

# WHEN VIOLENCE SHOWS UP AT WORK

PRESENTED BY STEVE HINDS

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## WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

- Violence or threat of violence
- Threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and homicide
- Psychological trauma
- Obscene phone calls
- Intimidating presence
- Harassment of any kind
- Overt acts of violence, threats and other conduct - that generates a reasonable concern for safety

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## TYPES OF VIOLENCE

- 1 - Criminal intent
- 2 - Employee and Customer or Client
- 3 - Employee and Employee or Employer
- 4 - Personal Relationship
- 5 - Active Shooter

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**TYPE 1 - CRIMINAL INTENT**

- Violent acts by criminals who have no other connection with the workplace but to enter to commit robbery or other crime
  - Vulnerable groups
    - Taxi drivers
    - Late night retail
    - Gas station clerks
    - Those who carry cash
  - Majority of workplace homicides (85%) fall in to this group - +/- 700 per year

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**TYPE 1 PREVENTION**

- Increased lighting
- Security hardware
- Cashless transactions
  
- From the standpoint of a customer
  - Do not go there late at night

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**TYPE 2 VIOLENCE - CUSTOMER/CLIENT**

- Violence directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, students, inmates, or any others for whom an organization provides services
  - Police officer, correctional officer, security guard, mental health worker, flight attendants and others
  - Social Workers who deal with domestic violence and child custody
  - Anyone having to deny services to a client or potential client
- For other occupations, violent reactions by a customer or client are unpredictable, triggered by:
  - An argument
  - Anger at the quality of service or denial of service
  - Delays, or some other precipitating event
  - May be absolutely no warning
  - Doctors, nurses and aides
- Others that I have been involved with
  - Animal Control Workers
  - Electrical Lineman

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**TYPE 3 VIOLENCE – EMPLOYEE TO EMPLOYEE**

- Violence against coworkers, supervisors, or managers by a present or former employee
- Typically develop over time
- Much greater chance that some warning sign will have reached employees in the form of observable behavior
- Some times warning signs are ignored for long periods of time
- People adjust to the bad behavior
- "That's just Walter, he is just like that"

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**RISK FACTORS**

- Risk factors at times associated with potential violence include
  - Personality conflicts (between coworkers or between worker and supervisor)
  - Grudge over a real or imagined grievance
  - Mishandled termination or other disciplinary action
  - Drug or alcohol use
- Risks can also stem from an employee's personal circumstances
  - Breakup of a marriage or romantic relationship
  - Other family conflicts
  - Financial or legal problems
  - Emotional disturbance

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**BE ALERT FOR SIGNS**

- Ominous, specific threats
- Increasing belligerence
- Hypersensitivity to criticism
- Apparent obsession with a supervisor or coworker or employee grievance
- Outbursts of anger
- Extreme disorganization
- Noticeable changes in behavior
- Homicidal/suicidal comments or threats
- Recent acquisition/fascination with weapons
- Preoccupation with violent themes
- Interest in recently publicized violent events

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### TYPES OF THREATS

- Direct
  - Identifies a very specific target. Straightforward, clear and explicit
  - "I am going home and getting my AK47 and will even the score"
- Indirect
  - More vague, unclear and ambiguous. Hard to identify the plan, victim, etc
  - I know where you live
- Veiled
  - Able to be understood yet expressed in a way that is not clear and direct, it is disguised
  - Strongly implies but does not specifically threaten violence
    - You know, I was trained to kill in the military
- Conditional
  - If certain things happen or do not happen, violence will ensue
  - If I lost my job, I would come back here and even the score

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### UNDERSTAND ATTACK BEHAVIOR

- There is no agreed upon profile of this individual
- In most cases though, that individual has a history of "attack" behavior
- Their behavior is based on intimidation
  - Bullying
  - Threats
  - Hostile behavior

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### STAGES PRECEDING ATTACK

- Person has history of "attack" behavior
- Attack or assault characteristics
- Person comes up with idea to do harm to others
- Person develops a plan to carry out their idea
- Person acquires or secures means to do harm
- Person "rehearses" plan
- Person implements the attack

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### ALTERING BEHAVIOR

- To alter the behavior of someone before they take action, you must change the direction of their actions
- Employee who has a history of angry responses
- Everyone says, "Oh, that's just Walter. He is just like that"
- Walter's behavior needs to be confronted.
- You need to put a tree in the middle of the road that they are traveling so they cannot continue on in the direction they have been going. It takes them out of control.

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### TYPE 4 VIOLENCE – PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

- Violence committed in the workplace by someone who doesn't work there, but has a personal relationship with an employee—an abusive spouse or domestic partner
- Greatest exposure is in situations where the workplace is easily accessed by outsiders
- Organization may be able to assist if the person at risk notifies someone within the office and the information reaches management

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### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior in which one intimate partner uses physical violence, coercion, threats, intimidation, isolation and emotional, sexual or economic abuse to control the other partner in a relationship - FBI
- Domestic violence is all about control
- Phases of domestic violence
  - Mental obsession
  - Surveillance
  - Harassment
  - Elimination

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**VICTIM INTERVENTION**

- Employees facing domestic threats may tend to confide most easily in coworkers, rather than supervisors, managers or an organization's security force
- Be aware - if you notice something with someone you work with, ask respectfully
- Organization may need to get involved even if the victim doesn't want help
- Harassing visits or phone calls
- Refer the employee for emotional, legal, or financial counseling, either through the organization's own employee assistance structure or from outside practitioners, (e.g., AWAIC)

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**OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR**

- Tardiness or unexplained absences
- Frequent and often unplanned use of leave time
- Change in job performance
- Tendency to remain isolated from coworkers or reluctance to participate in social events
- Discomfort when communicating with others
- Disruptive phone calls or email
- Disruptive visits from current or former intimate partner
- Acting uncharacteristically moody, depressed, or distracted
- Sudden or unexplained requests to be moved from public locations in the workplace, such as sales or reception areas
- Noticeable change in use of makeup (to cover up injuries)
- Inappropriate clothes (e.g., sunglasses worn inside the building, turtleneck worn in the summer)
- Sudden changes of address or reluctance to divulge where he/she is staying
- Being the victim of vandalism or threats
- Lack of concentration

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**TYPE 5 VIOLENCE – ACTIVE SHOOTER**

- 160 active shooter incidents have occurred between 2000 and 2013
  - 84 events happened between 2000 and 2010
  - 76 events happened between 2010 and 2013
- Frequency is increasing
- Businesses most frequently attacked (37%), followed by schools (34%) and public venues (17%)

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### ACTIVE SHOOTER

- The average active-shooter incident lasts 12 minutes
  - 37% less than 5 minutes
- With 43% of incidents, the crime is over before police arrive
- In 41 cases where the situation resolved before the police arrived, 16 cases the shooter was stopped by potential victims
- In 57% of the shootings, an officer arrives while the shooting is still underway
- Overwhelmingly, the offender is a single shooter (98%) and primarily male (97%)
- Patrol officers are most likely responding alone or with a partner.
- When responding alone, 75% had to take unilateral action
- A third of those officers who enter the incident alone are shot by the intruder

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### WHAT ORGANIZATIONS CAN DO

- Obtain Senior Management support
  - Develop and implement a workplace violence policy and plan
  - Each plan must be developed in relation to the needs that have been identified within that specific location. You cannot simply implement a plan that was developed somewhere else
- Have a physical assessment done of your facility
- A plan should be proactive in nature, not just reactive. Include prevention as well as response
- Have a number of individuals from around the organization participate in developing your workplace program. The plan will get better exposure and buy-in
- Communicate the program to all employees

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### SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

- Workplace violence can affect anyone in any work setting across all levels
  - Know work environment well enough to know when things change
  - Where is the nearest exit?
- Preparation
  - Take responsibility for your own safety
  - What would you do?
- Rehearsal
  - Mental walk through
  - Look for exits or hiding places
  - Reduces response times

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### REPORTING

- Who should report
  - Anyone with direct knowledge
  - Who should they report to
- Direct emergency –
  - Those around them
  - 911
- Concerns
  - Immediate supervisor
  - Human Resources
  - Security personnel

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### EVACUATE

- Leave as quickly as possible
- Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow
- Leave belongings behind
- Warn others to avoid the area
- Do not attempt to move injured people
- Once safe, contact emergency personnel
- Once connected to an emergency operator, certain information, if known, should be relayed
  - description and location of the shooter
  - number and types of weapons used
  - an estimate of the number of people in the building

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### HIDE OUT

- Lock yourself in
- Barricade the door
- Hide behind large objects
- Stay away from windows
- Turn off lights
- Become very quiet
- Silence cell phone completely
- Disperse – provide fewer targets
- If you have no other option – fight back

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### TAKE ACTION

- Only as a last resort
  - If you cannot get out
  - If you cannot hide
- Work as a team
  - Act as aggressively as possible
  - Improvise weapons
  - Look around your office now for what could be used?
- Yell when launching
- Throw the person off guard
- Commit to your actions

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### WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES

- Remain calm – follow instructions
- Slowly put down anything in your hands
- Raise hands and spread fingers - Keep hands visible at all times
- Avoid quick movements toward officers
- Avoid pointing or screaming
- Expect law enforcement to be shouting
- They may push you to the ground for your own safety
- Follow their instructions implicitly
- Do not expect primary responders to take time with you – they are focused on eliminating the threat
- Help will come once you are out of harms way

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### STAGES OF VIOLENCE

- At any time when you are dealing with someone who is upset
- Avoid drawing lines in the sand
- Use questions more than statements
- Create "Yes" momentum
- Leave room for options
- The person that you are interacting with is energized
  - Need to help dissipate the energy
  - Use and understand body language
  - What Every Body Is Saying – Joe Navarro

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### STAGES OF VIOLENCE

- Stage 1 - Characterized as Perceiving Injustices and
- Stage 2 - Characterized as Difficult and Having a victim mentality. Something is wrong with everything.
- Stage 3 - Characterized as Volatile and Initiating a Resolution
- Stage 4 - Characterized as Violent and Taking Action

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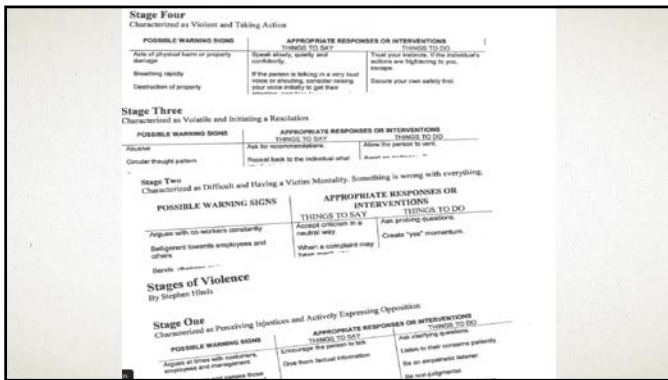
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