

5 VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE



PURPOSE

Nearly two million American workers report being victims of workplace violence each year. Unfortunately, young workers are exposed to violence on the job too often. This activity highlights the various types of workplace violence and includes scenarios in which young workers can discuss the way they would handle violent situations. This activity is best executed when examples of your own workplace policies can be substituted for the suggested answers.

ACTIVITY TIME

Approximately 15 minutes

PREPARATION

- Handouts are included in the activity book on pages 6–8. Alternatively, you can print the handouts from the website. The handouts can be found at: **www.promotingusafetyhealth.com** Click on "Start the Conversation Activities," then find the "Violence in the Workplace" activity and click on the "Handout" link. Print one copy of the handout for every three staff members attending the training, letter size, double sided.
- Print PUSH Cards.

DIRECTIONS

Supervisor reads out loud

Supervisor reads out loud-

SUPERVISOR READS QUESTION

- ✘ *Do not read out loud*



**OREGON HEALTHY
WORKFORCE CENTER**

A NIOSH CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

PUSH is an Oregon Healthy Workforce Center Project funded through the NIOSH Total Worker Health Center of Excellence Grant U19OH10154.

© Oregon Health & Science University and University of Iowa, 2016

BACKGROUND

In every workplace, there is a chance that violence can occur.

In violent situations, people in the workplace are physically or emotionally put at risk by an employer, fellow employee, or someone outside of work such as a customer, former employee, or domestic partner of an employee.

Some workplaces pose a greater risk for violence than others, especially environments that deal with money or the public.

There are many forms of violence:

- ⊖ Threatening behavior
- ⊖ Verbal or written threats
- ⊖ Harassment and bullying
- ⊖ Verbal abuse
- ⊖ Physical attacks
- ⊖ Intimidation

ACTIVITY

While these may sound extreme, these situations can happen anywhere, even in a workplace like ours. This is why we need to be prepared for any situation.

Remember, you deserve to work in a safe and non-threatening environment. If you ever feel threatened in any way, please let me or any of the supervisors know.

Now we are going to do an activity!

- ✦ *Split the group into roughly 3 equal groups.*

Each group will have a workplace violence scenario. Someone from the group will read the scenario and questions out loud to the rest of the group. Another person should record the answers, and a third person will present the answers when we're all finished.

- ✦ *Hand out scenarios or ask staff to turn to pages 6–8 in their activity workbooks.*
- ✦ *Give staff about 5 minutes to read through scenarios and answer the questions in their group. When they look like they have answered all the questions, bring their attention back to you.*

Let's come back together and discuss each scenario.

Can someone from Group 1 read their scenario?

- ✦ *After they finish reading, ask the group reporter these questions. When the group reporter answers, ask the larger group if they agree.*

ANSWERS SCENARIO 1

Molly got a new job at a restaurant. One day, she is unable to work her shift, so she arranges for a substitute, but forgets to tell her supervisor. The supervisor calls to yell at her for not remembering something so simple. Molly apologizes, but in the following weeks, her supervisor continues to make inappropriate comments and Molly doesn't think he'll stop.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THIS EXAMPLE OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

Answer: The substitute staff member, Molly, and her supervisor.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT MOLLY SHOULD DO IN RESPONSE?

- ✘ *Discuss your own workplace protocol.*

Answers may include:

- ☉ Molly should talk with another supervisor, someone in HR or someone higher up.
- ☉ Molly should document the supervisor's behavior.
- ☉ Molly needs to stay calm and not to make the situation more difficult by reacting to the supervisor in anger.

WHO SHOULD MOLLY TALK TO ABOUT THIS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

- ✘ *Call on staff; include your own workplace protocol.*

Answer: If there is another supervisor in the workplace, then Molly should talk to them about her supervisor's behavior. She could also talk to her parents about the situation. Molly deserves to work in a healthy environment free from verbal abuse from her supervisor. Molly can speak up to get the help she needs.

Good work! Now, can someone from Group 2 read their scenario?

- ✘ *After they finish reading, ask the group reporter these questions. When the group reporter answers, ask the larger group if they agree:*

ANSWERS SCENARIO 2

Devon is a new staff member at the local mall. He notices that two teenage customers are beginning to yell at each other and punch each other.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THIS EXAMPLE OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

Answer: Violence begins between two customers/patrons.

WHAT ARE 3 THINGS THAT DEVON SHOULD DO IN RESPONSE?

- ✘ *Call on staff; incorporate your workplace's policies.*

Answers may vary, but may include:

- ☉ Devon needs to stay calm.
- ☉ Devon should not get physically involved in the fight (e.g., breaking up the fight).
- ☉ Devon should call mall security.

WHO SHOULD DEVON TALK TO ABOUT THIS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

Answer: His supervisor, HR, and mall security.

- ✘ *Call on staff.*

Good work! Now, can someone from Group 3 read their scenario?

- ✘ *After they finish reading, ask the group reporter these questions. When the group reporter answers, ask the larger group if they agree:*

ANSWERS SCENARIO 3

Sarah is working the front desk at a local swimming pool. A patron tries to leave the facility with a pool toy that clearly belongs to the pool. Sarah asks the patron if the toy is hers and the patron yells, "Who do you think you are to ask me that? Do you think I stole this or something? Of course it's mine!"

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THIS EXAMPLE OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

Answer: Sarah and the pool patron.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER THINGS THAT SARAH SHOULD DO IN RESPONSE?

✘ *Include your own workplace policy.*

Answer: She needs to keep calm and:

- ☞ Ask the patron if she accidentally picked up the wrong toy.
- ☞ Get assistance from her supervisor.
- ☞ Report the issue to the supervisor or person in charge.
- ☞ If Sarah feels threatened, she has the right to back down and let the patron go. Sarah is not required to be a security guard.

WHAT SHOULD SARAH TELL HER SUPERVISOR?

Answer: Sarah should try to report the incident with as much detail as possible. She should describe the patron in detail and recall everything the patron said and did. Sarah should also describe how she responded to the patron.

Great work!

Remember, you deserve to have a safe and non-threatening work environment. Stay calm when you are in a threatening situation and please report it, no matter how serious, to me or another supervisor.

PUSH FORWARD

✘ *Pass out PUSH cards.*

On your card is a link to the Promoting U through Safety and Health page (www.promotingusafetyhealth.com). If you follow this page you can learn about other ways to stay safe at home and at work.

5 VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE HANDOUTS

**5 VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE
HANDOUT**

PU
PROMOTING U THROUGH
SH
SAFETY AND HEALTH

GROUP 1

DIRECTIONS
Designate one person to read aloud the scenario, one person to take notes, and one person to report your answer.

Molly got a new job at a restaurant. One day she was talking to her supervisor. The supervisor calls to her the following weeks, her supervisor continues to call her.

QUESTIONS

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THIS EXAMPLE OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT MOLLY SHOULD DO IN RESPONSE?

WHO SHOULD MOLLY TALK TO ABOUT THIS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

**5 VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE
HANDOUT**

PU
PROMOTING U THROUGH
SH
SAFETY AND HEALTH

GROUP 2

DIRECTIONS
Designate one person to read aloud the scenario, one person to take notes, and one person to report your answer.

Devon is a new staff member at the local mall. He is talking to a staff member who punches each other.

QUESTIONS

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THIS EXAMPLE OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT DEVON SHOULD DO IN RESPONSE?

WHO SHOULD DEVON TALK TO ABOUT THIS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

**5 VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE
HANDOUT**

PU
PROMOTING U THROUGH
SH
SAFETY AND HEALTH

GROUP 3

DIRECTIONS
Designate one person to read aloud the scenario, one person to take notes, and one person to report your answer.

Sarah is working the front desk at the swimming pool. A patron walks out of the locker rooms with a pool toy that clearly belongs to the pool. Sarah asks the patron if the toy is hers and the patron bursts out yelling, "Who do you think you are to ask me that? Do you think I stole this or something? Of course it's mine!"

QUESTIONS

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THIS EXAMPLE OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT SARAH SHOULD DO IN RESPONSE?

WHAT SHOULD SARAH TELL HER SUPERVISOR?