# DO SOMETHING ABOUT VIOLENCE AT WORK

## What is violence at work?

Workplace violence is the act or threat of violence, ranging from verbal abuse to physical assaults directed toward persons at work or on duty.[1] Some examples of workplace violence are physical assault, property damage, verbal abuse, verbal or written threats, bomb threats, and shootings.

## How widespread is violence at work in the United States?

Workplace violence is widespread in the US and can occur in any work setting, among any type of worker.  The risk for fatal violence is greater for workers in sales, protective services, and transportation, while the risk for nonfatal violence is greatest for healthcare and social assistance workers[2]:

- Nearly 2 million American workers report having been victims of workplace violence each year. Unfortunately, many more cases go unreported.[3]
- In 2014, 68 women and 341 men were victims of homicide in the workplace. Of these women, 32% were killed by a relative or a domestic partner, compared to 2% of the men.[4]
- Law enforcement officers have the highest rate of workplace violence, followed by mental health professionals. [5]
- 15,980 workers (67% of which were women) in the private industry experienced trauma from nonfatal workplace violence in 2014, requiring days away from work.[6]

## What culture changes and public policies are necessary for preventing violence at work?

Workplace cultural shifts should aim at creating an environment that reduces negative feelings, such as isolation, resentment, and hostility among employees.  Examples include encouraging open dialogue between employees and supervisors, a healthy work-life balance, and offering opportunities for professional development.  In terms of policy implementation, requiring employees to undergo trainings on workplace violence prevention would be beneficial.  Similarly, workplaces should create emergency action plans and perform mock drills.  Additional security measures such as on-site guard services, surveillance cameras, and metal detectors are also effective.[7]

## What practical solutions are effective for preventing violence at work?

Peaceful practical solutions to combat or reduce workplace violence include trainings on preventative measures as well as emergency response trainings.  Workplaces should also

---

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017). *Occupational Violence - NIOSH Workplace Safety and Health Topic*. Retrieved 13 February 2018, from https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/violence/default.html.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2014*). Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1994-2014.* Retrieved 13 February 2018, from https://www.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/cfoi/work_hom.pdf.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] U.S. Department of Labor. (n.d.). *DOL Workplace Violence Program*. Retrieved February 13, 2018, from https://www.dol.gov/oasam/hrc/policies/dol-workplace-violence-program.htm.

incorporate conflict resolution and nonviolent communication trainings as part of their onboarding or regularly programed procedures. See our Choose Peaceful Practices webpage for information on other possible solutions.

## What can *I* do to prevent or stop violence at work?

- Recognize early warning signs – Practice mindful awareness of your workplace surroundings and coworkers. Pay attention to if a person is becoming uncooperative, verbally abusive, withdrawn, argumentative, intimidating others, and refusing to follow policies and procedures.
- Document and report signs – Document the behavior and report concerns to your supervisor to seek help in responding to the situation. If the offending employee is your supervisor, notify the next level of supervision. Meetings should be held in a private place, and you should request that your supervisor meet with the offending employee in private to discuss the problems and establish steps towards solutions.
- Create an effective line of communication – In the case of workplace violence, silence indicates compliance with and acceptance of inappropriate behavior. Encourage your team members to communicate by having regular team meetings. These meetings will help defuse tensions and misunderstandings while ultimately defusing any possibility of violence.[8]
- In case of emergency – In cases of suicidal threats, physical fights, extreme rage, and utilization of weapons, call 911 immediately. Remain calm and secure your personal safety first. Leave the area if your safety is at risk and cooperate with law enforcement when they arrive onsite.

## Where can I find statistics about violence at work?

For data and statistics about various forms of workplace violence, please refer to the following organizations:

- The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) hosts a variety of publications about workplace violence on its website, with up-to-date facts and statistics.
- The Bureau of Justice Statistics complies reports about workplace violence on its website.

## Where else might I go to learn more about violence at work?

Some government and nonprofit organizations with more resources on workplace violence are:

- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration provides information on the extent of violence in the workplace, assessing the hazards and developing prevention plans.
- The ALICE Training Institute works with different types of organizations to implement violence prevention and response programs.
- The National Safety Council eliminates preventable deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the road through leadership, research, education and advocacy.

## About Peace Through Action USA

Peace Through Action USA activates and equips Americans to implement practical peaceful solutions to aggression and violence in their communities and our country. We are a national-scope, charitable, social capital-building organization. Learn more at www.PeaceThroughAction.org.

---

[8] 10 Ways to Prevent Workplace Violence. (2015, November 13). Retrieved February 20, 2018, from https://www.alicetraining.com/resources-posts/blog/10-ways-to-prevent-workplace-violence.