WORKPLACE VIOLENCE
An Overview

MCCCD College Police
Workplace Violence Defined

- Any act where a person is abused, intimidated, threatened, or assaulted in the workplace
- Not just assaults or shootings!
- Threats
- Harassment
- Stalking
- Damage
Four Types of Workplace Violence

- The person committing the crime:
  1. Has no relationship to the workplace (random)
  2. Is the recipient of a service, or other outside connection (vendor, etc.)
  3. Has an employment relationship (current or past)
  4. Has a personal relationship with an employee (current relationship or past relationship)

Your workplace assessment and programs should address incidents of all four types
The Riskiest (high-murder) Jobs

- Police officers (129)
- Retail sales workers (118)
- Security guards (102)
- Taxi drivers/chauffeurs (89)
- Cashiers (85)
- Restaurant employees (69)
- Food service managers (52)

No Workplace Connection

• On July 20, 2012, James Holmes committed a mass shooting inside a theater in Aurora, Colorado
• Killed 12 and injured 70 others
No Workplace Connection (Continued)

- January 2015: Chicago cab driver Chinedu Madu was shot and killed in a robbery
  - The suspect, with five drug convictions on his record, got away with less than $100
- April 2015: 35-year-old Seth Martin killed Phoenix Circle K clerk John Still, age 46
  - Martin was arrested after video led to leads that identified him
Service Recipients

• 55-year old Stephen Pasceri shot 44-year-old Michael Davidson in a Boston hospital before committing suicide
• Davidson was the surgeon for Pasceri’s mother, who later died
Employment Related

- This act resulted in the term “going postal”.

![Image of ambulances and police officers at a postal office, with a officers talking outside the building.](image-url)
December 7, 1987: former Pacific Southwest Airlines employee David Burke killed the pilots of a commuter jet, crashing the plane, killing all 43 people on board.
Personal Relationship

- October 2011: 44-year-old Scott Dekraai killed his ex-wife and seven others inside a Seal Beach, California beauty salon.
Impact of Workplace Violence

• Some 2 million people each year report some type of workplace violence
• Employers lose an estimated 1.8 million work days each year due to workplace violence
• The average cost to American businesses each year lost to workplace violence is estimated at $36 billion
• It is estimated that 25% of workplace violence goes unreported
Why Be Concerned About Workplace Violence?

- It avoids exposure to liability and litigation
- A good program contributes to the safety of employees
- Employers have a duty to provide a safe work environment
- It makes sound business sense
Legal Issues Involved In Workplace Violence Lawsuits

- Lawsuits often involve:
  - Negligent hiring
  - Negligent retention
  - Negligent supervision
  - Inadequate security
• Each employer:
  • Shall furnish to each employee a place of employment which is free from recognized hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees
  • While not specified, this includes prevention and control of workplace violence
Elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program

- Management commitment and employee involvement
- Strong policy
- Worksite analysis
- Hazard prevention and control
- Training and education
- Record keeping and evaluation
- Employee assistance programs
Management-Employee Commitment

• Essential for an effective program
• Create a clear policy prohibiting any form of violence
• Encourage reporting
• Prohibit reprisals to those who report acts
• Maintain zero tolerance for violent acts
• Investigate and take action on all reports
• Maintain a culture of respect
Multidisciplinary Threat Assessment Teams

- Threat assessment vs. behavioral intervention
- A good team requires a number of business disciplines:
  - Police (or security/public safety)
  - Management
  - Legal support
  - Human resources
  - Student affairs (schools)
  - Psychological services
Common Traits of Violent Workers

- The following characteristics are the most common in those who commit workplace violence:
  - History of violent behavior - this includes any involvement with the criminal justice system
  - Middle-aged white male
  - Upset with only having “low-level” tasks to do
  - Bitter and unhappy
  - No job security
  - Problems growing up, including bad grades in school, abusive parents, etc.
  - Substance abuse, including taking heavy medication
General Suspect Factors

• Mental illness
• Substance abuse
• Bullying behavior
• History of violence or bad employment behavior (proper screening may prevent this)
• Lack of respect for rules or authority
• Life changes (job, school, relationships)
• Threats or fascination with violence or weapons
The Pathway to Violence

- The “grievance”
- Violent ideation
- Research and planning the attack
- Pre-attack preparation
- Probing and breaches
- Attack
Grievance

- Sense of injustice
- Sense of mission
- Sense of loss
- Sense of destiny
- Desire for revenge
- Desire for recognition or fame
Violent Ideation

- Discusses with others
- Identification with other assassins
- Violence is the only alternative
- Fascination with weapons
- Fixation on anniversaries
Research and Planning

• Stalking
• Target research
• Suspicious inquiries
• Information gathering
• Surveillance
• Boundary probing
• Testing security
Pre-Attack Preparation

- Acquiring weapons
- Assembling equipment
- Arranging transportation
- Observing significant dates
- Conducting final-act behaviors
- Costume
Probing and Breaches

• Circumventing security
• Lethal approach
• Surreptitious approach
• Boundary probes
• Surveillance
Threat Evaluation

- Remember “JACA”
- Evaluate whether the person feels:
  - Justified in their use of violence
  - Alternatives to their use of violence
  - Consequences are not feared
  - Ability to carry out the threat
The Threat Assessment Process

- Identify the person(s) of interest
- Gather information (investigate)
- Assess and evaluate the information
- Manage the situation:
  - The subject
  - The circumstances (stress factors)
  - The victim(s)
  - The target(s)
Threat Enablers

- Violence preoccupation
- Intent and threats
- Others are concerned
- Recent or impending losses or significant stress
- Entitlement and negative attitudes
- Noncompliant or menacing behaviors
Threat Enablers (continued)

- Capacity and actions preparatory for violence
- Extreme moods
- Real provocations or destabilizers
- Irrational thinking
- Substance abuse
- Known history of violence, criminality, or conflict
Threat Inhibitors (Stabilizers)

- Positive personal attachments
- Remorse is genuine for transgressions
- Obeys limits set by employer or authorities
- Takes sanctioned actions to address “wrongs” and setbacks
- Enjoys life and freedom
- Coping skills are positive
- Treatment compliance
Behavioral Intervention

• Don’t tolerate bad behavior - it escalates

• Use a multi-disciplinary team to manage behavior:
  • Police (if acts approach criminal violations)
  • Management
  • Human resources
  • Behavioral health professionals
  • Legal advisors
Behavioral Intervention (Continued)

• Intervention can include many actions:
  • Discipline
  • Referral for behavioral health counseling
  • Suspension
  • Termination
  • Arrest
What To Do During An Act Of Violence

• Run
• Hide
• Fight
• Discussion...
Safe Terminations

• Prepare and plan:
  • Will the employee react emotionally (history)?
  • Who will conduct the termination meeting?
  • Who should witness the meeting?
  • What will be done with the employee’s personal possessions?
  • When will the employee be told of the meeting (planned vs. surprise)?
  • How will remaining staff be told?
During the Termination Meeting

- Make a written script - keep it brief
- Don’t use your office - choose space with escape options and privacy
- Consider a panic button and CCTV
- Ensure security is available if necessary
- Be calm and respectful
- Answer questions promptly
After The Termination Meeting

• Collect keys and employer property
• Allow the employee to retrieve personal property
• Severance pay
• Continue medical benefits and other assistance programs
• Separation agreement
• Be respectful in front of other employees
Physical Security

- Evaluate potential threats to the workplace
- Evaluate the need for open access versus ability to control access to a workplace (depending upon the business)
- As appropriate, employee access control
- Enforce ID policies for access
- Evaluate security for property border, fences and gates, parking lots, entrance doors, and interior doors
- Evaluate need for safe rooms
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

- CPTED is a multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior through environmental design
- Natural environment, barriers, and lighting are all factors to assess and design a safe workplace
- Establish barriers to prevent access by cars
- Secure entrances
- Minimize locations criminals can hide
- Perimeter barriers can be man-made (fences or walls) or natural (hedges, canals, etc.)
Questions?