Irvington Union Free School District Workplace Violence Prevention Guide

2024

Training Outline for Workplace Violence Prevention

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Introduction to the Irvington Union Free School District Workplace Violence Prevention Program

Welcome to the Irvington Union Free School District's Workplace Violence Prevention Program. This program is a critical component of our commitment to ensuring a safe and secure environment for all staff members, students, and visitors within our district. Our aim is to provide comprehensive training that equips our employees with the knowledge and tools necessary to recognize, prevent, and respond to potential instances of workplace violence. In addition to this written guide employees will be required to complete the Global Compliance Network training video on Workplace Violence and complete the Workplace Violence Training Exit Ticket. The Workplace Violence Prevention Policy and Incident Reporting form are found on the [District's HR webpage.](#)

Purpose of the Training

The primary purpose of this training program is to:

- Educate staff about the various forms and signs of workplace violence.
- Empower employees with strategies to prevent workplace violence.
- Establish clear protocols for responding to violent incidents.
- Foster a culture of safety, respect, and awareness within our school community.

Importance of Workplace Safety

A safe workplace is essential for the well-being of our employees and the effective functioning of our educational environment. Workplace safety includes not only physical safety but also psychological well-being. By addressing workplace violence proactively, we aim to create a space where every staff member feels secure and respected, and where learning can thrive.

Definitions of Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is defined as any physical assault or act of aggressive behavior occurring where employees perform any work-related duty in the course of their employment including but not limited to an attempt or threat, whether verbal or physical, to inflict physical injury upon an employee; any intentional display of force which would give an employee reason to fear or expect bodily harm; intentional and wrongful physical contact with a person without their consent that entails some injury; or stalking an employee with the intent of causing fear of material harm to the physical safety and health of such employee when such stalking has arisen through and in the course of employment.

Understanding Types of Workplace Violence

1. Physical Violence
    a. Definition: Physical violence in the workplace involves the use of physical force against another individual, which results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in, harm. This type of violence is often the most visible and easily identifiable form of workplace violence.

    b. Examples:
- Hitting, punching, slapping, or kicking.
- Pushing, shoving, or using force to move someone against their will.
- Use of weapons like knives or firearms to threaten or harm.
- Throwing objects with the intent to injure.

2. Verbal or Emotional Abuse
    a. Definition: This form of workplace violence includes any use of words or actions that are meant to control, hurt, or demean another person emotionally or psychologically. Unlike physical violence, it doesn't involve physical harm but can be just as damaging.
    b. Examples:
- Insults, derogatory remarks, or name-calling.
  - Especially if these remarks or comments violate a protected class

3. Threats and Intimidation
    a. Definition: Threats and intimidation involve expressions or actions that are meant to scare someone into submission or prevent them from doing something. This can be verbal or non-verbal and creates a feeling of fear for personal safety.
    b. Examples:
- Verbal threats of harm to an individual or their loved ones.
- Gestures or actions that imply the potential for violence (like showing a fist or a weapon).
- Stalking or persistently following someone around.
- Coercive behaviors meant to frighten or control.

4. Harassment
    a. Definition: Harassment is any unwanted conduct that creates an offensive, hostile, or intimidating work environment. It often focuses on characteristics such as race, gender, religion, or personal traits.
    b. Examples:
- Unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors.
- Racist or sexist jokes or comments.
- Displaying offensive materials like posters or screensavers.
- Persistent teasing or making fun of someone's personal characteristics.
- Title IX Policy

5. Bullying
    a. Definition: Workplace bullying involves repeated, health-harming mistreatment of an employee, such as verbal abuse and offensive behaviors which are done deliberately to an individual.
    b. Examples:
- Repeatedly singling someone out.
- Deliberately excluding or isolating someone from work-related activities.

Potential Risks and Warning Signs

Potential risks are factors that might increase the likelihood of workplace violence.

Personal Factors:

- History of violent behavior or criminal record.
- Substance abuse or addiction.
- Severe stress, depression, or mental health issues.
- Extreme beliefs or attitudes that justify violence.
- Societal issues like domestic violence that can spill into the workplace.
- Cultural norms that may tolerate or even glorify aggression.

Warning signs:

Warning signs are behaviors or situations that may indicate an increased risk of workplace violence. Recognizing these signs early can help prevent violent incidents:

Behavioral Changes:

- Sudden, noticeable changes in behavior or mood.
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs.
- Unexplained increase in absenteeism.

Emotional Signs:

- Frequent displays of excessive anger or frustration.
- Signs of paranoia or distrust of others.
- Extreme mood swings or emotional outbursts.

Verbal and Non-Verbal Cues:

- Making threatening remarks or inappropriate jokes about violence.
- Obsessive focus on a grievance or perceived injustice.
- Intimidating others through body language or verbal threats.

Physical Actions:

- Destroying property or throwing objects in anger.
- Physical altercations or shoving matches.
- Bringing weapons to the workplace or showing an unusual interest in weapons.
  Interpersonal Relations:
- Bullying or harassing coworkers.
- Difficulty accepting criticism or feedback.
- Isolation or withdrawal from colleagues.

Performance Issues:

- Sudden decline in work performance.
- Resistance to changes at work or non-compliance with policies.
- Poor conflict resolution skills or frequent conflicts with others.

Understanding these risks and warning signs helps in developing strategies to prevent workplace violence. It's important to approach these signs with sensitivity and discretion, ensuring that any intervention respects the privacy and rights of individuals while prioritizing the safety of the workplace.

Identifying early warning signs of workplace violence and understanding the risk factors involve a combination of vigilance, education, and a proactive approach. Here's how you can effectively do this:

Identifying Early Warning Signs
Educate Employees: Yearly training sessions to educate employees about the warning signs of workplace violence.

Observe Behavior Changes: Pay attention to noticeable changes in an employee's behavior, such as increased irritability, mood swings, or withdrawal. Sudden and significant changes in behavior are often key indicators.

Listen to Concerns: Encourage employees to report any concerning behavior or incidents they observe. Creating a culture where employees feel comfortable speaking up is crucial.

Communication Patterns: Be aware of any changes in communication, such as hostile, threatening, or unusual messages, whether verbal or written.

Monitor Stress Levels: High stress can be a precursor to aggressive behavior. Be aware of employees who are experiencing high levels of stress, whether work-related or personal.

Evaluate Performance Issues: Sudden declines in job performance can be a sign of underlying issues that might escalate into violent behavior.

Recognize Physical Signs: Look for signs of substance abuse or neglect of personal appearance, as these can sometimes be linked to deeper issues that may lead to violence.

Understanding Risk Factors
Personal Risk Factors: This includes individual characteristics such as history of violence, substance abuse, mental health issues, and personal stressors like financial or family problems.

Workplace Environment: Jobs that involve working with volatile people, working late hours, or in isolated settings increase the risk. High-pressure environments and lack of organizational support can also be risk factors.

Organizational Culture: A workplace that tolerates bullying, has poor conflict resolution mechanisms, or lacks clear policies on workplace violence is at higher risk.

Historical Data: Review any past incidents of violence in the workplace to understand potential patterns or areas of risk.

External Factors: Be aware of societal and economic factors that might impact employees, such as economic recessions, community violence, or domestic issues.

Preventive Measures
- Irvington UFSD Workplace Violence Prevention Policy
- Yearly Training
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs): Provide access to counseling and support services for employees dealing with personal or professional challenges.
- Encourage Reporting: Create a safe and anonymous system for employees to report concerns without fear of retaliation.
- Regular Assessments: Regularly assess the workplace environment and culture to identify potential areas of improvement.
- District Safety Team-Each year safety plans for each building are submitted to NYSED, our local police department and Westchester County Police

Legal and Policy Framework

NYS Law: New York Consolidated Laws, Labor Law - LAB § 27-b. Duty of public employers to develop and implement programs to prevent workplace violence

District Policy: Irvington UFSD Violence Prevention Policy -
8130.2 Workplace Violence Prevention adopted

Reporting Procedure:

All employees are responsible for notifying their immediate supervisor or other designated contact person of any violent incidents, threatening behavior, including threats they have witnessed, received, or have been told that another person has witnessed or received. All acts of workplace violence will be promptly and thoroughly investigated, and appropriate action will be taken, including contacting law enforcement where necessary.

Form for Reporting Workplace Violence Incidents

Prevention Strategies

In the Irvington Union Free School District we have implemented and are continuously improving the following security measures and emergency procedures to mitigate workplace violence which includes but is not limited to the following:

Security Measures:
1. Key card entry
2. Single point entry
3. Cameras
4. Security Personnel
5. Visible entrances

6. Alarm systems

7. Adequate lighting

8. Communication devices
    a. Radios
    b. Cell phones

Emergency Protocols:
1. Emergency Response Plan

2. Training and Drills

3. Threat Assessment Team

4. Crisis Communication Plan

5. Employee Assistance Program

6. Incident Report and Follow up

7. Review of and Update of Protocols

8. Collaboration with Law Enforcement

9. Anonymous Alerts

10. Title IX Policy

Conflict Resolution Techniques De-escalation Strategies:
1. Stay Calm and Composed
    - Maintain a Calm Demeanor: Keep your voice calm and use non-threatening body language. Avoid any actions that might be perceived as aggressive (like crossing arms or pointing fingers). Avoid name calling and escalating the situation.
    - Control Your Emotions: Avoid showing frustration or anger. Staying composed can help calm the other person.
    - Offer to have the conversation with another person present who can help mediate the situation.

2. Listen Actively
    - Active Listening: Pay close attention to what the other person is saying. Let them speak without interruption.
    - Reflect and Clarify: Repeat back what you've heard to show that you are listening and to clarify any misunderstandings.
    - Show Empathy: Acknowledge the person's feelings and show understanding. Empathy can significantly reduce tension.

3. Use Non-Confrontational Language
    - Avoid Blame: Use "I" statements instead of "You" statements to avoid sounding accusatory.
    - Be Respectful: Use respectful language and tone. Avoid sarcasm or mocking.
    - Speak Slowly and Clearly: This helps in conveying calmness and allows the other person to process your words more easily.

4. Create a Safe Space
   - Ensure Personal Space: Give the person enough physical space to avoid feeling trapped or threatened.
   - Find a Neutral Location: If possible, move the discussion to a neutral and private area to reduce embarrassment or external stressors.

5. Acknowledge the Person's Concerns
   - Validate Their Feelings: Even if you disagree, acknowledge that their feelings or concerns are valid.
   - Offer Assistance: Ask how you can help resolve the situation or what they need from you.

6. Use Distraction and Redirection
   - Change the Subject: Carefully shift the conversation to a different topic if it's getting too heated.
   - Offer Solutions: Propose constructive solutions or compromises to the problem.

7. Set Boundaries
   - Assertive Communication: Politely but firmly set boundaries if the person is behaving inappropriately.
   - Clear Consequences: Explain the consequences of continued aggression or non-compliance.

8. Know When to Disengage
   - Withdraw If Necessary: If the situation is escalating beyond control, know when to step back and seek assistance.
   - Call for Help: In situations where there is a threat of violence, do not hesitate to call security or law enforcement.

9. Proactively Seek Support
   - If there is a history of incidents with the individual do not engage the individual alone. Seek the assistance of a supervisor prior to engaging with the individual when a meeting or interaction with the individual is unavoidable.

Stress Management Techniques
   - Identify Stressors: Recognize the sources of stress in the workplace.
   - Healthy Communication: Communicate with supervisors respectfully and address issues before they escalate.
   - Make use of scheduled breaks to take a walk and destress.
   - Conflict Resolution Training is available.
   - Support Services: Access to employee assistance programs (EAPs) is always available.

Self-Care Strategies
- Regular Exercise: Promote physical activity, as it is an effective stress reliever.
- Healthy Eating: Encourage a balanced diet. Nutrition plays a significant role in managing stress.
- Adequate Sleep: Emphasize the importance of getting enough sleep. Poor sleep can exacerbate stress and impair judgment.
- Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques: Practices like meditation, yoga, or deep-breathing exercises can be very effective in managing stress.
- Work-Life Balance: Maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life.
- Hobbies and Interests: Support employees in pursuing hobbies or interests outside of work, as they can be a great way to de-stress.
- Social Support: Build supportive relationships both within and outside the workplace. A strong social network can be a buffer against stress.

Response to Incidents
Immediate Response to Violence or Threats
- Stay Calm and Assess the Situation: The first step is to remain calm. Panic can escalate the situation and make it harder to think clearly. Assess the nature and severity of the threat or violence. Is it verbal or physical? Is it directed at a specific person or is it a general threat?

- Evacuate or Find a Safe Place: If the situation allows, evacuate the area where the violence or threat is occurring. If evacuation is not possible, find a safe place to hide. This could be a locked room, an area out of the aggressor's sight, or somewhere that puts a barrier between you and the threat.

- Alert Authorities: As soon as it's safe to do so, contact the appropriate authorities. This might be the police, security personnel on site, or your supervisor/HR department. Provide them with as much information as possible about the situation.

- Avoid Confrontation: If you're in the vicinity of the person causing the threat or violence, avoid confrontation. Do not try to reason with or appease the aggressor, especially if they are armed or visibly agitated.

- Follow District Procedures: This might include lockdown procedures, evacuation routes, and designated safe areas. Familiarize yourself with these procedures ahead of time and follow them during an incident.

- Support Others: If safe to do so, help others around you. This might mean guiding them to safety, providing first aid if trained, or simply offering support.

- Document the Incident: Once safe, document everything you remember about the incident. This can be crucial for law enforcement and your company's response to the event.

- Seek Support Afterward: Incidents of workplace violence can be traumatic. Don't hesitate to seek support from mental health professionals, employee assistance programs, or support groups.

Reporting and Documentation Procedures

Complete the [district's reporting form](#) which is found on the District's HR webpage and provide it to your immediate supervisor.

Support Services for Affected Employees

Depending on the situation the district will provide crisis team counseling support and/or EAP services.

Role of Employees and Supervisors

- Employee Responsibilities
  The responsibilities of an employee in regard to workplace violence encompass a range of actions and attitudes that contribute to a safe and secure work environment. These responsibilities can be broadly categorized as follows:
  - Awareness and Understanding: Employees should be aware of and understand the district's policies and procedures regarding workplace violence. This includes knowing what constitutes workplace violence.
  - Prevention: Employees play a crucial role in preventing workplace violence. This involves:
    - Maintaining Professional Conduct: Treat colleagues with respect and professionalism to help foster a positive work environment.
    - Recognizing Warning Signs: Be alert to signs of potential violence, such as changes in behavior, verbal threats, or expressions of anger or frustration.
    - Reporting Concerns: If an employee notices behavior that could indicate a potential for violence, it's important to report it to a supervisor or designated point of contact.
  - Response: In the event of an incident, employees should know how to respond safely and effectively, which may include:
    - Following Emergency Procedures: Know and follow the established protocols for dealing with violent situations, like lockdowns or evacuations.
    - Contacting Authorities: If appropriate, contact law enforcement or emergency services.
  - Cooperation: Employees should cooperate with investigations and interventions related to workplace violence. This might include:
    - Providing Information: Share relevant information during an investigation.
    - Participating in Mediation or Counseling: If the situation involves interpersonal conflicts, participate in resolution processes.
  - Respect Privacy and Confidentiality: Be respectful of the privacy and confidentiality of all parties involved in an incident of workplace violence.
  - Attend Training and Education Programs: Participate in training programs provided by the employer to better understand and respond to workplace violence.

- Supporting Colleagues: Offer support to colleagues who have been affected by workplace violence. This can include emotional support or assistance in navigating post-incident procedures.
- Compliance with Legal and Policy Requirements: Adhere to all legal and organizational policies and requirements concerning workplace violence.

- Supervisory Roles and Responsibilities
  - Supervisor responsibilities include:
    - Establishing a Safe Work Environment: Supervisors are responsible for creating and maintaining a safe work environment. This includes implementing and enforcing policies and procedures designed to prevent workplace violence.
    - Risk Assessment: They should regularly assess the workplace for potential risks of violence and take proactive steps to mitigate these risks. This could involve environmental design, such as secure entry points or surveillance systems, and analyzing work practices for potential risk factors.
    - Developing and Implementing Policies: Supervisors should be involved in developing, implementing, and communicating workplace violence policies and procedures. These policies should be clear, accessible to all employees, and enforced consistently.
    - Training and Education: Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that employees are trained on how to recognize, avoid, and respond to potential workplace violence. This includes education on the company's policies and procedures, conflict resolution, and communication skills.
    - Early Intervention: Supervisors should be vigilant and responsive to early signs of conflict or aggression in the workplace. This may involve mediating conflicts, providing support to employees who are experiencing stress or personal issues, or addressing inappropriate behavior before it escalates.
    - Response to Incidents: In the event of a violent incident, supervisors are typically the first line of response. They should know how to respond effectively, including securing the area, providing assistance to victims, and contacting emergency services.
    - Reporting and Documentation: It's crucial for supervisors to document all incidents of violence or threats, regardless of severity. Accurate reporting helps in understanding the frequency and nature of incidents and is essential for legal and insurance purposes.
    - Supporting Affected Employees: Following an incident, supervisors should provide support to those affected. This could involve arranging for counseling services, giving time off, or modifying work schedules or responsibilities to accommodate those impacted.
    - Reviewing and Improving Practices: After an incident, supervisors should review the effectiveness of the response and make

improvements to policies and practices as needed. Learning from incidents is key to preventing future occurrences.
- Legal Compliance: Supervisors must ensure that the workplace complies with all relevant laws and regulations regarding workplace safety and violence.
- Encouraging a Culture of Safety and Respect
- **Evaluation and Feedback**
- Post-Training Assessment and Plan

After a workplace violence incident, it's crucial to conduct a post-training assessment and develop a resulting plan to address any shortcomings in response, improve safety measures, and support affected employees. Here's a framework for this process:

Debriefing and Incident Review:
- Conduct a thorough debriefing session with all involved parties, including witnesses.
- Review the sequence of events to understand what happened and why.
- Assess the effectiveness of the response, including adherence to existing protocols and the effectiveness of communication channels.

Identify Areas for Improvement:
- Highlight any gaps in the existing workplace violence prevention and response plan.
- Identify any training deficiencies or areas where employees were unsure of how to act.
- Review the physical environment and security measures to see if enhancements are necessary.

Employee Feedback and Support:
- Gather feedback from employees on how they perceived the incident was handled.
- Provide support to employees affected by the incident. This could include counseling services, time off, or other mental health resources.
- Encourage an open dialogue about workplace violence, ensuring employees feel safe to express concerns and suggestions.

Update Training and Policies:
- Revise training programs based on insights from the incident and feedback.
- Update policies and procedures to incorporate lessons learned. This might include changes in security protocols, communication procedures, or emergency response plans.
- Ensure that new policies and training are communicated effectively to all staff. Reinforce a Safe Workplace Culture:
- Reinforce a culture of safety and respect in the workplace.
- Encourage employees to report any concerns or threats immediately.
- Promote ongoing awareness and education about workplace violence.

Engage with Law Enforcement and Legal Advisors:
- Work with law enforcement to understand any legal implications or actions

required post-incident.
- Consult with legal advisors to ensure compliance with any regulatory reporting requirements and to understand any liability issues.
- Plan for Continuous Improvement:
- Establish a regular review process for the workplace violence prevention program.
- Schedule periodic drills and training refreshers to keep employees prepared.
- Monitor the effectiveness of changes and be open to continuous feedback and improvement.The goal is not only to address the specific incident that occurred but also to strengthen the overall safety and security of the workplace. This comprehensive approach ensures a proactive stance against future incidents of violence and maintains a safe and supportive work environment.

Q &A

What is workplace violence?
- Workplace violence includes any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site.

What are the common types of workplace violence?
- Types include criminal intent, public/staff, worker-on-worker, and personal relationship violence.

How can employers prevent workplace violence?
- By establishing a workplace violence prevention program, training employees, and maintaining a safe working environment.

What should employees do if they witness or experience workplace violence?
- Report it immediately to their supervisor using the [District's reporting form](#) or designated official as per the company's policy.

Are there any legal protections for victims of workplace violence?
- Yes, state labor law.
- How should employers respond to a report of workplace violence?
- Employers should investigate promptly and take appropriate action to ensure safety and address the issue.

Can workplace violence occur remotely or online?
- Yes, workplace violence can include cyberbullying or online harassment. What are the effects of workplace violence on employees?
- Effects include physical injury, psychological trauma, decreased productivity, and increased absenteeism.
- What role does workplace culture play in preventing violence?
- A positive workplace culture that promotes respect and open communication can help prevent violence.

What resources are available for dealing with workplace violence?
- Resources include speaking with district administrators as well as support from the district's employee assistance program.