



INSTITUTE FOR HOMELAND SECURITY



**Sam Houston
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SAFE & SECURE ADDRESSING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Institute for Homeland Security

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Summary

Workplace violence entails any act or threat of violence, verbal abuse, or physical assaults towards individuals at work. This could arise from criminal intent, customer/client interactions, worker-on-worker disputes, or personal relationships. Industries dealing with the public, money handling, lone work, or operating in high-crime areas face elevated risk.

It is critical for organizations to have preventive policies for workplace violence that include risk assessments, enhanced security measures, and employee training for recognizing and addressing potential violence. A culture of open communication, respect, and confidential incident reporting should be promoted.

Workplace violence response plans must be comprehensive, encompassing support for affected employees, incident investigations, law enforcement engagement, and suitable disciplinary actions. Regular training should focus on prevention, recognition of warning signs, situation de-escalation, and incident reporting. Special training should be provided for management and HR to handle sensitive situations and support affected staff.

Post-incident support, including counseling, flexible work arrangements, and trauma coping resources, is crucial. Regular policy review and update are necessary for legal compliance and interdepartmental collaboration. Thorough background checks for potential hires are recommended.

Early detection of warning signs, such as aggressive behavior, verbal threats, weapon possession, substance abuse, or sudden behavioral changes, can prevent violence and promote a safer workplace.

Prevention and response strategies involve fostering a safe environment through conflict resolution, employee assistance programs, and active employee participation. Emphasis should be on zero-tolerance for violence, regular training, and policy communication to all staff.

Emergency preparedness requires response plans for violent incidents, regular drills, physical security assessments, and updates. Constant evaluation of implemented strategies, promotion of diversity and inclusivity, collaboration with external agencies, and ongoing communication with employees are key.

It's beneficial to recognize and reward employees for maintaining safety, promoting overall well-being, adapting measures for remote employees, monitoring social media, and conducting post-incident analysis. Benchmarking, implementing visible security measures, promoting open communication, involving employees in strategy development, providing whistleblower protection, and offering customized training are also necessary.

The strategy should encompass mental health support, clear behavior expectations, policy reviews, awareness campaigns, and exit interviews. Cross-functional teams should be established, external consultants engaged, incidents tracked, a crisis management plan developed, communication channels established, educational materials provided, safety drills conducted, and partnerships with community organizations formed.

Organizational leadership must promote a safety culture and be accountable for implementing initiatives. A proactive approach to workplace violence prevention can enhance organizational performance, reputation, employee satisfaction, and retention rates, while building trust and credibility, reducing legal risks, fostering engagement, and boosting overall resilience.

Introduction

Workplace violence has become a topic with more acknowledgment in today's dynamic and diverse work environments. Unfortunately, it is a topic that is making news headlines more and more in the past couple of years, due to the increase of violent acts in the workplace.

Workplace violence is not just a topic but reality in many organizations, no matter the size or the industry. According to National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, workplace violence has always been seen as a social problem when it should be seen as a serious workplace hazard. Exposure to violence is never an acceptable consequence from earning a living, and prevention is the ultimate goal (NIOSH, 2017). A part of our ongoing commitment to fostering a positive and secure workplace, we have conducted a comprehensive analysis of violence in the workplace, aiming to raise awareness, identify effective prevention strategies, and provide practical guidance for employers and employees alike (NIOSH, 2021). This report aims to provide a thorough understanding of workplace violence, its potential impact on our workforce, and the best practices to mitigate risks and promote a culture of safety (FBI, 2004).

The report is organized into three main sections, each focusing on a critical aspect of workplace violence prevention and response. The first section presents an overview of workplace violence, including its various forms, risk factors, and potential consequences (OSHA, 2015). This section will provide a foundation for understanding the scope and complexity of the issue and the importance of addressing it proactively.

The second section delves into the practical applicability of our analysis, offering actionable recommendations for employers and employees to implement in their daily operations (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). This section will cover a range of strategies, from policy development and employee training to communication and incident response, aiming to provide a comprehensive toolkit for promoting a safe and secure work environment.

Finally, the report's third section focuses on the Texas perspective, examining regional trends, challenges, and success stories in addressing workplace violence (Texas Department of Insurance, n.d.). By exploring the unique context of our state, we aim to identify valuable insights and best practices that can be adapted and applied to various industries and organizations across Texas.

Through this report, we aspire to contribute to the ongoing efforts to create a safer, more inclusive, and supportive work environment for all employees, ultimately enhancing productivity, employee satisfaction, and organizational success (OSHA, 2015; NIOSH, 2021; ASIS/SHRM, 2011).

What Are the Key Aspects Of Workplace Violence

What is Workplace Violence?

We will start by defining workplace violence. Workplace violence refers to any act or threat of violence, ranging from verbal abuse to physical assaults, directed towards people at work or on duty (NIOSH). This can include verbal abuse, physical assaults, or psychological trauma involving employees, clients, customers, or visitors.

Workplace violence can be broadly classified into four categories: a. Criminal intent: Violence perpetrated by someone with no legitimate relationship with the business or its employees (FBI, 2004). b. Customer/client: Violence committed by a client or customer of the business (NIOSH, 2021). c. Worker-on-worker: Workplace violence, including bullying, harassment, and physical aggression (OSHA, 2015). d. Personal relationship: Violence stems from an employee's personal relationships that spill over into the workplace (FBI, 2004).

Some factors that may increase the risk of workplace violence include working with the public, handling money, working alone or in isolated areas, working late at night or during early morning hours, and working in high-crime areas (OSHA, 2015). Industries such as healthcare, social services, retail, and law enforcement are at higher risk (NIOSH, 2021).

Injuries and deaths on the job must be eliminated no matter the cost (NIOSH, 2017). Companies should have clear policies and procedures in place to prevent and address workplace violence (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). This includes conducting risk assessments, implementing security measures, and providing training to employees on recognizing and responding to potentially violent situations (OSHA, 2015). It is the commitment from Management what motivates employee to follow the policies and procedures in the workplace and how the implementation of new security measures and other necessary resources are funded. Management should foster a culture of respect and open communication, where employees feel comfortable reporting incidents or concerns (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). Encourage employees to report workplace violence incidents, whether victims or witnesses (NIOSH, 2021). Establish a confidential reporting system and ensure all complaints are taken seriously and investigated promptly (OSHA, 2015).

Response To Workplace Violence

Employers must be prepared to respond to a workplace violence situation. Since there is no perfect prevention plan, employers must develop a plan that will address potential risks. When developing a comprehensive response plan to address workplace violence incidents, employers must know that even though there is no specific standard for workplace by OSHA, there is a general duty clause that they must comply with. Also, employers must also consider the Common-law principals in order to have a better idea of their responsibility with their employees (OSHA, 2015). The response plan must include supporting affected employees,

conducting investigations, involving law enforcement when necessary, and taking appropriate disciplinary actions against perpetrators (ASIS/SHRM, 2011).

Providing regular training to employees on workplace violence prevention, including how to recognize warning signs, de-escalate potentially violent situations, and report incidents (OSHA, 2015). Management and HR staff should receive additional training on handling sensitive situations and supporting affected employees (NIOSH, 2021).

Warning Signs

In any workplace, employers hold a significant responsibility not just to manage operations and lead teams, but also to ensure the safety and well-being of their employees. One important aspect of this responsibility involves the careful identification of potential risks that could jeopardize the harmonious working environment. This includes recognizing the warning signs of potential workplace violence, as emphasized by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in 2015.

The key to mitigating risks associated with workplace violence is understanding and recognizing the early warning signs. These signs could manifest in various ways and, hence, vigilance in observing and understanding these indicators is crucial.

Aggressive behavior, for example, may not always be overt physical actions; it could also be subtle and passive-aggressive acts like constantly undermining coworkers or intentionally disrupting team dynamics. It's essential to pay attention to such cues and take appropriate action before it escalates into a significant concern.

Verbal threats or intimidating language, another critical sign, can create an atmosphere of fear and anxiety. It's important to address such issues immediately, reminding employees that threats are unacceptable, and may be grounds for disciplinary action or even legal consequences.

Possession of weapons at the workplace is a clear violation of most company policies. If anyone is found carrying a weapon without a valid reason, it should be treated with utmost seriousness, as it could be a sign of an impending violent act.

Substance abuse, often overlooked, is another potential warning sign. Employees struggling with drug or alcohol problems may exhibit erratic behavior and could be at risk of perpetrating violence. Employers should have mechanisms in place to address substance abuse issues, including referral to professional help if needed.

Lastly, sudden, and unexplained changes in mood or behavior can signal underlying issues that may contribute to workplace violence. For instance, an employee who is usually jovial but suddenly becomes withdrawn or aggressive might be under severe stress or dealing with personal issues that could potentially lead to violent incidents.

It's important to understand that early identification and intervention can significantly reduce the risk of workplace violence. Employers should provide training and resources to help employees recognize these signs. Moreover, an open and supportive work environment encourages employees to report unusual behaviors without fear of retribution, making it easier to prevent incidents from escalating.

Identifying these warning signs is not just about preventing violence, but also about creating a safer, healthier, and more productive workplace. By taking the time to educate everyone about these potential indicators, employers can take proactive steps towards fostering a more secure and harmonious working environment.

Post-incident support:

After a workplace violence incident, it is essential to support affected employees (OSHA, 2015). This may include offering counseling services, adjusting work schedules or responsibilities, and helping employees to access resources for coping with trauma. The accessible resources should be also offered to family members of the affected employees who will be also coping with the trauma at home.

It is imperative that after a workplace violent incident policies in place are reviewed and modified accordingly and that the new lessons learned during the incident are used for best practices to avoid future incidents. Continuous improvement: Regularly review and update policies and procedures related to workplace violence prevention, considering new industry best practices, changes in the work environment, and feedback from employees (ASIS/SHRM, 2011).

Legal and regulatory compliance: Ensure that your company's workplace violence prevention and response efforts comply with relevant federal, state, and local laws and regulations, as well as industry-specific guidelines (OSHA, 2015).

It will be important to foster collaboration between different departments, such as HR, security, and facilities management, to ensure everyone works together to maintain a safe work environment (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). Encourage open communication and sharing of best practices across the organization.

Employee screening: Implement thorough background and reference checks for potential hires to identify any history of violent behavior or other red flags (OSHA, 2015).

Extra considerations for second chance hiring

When a company adopts a second chance policy, which allows hiring candidates with criminal records, it introduces a set of unique considerations. While offering opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration into the workforce is important, employers must also balance this with ensuring workplace safety and trust.

Here are some extra considerations that companies should consider when making hiring decisions for candidates with criminal records:

- The nature of the job and the potential risks to safety or security. For example, a company that employs people in customer-facing roles may want to take a closer look at any history of violent behavior.
- The age of the criminal record. A conviction that is decades old may be less relevant to a candidate's current fitness for employment than a more recent conviction.
- The circumstances of the conviction. For example, a conviction for a drug offense that occurred while the candidate was struggling with addiction may be less concerning than a conviction for a violent crime.
- The candidate's rehabilitation efforts. Has the candidate completed any rehabilitation programs or counseling? Are they currently in treatment for any substance abuse or mental health issues?

It is also important to remember that not all criminal records are created equal. Some convictions, such as those for minor traffic offenses, may be considered relatively minor and not have a significant impact on a candidate's suitability for employment. Other convictions, such as those for violent crimes, may be considered more serious and may warrant further investigation.

Ultimately, the decision of whether to hire a candidate with a criminal record is a complex one that should be made on a case-by-case basis. However, by carefully considering the extra considerations outlined above, companies can make more informed decisions about second chance hiring.

In addition to the above, companies with second chance hiring policies may also want to consider the following:

- Providing candidates with the opportunity to explain their criminal record and discuss their rehabilitation efforts.

- Developing a clear and transparent policy on second chance hiring that is communicated to all employees.
- Providing training to managers and HR staff on how to effectively assess candidates with criminal records.

By taking these steps, companies can create a more inclusive workplace and help people with criminal records get a second chance.

Conflict resolution

Provide employees with training and resources on effective conflict resolution techniques (OSHA, 2015). Encouraging respectful communication and problem-solving can help diffuse tense situations and reduce the likelihood of violence.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs): Offer EAPs or other support services to employees who may be struggling with personal issues that could contribute to workplace violence (NIOSH, 2021). Providing resources for stress management, mental health, and substance abuse can help employees manage their personal lives more effectively, reducing the risk of violence at work.

Encourage employees to take an active role in preventing workplace violence by speaking up if they witness inappropriate behavior or providing support to colleagues who may be experiencing difficulties (OSHA, 2015). Bystander intervention can help create a more supportive and inclusive work environment, making it less likely for violence to occur.

Adopt a zero-tolerance policy for workplace violence, making it clear that any form of violence or threatening behavior will not be tolerated (OSHA, 2015). This policy should be communicated to all employees and enforced consistently to create a culture of safety and respect.

Emergency Preparedness

Develop emergency plans for responding to incidents of workplace violence, including lockdown procedures, evacuation plans, and communication strategies (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). Regularly review and practice these plans with employees to ensure that everyone knows what to do in case of an emergency (OSHA, 2015).

Assess the physical security of the workplace and implement necessary measures to protect employees, such as installing security cameras, access control systems, and alarm systems (OSHA, 2015). Regularly review and update these measures to address evolving threats and vulnerabilities (ASIS/SHRM, 2011).

Ongoing evaluation:

Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of your organization's workplace violence prevention and response efforts, using metrics such as incident rates, employee feedback, and participation in training programs (OSHA, 2015). Use this data to identify areas for improvement and adjust your strategies accordingly.

Encourage diversity and inclusivity in the workplace, fostering a culture of understanding and respect for different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences (NIOSH, 2021). A more inclusive work environment can reduce misunderstandings, conflicts, and potential acts of violence.

Collaborate with local law enforcement agencies, emergency responders, and other relevant organizations to develop a comprehensive approach to workplace violence prevention and response (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). Inviting your local law enforcement to your facility and learning any tips that might help in an emergency workplace incident is a good idea because it will strengthen the collaboration's effectiveness. These partnerships can provide additional resources, expertise, and support in case of an incident.

Regularly communicate with employees about the organization's commitment to workplace safety and the steps being taken to prevent and address workplace violence (OSHA, 2015). This helps to create a sense of shared responsibility for maintaining a safe work environment.

Recognition and rewards

Recognize and reward employees who demonstrate a commitment to maintaining a safe and respectful work environment, such as by reporting incidents, supporting affected colleagues, or participating in workplace violence prevention initiatives (NIOSH, 2021). This can help to reinforce positive behaviors and further promote a culture of safety.

Promote overall employee well-being through programs that address physical, emotional, and mental health (OSHA, 2015). A healthier and more resilient workforce is less likely to experience workplace violence or to be negatively affected by it.

With the rise of remote work, it's essential to consider how workplace violence prevention measures can be adapted to protect employees working from home or in other non-traditional settings (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). This may involve providing resources and support for dealing with online harassment, cyberbullying, or other virtual threats.

Social media monitoring: Be aware of potential workplace violence threats that may originate or be communicated through social media platforms (OSHA, 2015). Establish guidelines for monitoring and responding to these threats, while also respecting employee privacy and freedom of expression.

Post-incident analysis

After a workplace violence incident, conduct a thorough analysis to identify the root causes, determine what could have been done differently, and identify any gaps in existing policies and procedures (OSHA, 2015). Use this information to improve your organization's workplace violence prevention and response efforts moving forward.

Benchmarking and best practices

Stay informed about the latest research, best practices, and trends in workplace violence prevention and response (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). Network with similar local companies to learn about their best practices and to see if they are experiencing the same issues as your company. Regularly review your organization's efforts in light of this information and make any necessary adjustments to ensure you provide a safe work environment for all employees.

Finally, effective workplace violence prevention and response requires a strong commitment from organizational leadership (OSHA, 2015). Management should set the tone for a culture of safety and respect, allocate resources to support workplace violence initiatives, and actively participate in the development and implementation of policies and procedures.

Visible security measures: Implement visible security measures, such as security personnel, to deter potential acts of workplace violence (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). The presence of security staff can help employees feel safer and discourage individuals with malicious intent from targeting your workplace.

Encourage open communication and information sharing among employees, management, and security teams (OSHA, 2015). This can help identify potential threats or concerns early on and allow for swift action to address them.

Engage employees in the development, implementation, and ongoing evaluation of workplace violence prevention and response strategies (NIOSH, 2021). This can help ensure that policies and procedures are relevant, practical, and effective in addressing employees' concerns and needs.

Establish and enforce whistleblower protection policies to encourage employees to report workplace violence concerns without fear of retaliation (OSHA, 2015). This can help create a culture of trust and openness where employees feel comfortable coming forward with concerns.

Training

Customized training: Develop customized training programs that cater to the unique needs of your organization and industry (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). Consider the specific risk factors, job

responsibilities, and work environments of your employees when designing and delivering training.

Supervisor training: Provide additional training for supervisors and managers on recognizing and addressing workplace violence concerns (OSHA, 2015). Supervisors play a critical role in modeling appropriate behavior, addressing conflicts, and supporting employees in crisis.

Mental health support: Offer mental health support services to employees, including access to counseling and mental health resources (NIOSH, 2021). This can help employees cope with stress, anxiety, or other issues contributing to workplace violence.

Establish clear expectations for employee behavior and performance, and address issues promptly and consistently (OSHA, 2015). This can help prevent workplace violence by addressing conflicts or performance issues before they escalate.

Regularly review and update your workplace violence prevention policies and procedures to ensure they remain relevant and effective (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). This should involve gathering input from employees, management, and other stakeholders, as well as staying informed about industry best practices and regulatory requirements.

Conduct ongoing awareness campaigns to inform employees about workplace violence prevention and response initiatives (OSHA, 2015). This can include regular updates, posters, newsletters, or other communications emphasizing the importance of maintaining a safe work environment and the steps employees can take to contribute to this goal.

Conduct interviews with departing employees to gather insights into potential workplace violence issues or concerns that may not have been previously reported (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). This information can help identify areas for improvement and address potential problems proactively.

Establish cross-functional teams comprising members from HR, security, management, and other relevant departments to develop and implement workplace violence prevention and response strategies collaboratively (NIOSH, 2021). This can help ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach.

Consider engaging external consultants or experts in workplace violence prevention to review your organization's policies, procedures, and training programs (OSHA, 2015). They can provide valuable insights and recommendations based on their expertise and experience in the field.

Incident tracking: Maintain a system for tracking and analyzing incidents of workplace violence to identify trends, areas of concern, and potential vulnerabilities (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). Use this data to inform your prevention and response efforts and measure the effectiveness of existing strategies.

Crisis management plan

Develop a crisis management plan to guide your organization's response to a major workplace violence incident or other emergency situations (OSHA, 2015). This plan should outline roles and responsibilities, communication protocols, and resources needed to manage the crisis effectively.

Communication channels: Establish clear and accessible communication channels for employees to report workplace violence concerns or incidents (NIOSH, 2021). This can include hotlines, email, or anonymous reporting systems, ensuring that employees feel comfortable coming forward with information.

Provide resources and educational materials to employees on topics related to workplace violence prevention, such as recognizing warning signs, managing stress, and practicing self-care (OSHA, 2015). This can help empower employees to take an active role in maintaining a safe work environment.

Conduct regular safety drills to familiarize employees with emergency procedures and protocols in case of a workplace violence incident (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). This can help ensure that employees are prepared and know how to respond effectively in a crisis situation.

Partner with community organizations, such as local law enforcement or violence prevention groups, to raise awareness about workplace violence and share resources and best practices (NIOSH, 2021). This can help build a supportive network and enhance your organization's reputation as a responsible employer.

Hold organizational leaders accountable for promoting a culture of safety and respect and for ensuring that workplace violence prevention and response initiatives are effectively implemented (OSHA, 2015). This can help demonstrate the organization's commitment to employee safety and well-being.

By continuously expanding and refining your organization's approach to workplace violence prevention and response, you can help create a safer, more supportive work environment that fosters productivity, employee satisfaction, and overall success.

While the primary focus of workplace violence prevention and response is to protect employees and maintain a safe working environment, it's important to remember that a proactive approach can also have positive ripple effects on an organization's overall performance and reputation.

By creating a culture of safety, respect, and support, organizations can increase employee satisfaction and retention rates (Neuman & Baron, 1998). Employees who feel valued and secure in their work environment are more likely to stay with the company long-term, reducing turnover costs and fostering continuity and stability.

A strong commitment to workplace violence prevention and response can enhance an organization's reputation among customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders (Chen & Huang, 2016). Companies that demonstrate a genuine concern for employee well-being and proactively address potential issues can build trust and credibility in the marketplace.

Addressing workplace violence risks proactively can help organizations avoid potential legal, financial, and reputational consequences associated with workplace violence incidents (Kelloway, Barling, & Hurrell, 2006). By identifying potential threats and implementing effective prevention and response strategies, organizations can minimize their exposure to these risks and improve overall risk management efforts.

Employee engagement: Employees who feel safe and supported at work are more likely to be engaged and productive (Locke & Latham, 2002). By prioritizing workplace violence prevention and response, organizations can create a positive work environment that fosters employee engagement, collaboration, and innovation.

By developing robust workplace violence prevention and response plans, organizations can enhance their overall resilience in the face of potential crises or emergencies (Sullivan-Taylor & Branicki, 2011). This resilience can help ensure that an organization is better prepared to navigate challenging situations and maintain business continuity.

In summary, a proactive and comprehensive approach to workplace violence prevention and response not only helps to protect employees and maintain a safe working environment but also contributes to broader organizational success. By fostering a culture of safety, respect, and accountability, organizations can enhance employee retention, engagement, and overall performance, while also reducing risks and building resilience for the future.

Practical Applicability Of This Analysis

The analysis provides a comprehensive and detailed approach to reducing workplace violence that is highly practical in nature. Here's how the analysis could be applied practically:

Risk Assessments and Security Measures: These could involve conducting safety audits to identify potential hazards, assessing employee feedback, and strengthening security infrastructure such as surveillance systems, alarm systems, and access controls.

Training Programs: Tailored training programs could be developed and delivered regularly, focusing on the prevention of violence, recognition of warning signs, conflict resolution, and reporting procedures. Specialized training for management and HR staff can be organized to better handle sensitive situations.

Open Communication and Confidential Reporting: Organizations can establish various reporting channels like hotlines or online portals that assure confidentiality and protection from retaliation. Regular team meetings and one-on-one sessions could be conducted to maintain open communication.

Response Plan: An explicit response plan could be prepared and communicated to all staff, detailing immediate actions, emergency contacts, and the escalation process. The plan should also incorporate law enforcement engagement and disciplinary procedures.

Post-Incident Support: Offering employee assistance programs that include counseling services, flexible working arrangements, and trauma support resources can aid affected employees' post-incident.

Policy Review and Background Checks: Regular review and updating of policies should be scheduled, ensuring they align with current laws and workplace dynamics. Comprehensive background checks on all potential hires can minimize the risk of hiring individuals with a violent history.

Emergency Preparedness: Regular drills simulating potential incidents can prepare employees better. Also, periodic evaluation and updating of response plans is crucial.

Employee Recognition and Inclusion: Incentive programs that recognize and reward employees for upholding safety norms and contributing to a positive work environment could be implemented. Inclusion strategies like promoting diversity and ensuring policies protect all employees regardless of their role or status should be in place.

Leadership Involvement: Leaders play a vital role in shaping organizational culture. By embodying and promoting a culture of safety and respect, they can significantly influence employee behavior and commitment to violence prevention.

External Collaboration: Partnerships with local community organizations, law enforcement, and safety consultants can provide additional resources and expertise in managing workplace violence. These practical steps, informed by the analysis and conclusions, can significantly contribute to creating a safer, healthier, and more resilient workplace.

The Texas Perspective

When considering the specific context of the State of Texas, it's essential to acknowledge the unique factors that might influence workplace violence prevention and response strategies. These factors include regional trends, industry composition, legal and regulatory frameworks,

and cultural aspects. Here, we discuss some key points that can inform workplace violence prevention and response efforts within Texas:

Regulatory Compliance

In Texas, employers are subject to federal regulations such as the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), which requires employers to provide a safe work environment. While Texas does not have a specific state-level workplace violence prevention law, employers should still adhere to federal guidelines and best practices to maintain compliance and ensure employee safety.

Industry Composition

Texas has a diverse economy, with key industries such as oil and gas, technology, healthcare, construction, and agriculture. Each industry may face unique challenges and risk factors related to workplace violence (Sullivan-Taylor & Branicki, 2011). Employers should tailor their prevention and response strategies to address the specific needs and risks associated with them.

Regional Trends and Challenges

Texas has experienced various incidents of workplace violence, including shootings and other acts of violence. In response to these incidents, employers in Texas should remain vigilant and take proactive measures to prevent and address potential threats (Sullivan-Taylor & Branicki, 2011). Sharing information, resources, and best practices with other organizations and community partners can help build a supportive network for addressing workplace violence across the state.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

Texas is an "employment-at-will" state, which means that either the employer or the employee can terminate the employment relationship at any time and for any reason, as long as it does not violate state or federal law (Yates, 2012). In the context of workplace violence, this allows employers to take swift action when addressing problematic behaviors or incidents involving employees. However, employers must still follow due process and adhere to relevant laws, such as anti-discrimination and whistleblower protection laws.

Cultural Aspects

Texas has a diverse population, with various cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds represented in the workforce. Promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace can help prevent misunderstandings and conflicts that could lead to workplace violence (Mor Barak,

2014). Employers should encourage cultural sensitivity, open communication, and mutual respect among employees to foster a safe and inclusive work environment.

State and Local Resources

Employers in Texas can leverage state and local resources to support their workplace violence prevention and response efforts. For example, the Texas Department of Insurance provides guidance on workplace violence prevention and offers resources for employers and employees. Additionally, collaborating with local law enforcement and emergency responders can help organizations develop effective response plans and access additional expertise and support in case of an incident (Chen & Huang, 2016).

By considering the unique context of Texas, employers can develop tailored workplace violence prevention and response strategies that address regional trends, industry-specific risks, and other factors relevant to their organizations. By engaging in proactive efforts to promote a safe and secure work environment, Texas employers can contribute to the well-being and safety of their employees and the broader community.

Conclusions

1. Workplace violence is a significant issue that can take many forms, including physical and verbal abuse. Certain industries and roles are more susceptible due to factors such as customer interaction, money handling, solitary work, or operation in high-risk areas.
2. An effective workplace violence prevention strategy should be multi-faceted, including risk assessments, security measures, employee training, and open communication channels for confidential incident reporting.
3. Companies need to proactively recognize warning signs and address potential violent situations before they escalate. This involves training employees to identify such signs and fostering an environment that encourages reporting.
4. Post-incident support, such as counseling and flexible work arrangements, plays a crucial role in assisting affected employees, showcasing the organization's commitment to employee well-being.
5. Consistent review and improvement of policies and procedures is necessary, ensuring they remain relevant, compliant with laws, and effective in the changing workplace dynamics.
6. Emergency preparedness, involving the development of response plans and regular drills, is crucial in managing violent incidents effectively and minimizing their impact.
7. Organizational leadership plays a pivotal role in promoting a culture of safety and respect, which can have far-reaching benefits, including enhanced performance, improved employee satisfaction and retention, trust building, legal risk mitigation, and overall resilience.
8. The incorporation of mental health support, clear behavioral expectations, and regular policy reviews into workplace violence prevention strategies is vital. Moreover, collaboration with external agencies and community organizations can bring in fresh perspectives and resources to combat workplace violence.
9. A proactive approach to preventing workplace violence not only safeguards the physical well-being of employees but also contributes to a healthier, more productive, and more resilient organization.

Recommendations

1. **Implement Preventive Policies:** Develop comprehensive policies aimed at preventing workplace violence. These should be designed based on risk assessments and include robust security measures.
2. **Establish Training Programs:** Create regular training programs for all employees focused on recognizing and responding to potential violence, conflict resolution, and incident reporting. Specialized training should be developed for management and HR teams.
3. **Promote Open Communication:** Foster a culture of open communication and respect and establish confidential channels for employees to report incidents of violence without fear of reprisal.

4. **Develop a Response Plan:** Prepare a comprehensive response plan for instances of violence, which should include support for affected employees, incident investigations, cooperation with law enforcement, and disciplinary actions.
5. **Provide Post-Incident Support:** Implement measures to provide affected employees with counseling services, flexibility in work arrangements, and access to resources for dealing with trauma.
6. **Review and Update Policies:** Regularly review and update prevention policies and procedures to ensure they remain effective and compliant with laws and regulations.
7. **Conduct Background Checks:** Carry out thorough background and reference checks on all potential hires to mitigate the risk of introducing violence-prone individuals into the workplace.
8. **Recognize Warning Signs:** Educate all employees on the warning signs of potential violence, such as aggressive behavior, verbal threats, and sudden behavioral changes.
9. **Emphasize Zero-Tolerance Policy:** Ensure all employees are aware of a zero-tolerance policy towards workplace violence. This includes verbal and physical abuse.
10. **Prepare for Emergencies:** Develop emergency response plans, conduct regular drills, and routinely assess physical security measures.
11. **Reward Safety Practices:** Implement programs that recognize and reward employees for maintaining safety, promoting well-being, and upholding the company's values.
12. **Engage Employees:** Involve employees in strategy development, provide them with whistleblower protection, and offer customized training programs.
13. **Mental Health Support:** Include mental health support in your strategy. This can involve employee assistance programs, stress management training, and mental health awareness campaigns.
14. **Develop a Crisis Management Plan:** Establish a plan detailing how to handle crisis situations, including communication strategies, responsibilities, and resources available.
15. **Promote Diversity and Inclusion:** Ensure your prevention strategies, policies, and programs embrace diversity and inclusivity to protect all employees.
16. **Establish Clear Channels of Communication:** Regularly communicate with employees about policies, training, and other initiatives to keep them informed and involved.
17. **Engage Organizational Leadership:** Encourage leadership to actively promote a culture of safety and respect and hold them accountable for implementing violence prevention initiatives.
18. **Collaborate Externally:** Form partnerships with community organizations, engage external consultants, and maintain strong relationships with local law enforcement agencies.

When implemented effectively, these recommendations can significantly reduce the risk of workplace violence, increase employee satisfaction, and enhance overall organizational resilience.

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