WORKPLACE VIOLENCE IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Discuss. Plan. Act.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE: WHAT IS IT?

Workplace violence is defined as **"any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior"** occurring to individuals at their place of work or in any location due to the nature of their work.

WORKFORCE VIOLENCE IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Workplace violence has manifested in public health agencies as employees feeling bullied, threatened, or harassed because of their role as a public health professional. This includes job-related verbal, written, or physical harassment, threats or bullying, including cyberbullying and doxing (unauthorized release of personal information).

Workforce violence in public health agencies ranges in severity and can extend to include family members as well as threats related to race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation.
Learn more: **CDC | OSHA**

IMPACTS ON INDIVIDUALS & COMMUNITIES

When those working in public health agencies are targeted the whole organization and the community it serves is affected. So is the public that the organization serves.

THREATS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

**Findings from the field -
Public health workers experiencing workplace violence report feeling:**

- UNDER-APPRECIATED

- UNDER-SUPPORTED

- VILLAINIZED

- CAUGHT IN THE POLITICS

- DISILLUSIONED

All of this can elevate risk of adverse mental health symptoms, anxiety, depression, and feelings of disconnect, negatively impacting worker health morale, turnover, and absenteeism.

WHAT PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES CAN DO TO HELP PREVENT WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

PREVENT

Take all reasonable precautions to prevent workplace violence and harassment, including providing employees with appropriate safety education, training, and resources and assuring employees that all workplace violence claims will be promptly investigated and addressed.

Be aware of existing state and federal legislation that protects your employees and your organization.

PREPARE

Develop a workplace program or policy that includes a reporting system for harassment/violence, and ensure employees know how and where they can safely report incidents. Provide training in de-escalation techniques and foster a culture of peer support.

Build relationships with legal counsel to provide employees with legal guidance as appropriate.

SUSTAIN

Institutionalize policies and procedures to support employees, such as support employees as needed, such as allowing time off, flexible work schedules, surge staffing, designation of a staff member or committee to champion and 'own' this issue, and maintaining active and accessible employee assistance programs.

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT AND RESPOND TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

ANTICIPATE

Familiarize yourself with workplace violence reporting procedures and policies. Explore existing supports and resources at your workplace (e.g., trainings, employee assistance programs, security, legal counsel, etc.).

REPORT

Report any concerns to your primary point of contact for workplace related issues. In case of emergency involving physical violence and/or threats, **call 911 and reach out to local law enforcement.**

GET SUPPORT

Victims of workplace violence can experience mental health trauma due to or in addition to the threats. Participate in peer support or wellbeing programs. Seek professional mental health services if needed.

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER!

Your work in public health matters. Don't be afraid to ask for help when needed – whether for yourself or others.

1-800-950-NAMI
National Alliance
for Mental Illness

1-800-662-HELP
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Service Administration

crisistextline.org
Crisis Text Line

For Legal Technical Assistance, visit Network for Public Health Law

standwithpublichealth.jhsph.edu