

Workplace Violence Prevention Checklist

More than one million Americans are physically assaulted at work each year. The costs associated with workplace violence averages over \$18 billion annually. Effective prevention initiatives are necessary to avoid the consequences of workplace violence. The following checklist provides guidelines for evaluating the risks and warning signs in current and prospective employees, as well as how employees should respond in a violent situation.

Pre-Employment Screening

When considering potential employees a thorough background check should be conducted. Pre-employment screening could include:

- Reference checks
- Employment verification
- Criminal history and credit reports
- Drug screening
- Physical and psychological examination

Behavioral Warning Signs

In addition to screening for past incidents, evaluating the behavior of both prospective and current employees can present warnings of potential violence. Signs to be aware of include:

- Intimidating, harassing, or other aggressive behavior
- Conflicts with co-workers, customers and supervisors
- Fascination with guns or other weapons
- Statements indicating desperation over personal or work circumstances
- Direct or disguised threats of harm or violence
- Substance abuse
- Extreme behavioral changes or mood swings
- Low self-esteem
- Paranoia or destructive behavior
- Persistent anger
- Excessive tardiness and reduced productivity
- Changes in health and hygiene

Workplace Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures must be established to train employees to react to situations of workplace violence. Guidelines for employees should contain:

- Establishing a zero tolerance policy regarding threats and violent behavior
- An anonymous process for reporting violent tendencies or threats, which managers can thoroughly investigate before determining a response or consequence
- A handbook outlining clear standards of conduct and performance
- Procedures for notifying the proper authorities, security personnel and the police, as well as contact information for quick reference during a crisis
- Process for attaining counseling from both internal and external sources
- A training program addressing:
 - Communication skills
 - Identifying and evaluating potential hazards
 - Preventing or defusing volatile situations or aggressive behavior
 - Conflict resolution
 - Anger and stress management