (4 or 2 questions)

TRUE/FALSE

7. Violence in the workplace is a financial burden for the healthcare organization.
8. An increasing number of healthcare staff are being subjected to violent situations.
9. Every employee in a healthcare organization has the right to a safe and healthy work environment.
10. Health care workers face significant risks of workplace violence.
11. Workplace violence only occurs in the emergency department.
12. Lateral violence includes incidents between coworkers in which psychological injury is inflicted.
13. Workplace violence results in low staff morale and high worker turnover.
14. Violence against health care workers is grossly underreported.

Workplace Violence Prevention - Clinics

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