Supporting a Safe and Respectful School

Addressing Workplace Violence
Training Goals

- How to **identify** troubled employee behavior and troubling situations.

- When and how to **respond** to the concerns and needs of troubled employees.

- When and how to:
  - **Report** troubling situations to Human Resources or Security.
  - **Consult** with assigned District Personnel.
  - **Monitor** employee behavior and situations.
Myths and Realities of School Workplace Violence

- **True or False. School violence is a big city problem.**
  
  False. The adults who work in schools, others they know and the parents of our students pose a risk for workplace violence in every school in the nation. Focus should be placed on recognizing indicators that a person or situation holds the potential for violence.

- **Violent employees just “snap” without warning.**
  
  False. Caring coworkers and supervisors who are paying attention can often see a serious problem unfolding. The sooner proper steps are taken to prevent violence and other possible outcomes, the better for all concerned. Early intervention can save someone’s job or someone’s life.
Myths and Realities of School Workplace Violence – Cont.

- **School violence is a security and law enforcement problem.**
  False. Too often, security becomes involved only when a problem has advanced to a stage of overt threats. Early intervention requires that supervisors and co-workers bring problem behaviors and situations to the attention of Human Resources and Security in the early stages of concern so that appropriate intervention may prevent devastating outcomes.

- **Domestic violence and workplace violence have little correlation**
  False. Of working women who are domestic violence victims, approximately 70% are also harassed by their abuser at work.

- **Administrators need to know how to counsel severely depressed or agitated employees.**
  False. The role of an administrator is to identify signs that employees may be troubled, respond to employee concerns, refer employees or report situations and consult with other professionals available to you through your employer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incivility</td>
<td>&gt; 1,000,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats, intimidation, bullying, harassment</td>
<td>&gt; 12,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery, rape, assault</td>
<td>&gt; 1,700,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mass murder</td>
<td>10</td>
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*Most costly behavior problems for employers: domestic violence, substance abuse, depression, misconduct, threats, violent acts*
Threats of Violence Against Teachers

- Each year, 253,100 teachers are threatened with injury; 45% of these threats occur in elementary school and 55% in secondary.
- 127,500 teachers are physically attacked by students annually.
- Nationwide cost of teacher victimization exceeds $2 billion annually (wages, days missed, replacement, medical/psychological care, disciplinary proceedings, workers’ comp, premiums, incarceration of perpetrators).
Lessons Learned About Workplace Misconduct

- Misconduct varies in nature, but has related causes.
- The causes of misconduct include people and situations.
- Misconduct ungoverned tends to worsen.
- Situations uncorrected tend to worsen.
- Those who misbehave often do so in more than one way and this becomes more apparent the longer you permit them to misbehave in your employ.
- The earlier you intervene, the better.
Troubled Employee Indicators

Administrators may observe or learn about the following indicators, which may affect performance, enjoyment of work and morale:

- Displaying irrational, unpredictable or inappropriate behavior
- Negativity or harsh criticism of others
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, thinking, solving problems or making decisions
- Ruminating about a situation; excessive preoccupation
- Difficulty accepting constructive criticism
Troubled Employee Indicators (continued)

- Excessive vigilance about minor breaches of rules or procedures
- Irritability, belligerence, hostility, anger, temper tantrums
- Excessive use of alcohol or drugs
- Recklessness in driving, spending, gambling or sexual activity
- Avoidance of situations, people or problem solving
- Consistently non-compliant, resistant or uncooperative
- Marked change in usual manner, patterns, mood, behavior or grooming, especially (but not exclusively) in a negative direction
Common Stressors

- Losses, including death, divorce, custody disputes or job loss
- Emotional and mental health issues
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Workplace problems
- Family problems including childcare, teenage misbehavior or elder care
- Financial hardships including debts or bankruptcy
- Military deployment of loved ones

*It is not an administrator’s role to diagnose personal problems or conduct security investigations.*
What Is Your Role as Administrator?

Your administrative role is to observe substandard or deteriorating job performance such as:

- Excessive absenteeism or tardiness
- Difficulty with coworkers or withdrawal from contact with others
- Accidents and injuries
- Poor work quality
- Missed deadlines
- Sudden or significant deterioration in performance
- Difficulty accepting constructive criticism or guidance
Coworkers May Observe or Become Aware Of:

- Extreme mood swings; unpredictability
- Consistent problems with performance despite adequate training and motivation
- Inability to get beyond anger, disappointment, sadness or guilt
- Disturbance of appetite or sleep
- Strained relationships
- Isolation, social withdrawal or secretive behavior
- Prolonged depression, anxiety or anger
- Marked change in usual manner
Safe Workplace Barrier #1: Under-Reporting

- 24% of workplace assaults are unreported
- 43% of workplace threats are unreported
- >95% of less serious policy violations are unreported
- Employees don’t report their peers
- Supervisors don’t document or report violations to HR or management
- HR and security are often the last to know
- Problems often go unreported until they escalate to the terminal stage

Solution: Train managers, supervisors and employees annually to raise awareness.
Often when supervisors and managers learn of behavioral issues, they take no action.
Many times, action taken is too weak, too harsh or otherwise ineffective.
Often intervention efforts are not documented.

Solution: Train supervisors and managers to work collaboratively with Human Resources, which will give guidance and ensure documentation when appropriate.
Safe Workplace Barrier #3: Making Bad Situations Worse

- Ignoring the problem
- Under-reacting
- Over-reacting
- “Burning” the informant
- Calling the police
- Getting an order of protection
- Turning one employee’s risk into everyone’s risk
- Disrespectful, humiliating or punitive discipline, including termination
Four Strategies to Overcome Barrier #3

- **MANAGERIAL** – coach, counsel, change work assignment/environment/supervisor, mediate

- **DISCIPLINARY** – fully documented suspension with pay, oral and written warning or termination

- **LAW ENFORCEMENT** – information only report, trespass notice, restraining order, welfare check, formal report, arrest, prosecution, 911

- **MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTION** – Voluntary EAP referral, mandatory EAP referral, last chance agreement with counseling, emergency detention, civil commitment
Indicators Needing Immediate Assistance

- Talk of suicide or having no reason to live
- Unfounded paranoia; concerns about being killed, harmed, spied upon or conspired against
- Indications of peculiar or bizarre thinking
- Hearing or seeing things that are not there
- Delusional thinking
Coworker immediately notify principal
Principal report to HR, Security, or Senior Administrators to seek guidance on next steps
If unable to get immediate response, use best judgment regarding calling 911, the employee’s doctor of choice, a family member or law enforcement
HR/Security/Senior Administration – Confer, consult, access case management as needed
**DISC Referral Process**

Listen and seek understanding with respect and confidentiality.

**D – Describe Problem or Concern**

“You’ve seemed a bit preoccupied lately and have made some mistakes that aren’t like you.”

**I – Involve Employee in Discussing Problem**

“What do you think might be helpful?”

**S – Suggest Options/Resources**

If personal problem suggest EAP; if work/job problem suggest Human Resources

**C – Continue to Monitor and Follow Up**

Follow up with the employee to ensure that s/he has sought help or to determine if the situation has changed.
Consultation:
Refer “troubled” employees. Report “troubling” situations.

When you consult with other professionals, they can provide advice and support:

Arrange for risk assessment
- Respond to a threatening person
- Respond to the victim(s)
- Secure the work environment
- Address safety, mental health, legal and management concerns
- Plan interventions
- Monitor progress and outcome
Additional Resources

- EAP services free to RCBOE Employees at 1-800-822-4847 or www.lifeserviceseap.com
  Username: rutherford; password: employee
- www.tennessee.gov/mental to find a service provider
- 1-855-CRISIS 1 (855-274-7471) - 24/7 Mobile Crisis Team