Workplace Violence and Aggression

Balance in the Workplace is designed to equip organisations in the health and community services sectors with practical tools and resources to mitigate **psychosocial hazards** and create safer, healthier work environments. These freely available documents, which can be used in digital formats or printed as needed, aim to address challenges such as **workload management**, **work-life balance**, and mental health monitoring.

The mission of this initiative is to foster workplaces where health and wellbeing workers feel **safe** and **supported**, enabling them to provide effective care to those who depend on their services. By adopting these resources, organisations can actively promote a culture of care, **resilience**, and **sustainability** within their teams.

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OVERVIEW

Why This Matters

Workplace violence and aggression pose significant risks to employees, customers, and organisations. It affects mental well-being, safety, and overall workplace culture. Organisations must take proactive steps to ensure employees feel safe, valued, and supported.

Impact of Workplace Violence

- Reduced Productivity – Employees working in high-risk environments are less engaged and less productive due to fear and stress.

- Increased Turnover & Absenteeism – Workers who experience violence or aggression are more likely to take leave or resign.

- Legal & Financial Consequences – Organisations that fail to manage workplace violence face lawsuits, compliance penalties, and reputational damage.

- Decline in Workplace Morale – Witnessing violence or aggression affects team morale and collaboration.

- Increased Risk of Psychological Harm – Exposure to violence or threats can lead to mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, PTSD, and burnout.

- Vicarious Trauma – Workers exposed to second-hand trauma (e.g. through client stories) may experience similar symptoms to primary victims.

- Reduced Team Cohesion – Fear of future incidents can reduce collaboration and trust among team members.

Workplace Violence as a Psychosocial Hazard

Under Queensland's Work Health and Safety (Psychosocial Risks) Amendment Regulation 2022, workplace violence is recognised as a psychosocial hazard. Employers must implement reasonably practicable measures to prevent psychological harm caused by such hazards (see WHS Regulation Section 55A–55C).
Refer also to the Code of Practice 2022, which outlines steps to identify, assess, and control psychosocial risks, including violence and aggression in the workplace.
Best Practice:
Prevention requires a comprehensive strategy, including risk assessments, training, clear policies, and support systems.

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Understanding Workplace Violence and Aggression

Workplace violence and aggression encompass a broad range of behaviours, from verbal threats to physical attacks, and can be perpetrated by colleagues, customers, or external parties.

TYPE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
Verbal Aggression	Hostile communication meant to intimidate or demean.	Shouting, name-calling, threats, offensive language.
Physical Violence	Any act that causes or attempts to cause physical harm.	Hitting, pushing, spitting, throwing objects, assault.
Psychological Abuse	Repeated acts designed to undermine or manipulate.	Gaslighting, emotional blackmail, humiliation.
Sexual Harassment	Unwelcome sexual behaviour or comments.	Unwanted advances, lewd jokes, inappropriate touching.
Bullying & Harassment	Repeated unreasonable behaviour that creates risk to health and safety.	Exclusion from teams, intimidation, spreading rumours.
Third-Party Violence	Aggression from customers, patients, or visitors.	A nurse being attacked by a patient, a retail worker facing verbal abuse.

Best Practice:
All workplaces must identify, document, and categorise instances of violence to ensure proper intervention strategies.

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Workplace Violence Risk Factors

Certain work environments present higher risks of violence and aggression.

High-Risk Workplace Factors

- Customer-Facing Roles – Employees in retail, healthcare, hospitality, and security face higher aggression risks.
- Lone Work & Isolated Locations – Employees working alone or in remote areas may be more vulnerable.
- High-Stress Industries – Healthcare, emergency services, and social work often involve emotionally charged interactions.
- Handling Cash or Valuables – Employees in banking, retail, and public transport face risks of robbery-related violence.
- Unclear Workplace Policies – A lack of clear procedures for reporting and addressing violence leads to unmanaged aggression.
- Workers providing care in emotionally charged environments (e.g. domestic violence, child protection)
- Lone or remote work situations
- High client distress or unmet needs
- Inadequate staffing or security presence
- Cultural or language misunderstandings during high-stress interactions

Best Practice:
Employers should conduct workplace-specific risk assessments to identify high-risk job roles and environments.

Psychological Impact of Workplace Violence
Exposure to workplace violence can have serious long-term effects on employees.

- Increased Anxiety & Depression – Victims experience higher rates of PTSD, stress disorders, and burnout.
- Reduced Job Satisfaction – Employees in violent environments report lower motivation and engagement.
- Social Withdrawal & Isolation – Affected employees avoid team interactions and become less collaborative.
- Physical Health Issues – Chronic stress from workplace violence contributes to headaches, digestive issues, and sleep disorders.
- Increased Absenteeism & Turnover – Employees exposed to workplace violence are more likely to take extended leave or resign.
- Emotional exhaustion and increased sick leave
- Hypervigilance or avoidance behaviours
- Breakdown of trust in organisational safety measures
- Increased turnover and loss of skilled staff Organisations should consider offering trauma-informed counselling and debriefing opportunities.

Best Practice:
Employers must provide mental health support and workplace well-being programs to help employees recover from violence-related stress.

Legislative and WHS Compliance

Employers have a legal obligation to prevent and manage workplace violence and aggression under Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws. Compliance with state and federal legislation helps ensure safe working conditions and protection for employees.

Key Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) Laws

In Australia, workplace violence falls under Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws, which require employers to take proactive steps to manage risks.

LEGISLATION	KEY REQUIREMENT	HOW IT APPLIES TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE
Work Health and Safety Act (WHS Act)	Employers must ensure a safe work environment.	Workplaces must implement risk control measures for workplace violence and aggression.
Work Health and Safety Regulations	Requires employers to identify, assess, and control psychosocial hazards.	Employers must treat workplace violence as a hazard and apply risk reduction strategies.
Managing Psychosocial Hazards Code of Practice	Provides guidance on managing work-related stress and violence.	Organisations must develop prevention, response, and support programs.
Fair Work Act	Protects employees from bullying, harassment, and unfair dismissal.	Workplace violence or aggression cannot be tolerated, and victims have legal protection.
Anti-Discrimination Laws	Protects employees from harassment based on race, gender, religion, or disability.	Sexual harassment and discriminatory violence must be prevented and reported.

Best Practice
Employers should regularly review legal requirements to ensure their workplace policies align with WHS laws and best practices.

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Employer Responsibilities Under WHS Laws

Employers have a duty of care to protect workers from harm, including workplace violence. This means:

- Identifying and assessing workplace violence risks through regular risk assessments.
- Implementing control measures to prevent aggression (e.g., security protocols, de-escalation training).
- Providing mental health support for employees impacted by violence.
- Establishing clear reporting and investigation procedures for violent incidents.
- Training managers and employees on how to recognise, prevent, and respond to aggression.

Best Practice:

WHS obligations apply whether the violence comes from customers, colleagues, or third parties—employers must have systems in place for all scenarios.

Employee Rights and Responsibilities

Employees also have responsibilities under WHS laws to ensure a safe workplace.

- Right to a Safe Workplace – Employees can refuse unsafe work if there is a risk of violence.
- Obligation to Report Incidents – Employees should report workplace violence to HR or their supervisor.
- Respectful Workplace Behaviour – Employees must not engage in harassment, bullying, or aggression.
- Participation in Safety Training – Employees must complete workplace violence prevention training where required.

Best Practice:

Employees should feel empowered to report violence without fear of retaliation—confidential reporting systems should be available.

WHS Compliance Checklist for Workplace Violence

Requirement	Status		Action Required
Workplace violence risk assessment completed			Conduct annual risk reviews
Clear reporting procedures in place			Ensure employees know how to report incidents
WHS training provided to employees			Regularly update training on violence prevention
Security measures in place (if applicable)			Review workplace security protocols
Employee mental health support available			Provide access to EAP (Employee Assistance Programs)

Best Practice:

Employers should audit their workplace annually to ensure compliance with WHS and anti-violence regulations.

Risk Assessment and Prevention Strategies

A proactive approach to workplace violence includes assessing risks, implementing safety controls, and fostering a culture of respect and prevention. Regular risk assessments help organisations identify potential hazards and implement effective prevention strategies before violence occurs.

Conducting a Workplace Violence Risk Assessment

Why Risk Assessment is Essential

- Prevents incidents before they occur by identifying potential hazards.
- Ensures compliance with WHS regulations and duty of care responsibilities.
- Creates safer workplaces by addressing high-risk situations and roles.
- Reduces liability and legal risks by ensuring proactive management of workplace violence.

Risk Assessment Process

1. **Identify Hazards** – Evaluate job roles, workplace environments, and past incidents to determine risks.

2. **Assess Risks** – Rate the likelihood and severity of potential workplace violence.

3. **Implement Control Measures** – Introduce prevention strategies to minimise identified risks.

4. **Monitor & Review** – Regularly review and adjust risk management strategies.

Workplace Violence Risk Assessment Template

RISK FACTOR	EXAMPLES	LIKELIHOOD (LOW/MED/HIGH)	PREVENTATIVE ACTION
Customer aggression	Abusive customers in retail or healthcare	High	Staff de-escalation training, security presence
Working alone	Night-shift employees in remote areas	Medium	Panic buttons, regular check-ins
Handling cash/valuables	Retail staff, bank tellers, delivery drivers	High	Cashless payment options, secure drop safes
High-stress roles	Emergency responders, social workers	High	Employee mental health support, conflict resolution training
Inadequate reporting systems	Lack of incident tracking leads to unaddressed violence	Medium	Introduce digital reporting tools, anonymous feedback channels

Best Practice: Conduct risk assessments annually or whenever there are significant workplace changes (e.g., new policies, new locations).

Prevention Strategies for Workplace Violence

A. Organisational-Level Strategies

- Establish a Zero-Tolerance Policy – Clearly communicate that all forms of aggression are unacceptable.
- Create Safe Physical Environments – Install security cameras, panic buttons, and controlled access points where necessary.
- Develop Clear Reporting Procedures – Ensure employees know how to report incidents confidentially.
- Encourage a Culture of Respect – Promote anti-bullying, anti-harassment, and bystander intervention training.

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B. Training and Awareness Programs

- Conflict Resolution Training – Equip staff with de-escalation techniques.
- Self-Defense & Personal Safety Training – Teach basic safety techniques for employees in high-risk roles.
- Crisis Response Drills – Conduct simulated incident drills to improve emergency preparedness.
- Customer Aggression Training – Role-play scenarios to help employees handle difficult customers effectively.

C. Employee-Focused Support Systems

- Mental Health Support – Provide Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and
- counselling services.
- Flexible Work Arrangements – Reduce exposure to high-risk situations through shift adjustments.
- Anonymous Reporting Channels – Offer confidential methods to report workplace
- violence concerns.

Best Practice: Prevention strategies should be customised based on industry risks and employee feedback.

Implementing Workplace Safety Controls

CONTROL MEASURE	DESCRIPTION	INDUSTRIES BEST SUITED FOR
Physical Barriers	Glass partitions, restricted access areas	Healthcare, banking, retail
Security Personnel	On-site security officers	Hospitality, public transport, hospitals
Panic Alarms	Discreet emergency alarms for employees	Retail, social services, high-risk environments
Body Cameras	Wearable devices to deter aggression	Law enforcement, security, emergency services
Policy Enforcement	Clear consequences for violence	All industries

Best Practice: Organisations should regularly assess security measures to ensure effectiveness.

Workplace Violence Prevention Policy

Purpose:

This policy ensures a safe and respectful workplace by outlining measures to prevent and respond to violence and aggression.

Scope:

Applies to all employees, contractors, customers, and visitors in all workplace settings.

Definitions:

- Workplace Violence: Any act of verbal, physical, or psychological harm occurring in the workplace.
- Zero-Tolerance Policy: A commitment to ensuring all acts of violence are taken seriously and investigated.

Responsibilities:

- **Employer:** Provide a safe work environment, risk management procedures, and staff training.
- **Employees:** Follow workplace policies, report incidents, and participate in safety training.

Incident Reporting Procedure:

1. Immediate Safety Response – Ensure affected employees are safe.
2. Report the Incident – Use the workplace violence reporting form.
3. Investigation & Action – HR conducts an internal investigation.
4. Support for Employees – Provide counselling and workplace adjustments if needed.

Review & Monitoring:

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure ongoing effectiveness.

HR REPRESENTATIVE	DATE

Best Practice: This policy should be integrated into employee handbooks and onboarding materials.

Managing Workplace Violence and Aggression

Effective management of workplace violence involves four key areas:

1   **Preventive Measures** – Minimise risk through policy enforcement, staff training, and workplace design.

2   **Early Intervention** – Identify warning signs of aggression and respond before escalation.

3   **Incident Management** – Handle violent events with structured response plans.

4   **Post-Incident Support** – Provide physical, emotional, and professional support for affected employees.

Best Practice: A structured violence management framework ensures employees feel protected and supported.

Early Warning Signs of Workplace Violence

Increased Conflict – Frequent arguments, tension, or hostility among employees or customers.

Threatening Behaviour – Direct or indirect threats, intimidation, or aggressive language.

Physical Gestures – Clenched fists, pacing, invasion of personal space.

Escalating Customer Aggression – Complaints turning into loud confrontations or threats.

Stress-Induced Behaviour Changes – Employees becoming withdrawn, erratic, or overly aggressive.

Best Practice:

Managers should be trained to recognise and act on early warning signs before situations escalate.

Immediate Response Plan for Violent Incidents

RESPONSE STAGE	ACTIONS TO TAKE
1. Ensure Immediate Safety	Remove the affected employee(s) from the situation. Contact emergency services if necessary.
2. Secure the Area	Isolate the aggressor (if safe). Alert security or supervisors.
3. Medical & Psychological First Aid	Provide first aid, medical attention, or mental health support to affected employees.
4. Incident Reporting	Document details of the event using a Workplace Violence Incident Report.
5. Investigation & Root Cause Analysis	Conduct an internal review to determine causes, policy breaches, and corrective actions.
6. Implement Corrective Measures	Strengthen workplace safety controls, revise policies, or provide additional training.
7. Offer Post-Incident Support	Provide counselling, debriefing sessions, and reintegration support for affected employees.

Best Practice:
Every employee should know the workplace's emergency response plan for handling violence.

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Workplace Violence Incident Report Template

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

Name:	
Date & Time of Incident:	
Location:	

DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT

Type of Violence			
Briefly Describe What Happened:			
Were There Witnesses? (Yes/No)		Who?	
Immediate Actions Taken:			

INVESTIGATION & FOLLOW-UP

Reviewed By:	
Corrective Actions Taken:	
Employee Support Provided:	

Best Practice: Every incident report should be reviewed by HR or a designated safety officer within 24 hours.

Support for Employees Affected by Workplace Violence

Workplace violence can traumatise employees. Organisations must provide immediate and long-term support.

Post-Incident Support Strategies

Employers should train managers to recognize early signs of mental health struggles and offer proactive support to at-risk employees.

- Crisis Debriefing Sessions – Employees involved in workplace violence should receive immediate counselling and trauma support.
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) – Offer confidential access to mental health support.
- Modified Work Duties – Provide affected employees with temporary alternative tasks while they recover.
- Legal & Financial Assistance – Support employees who need legal guidance or compensation claims.
- Return-to-Work Support – Help employees gradually reintegrate into their roles after traumatic incidents.

Best Practice:
Employees should never feel pressured to return to work immediately after a violent incident—they should have flexible recovery options.

Preventing Future Incidents

Lessons Learned from Workplace Violence Investigations
- Were warning signs missed? Adjust training programs accordingly.
- Were policies followed? If not, review and reinforce workplace safety procedures.
- Did employees feel safe reporting the incident? Strengthen reporting systems if needed.
- Were support measures effective? Gather feedback to improve post-incident care.

Best Practice: Use data from past incidents to refine future prevention and intervention strategies.

Key Takeaways for Managing Workplace Violence:

- Recognising early warning signs helps prevent violent incidents before they escalate.
- A structured response plan ensures that employees and managers know exactly how to handle violent situations.
- Incident reporting and investigation processes are critical for accountability and learning from past events.
- Providing emotional and psychological support is essential for employees who experience workplace violence.
- Continuous monitoring and improvement help prevent repeat incidents.

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Responding to Workplace Violence Incidents

A well-structured response plan is essential for ensuring workplace safety, protecting employees, and complying with WHS regulations. Responding to workplace violence effectively requires a clear incident management framework, immediate intervention strategies, and post-incident support.

Immediate Response Actions

When an incident of workplace violence occurs, employers and employees must respond quickly and effectively to ensure safety.

RESPONSE STAGE	ACTIONS TO TAKE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
1. Ensure Immediate Safety	Remove affected employees from danger. If necessary, call emergency services (000).	Employee, Supervisor, Security
2. Contain the Situation	Prevent further escalation by de-escalating the aggressor (if safe) or isolating them from others.	Supervisor, HR, Security
3. Provide Medical or Psychological First Aid	Administer first aid, seek medical attention, or offer mental health support.	First Aid Officer, HR
4. Contact Security or Authorities	In cases of assault, threats, or severe aggression, involve law enforcement or security personnel.	Supervisor, Security Team
5. Document the Incident	Complete a Workplace Violence Incident Report detailing what occurred.	Employee, HR
6. Notify HR & Management	HR should review the report and initiate an internal investigation.	HR, Safety Officer
7. Implement Immediate Corrective Actions	If necessary, adjust security protocols or take disciplinary action.	Management, HR
8. Support Affected Employees	Provide trauma-informed support, legal guidance, and workplace adjustments if required.	HR, Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)

Best Practice: Employees should know their role in responding to workplace violence, and emergency response protocols should be reviewed regularly.

De-Escalation Techniques for Handling Aggression

Employees dealing with aggressive individuals should use calm, professional communication techniques to reduce conflict.

Key De-Escalation Strategies

- Maintain a Calm Tone – Speak slowly and keep your voice steady.
- Use Open Body Language – Avoid crossed arms, pointing, or aggressive posturing.
- Acknowledge the Person's Feelings – Say "I understand that you're upset, let's work through this together."
- Offer Solutions, Not Ultimatums – Provide options that help resolve the situation peacefully.
- Create Physical Space – If safe, keep at least 2-3 metres of distance from the aggressor.
- Know When to Exit – If an individual becomes physically threatening, remove yourself from the situation and seek help.

Best Practice:

All employees, especially those in customer-facing roles, should receive de-escalation training.

Workplace Investigation Process

A thorough investigation must follow any serious workplace violence incident to ensure accountability and future risk prevention.
Investigation Steps

1. **Gather Statements** – Interview all involved parties and witnesses.
2. **Review Workplace Policies** – Ensure company policies were followed or identify policy gaps.
3. **Assess Evidence** – Review security footage, emails, or prior complaints.
4. **Determine Corrective Actions** – Implement changes to prevent future incidents.
5. **Take Disciplinary Action** (if necessary) – If an employee violated policies, apply appropriate consequences.
6. **Report Findings** – Provide a summary of findings to management and affected employees.

Best Practice:
Investigations should be objective, confidential, and follow WHS and legal guidelines.

- Crisis Counselling – Employees should have access to mental health professionals.
- Paid Leave for Recovery – If needed, offer time off for affected employees.
- Legal Assistance – Provide legal guidance for employees pressing charges.
- Workplace Adjustments – Modify job roles, shift patterns, or workstation loctions if necessary.
- Regular Check-Ins – Managers should follow up with affected employees to monitor well-being.

Best Practice:
Employers should create a supportive environment for employees impacted by workplace violence.

Reviewing and Updating Workplace Safety Policies

Organisations should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their workplace violence response protocols.

REVIEW AREA	EVALUATION QUESTIONS	ACTION STEPS
Incident Response Time	Were security and emergency responders activated quickly?	Improve communication channels for rapid response.
De-Escalation Success	Were staff able to effectively reduce aggression?	Provide ongoing de-escalation training.
Incident Reporting & Documentation	Were all violent incidents reported correctly?	Reinforce mandatory reporting policies.
Post-Incident Employee Support	Did affected employees receive proper counselling and recovery options?	Expand Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).
Preventative Measures Effectiveness	Have workplace violence incidents decreased over time?	Update risk management strategies.

Best Practice: Employers should conduct annual policy reviews and employee feedback sessions to improve workplace safety protocols.

Key Takeaways for Responding to Workplace Violence

- Immediate safety must be the first priority in any workplace violence incident.
- De-escalation techniques can prevent many incidents from becoming violent.
- Incident reporting and investigation procedures ensure accountability and legal compliance.
- Providing emotional and legal support helps employees recover from workplace violence.
- Regular reviews and policy updates are essential for continuous improvement.

Training and Awareness Programs

Effective workplace violence prevention relies on comprehensive training programs that educate employees and managers on how to prevent, manage, and respond to violent incidents.

This section outlines core training modules, delivery methods, and evaluation strategies to ensure all employees feel prepared and empowered to handle workplace violence.

Why Workplace Violence Training is Essential

- Reduces the risk of violence – Employees learn early warning signs and prevention techniques.
- Improves confidence in crisis situations – Staff are better prepared to respond to threats or aggression.
- Strengthens organisational compliance – Meets WHS and legal requirements for workplace safety.
- Promotes a culture of respect and safety – Reinforces zero-tolerance policies and respectful behaviour.
- Reduces psychological harm – Ensures employees know where to seek support after experiencing workplace aggression.

Best Practice:

Training should be mandatory for all employees, managers, and security personnel and conducted at least annually.

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Core Workplace Violence Training Modules

Each training program should cover key aspects of violence prevention, response, and support.

MODULE	LEARNING OBJECTIVES	BEST FOR
Recognising Early Warning Signs	Identify behaviours that signal potential violence before escalation.	All employees
De-Escalation & Conflict Resolution	Use verbal and non-verbal techniques to calm aggressive individuals.	Customer-facing staff, managers, HR
Personal Safety & Emergency Procedures	Learn how to protect oneself in high-risk situations.	Lone workers, night-shift employees
Incident Reporting & Documentation	Understand how to report incidents correctly and confidentially.	All employees, HR, management
Trauma-Informed Workplace Practices	Support colleagues affected by workplace violence with compassionate care.	Managers, HR, senior leaders

Best Practice:
Training should be customised for different job roles to ensure practical application in real-world scenarios.

Delivery Methods for Workplace Violence Training

TRAINING METHOD	BENEFITS	BEST FOR
In-Person Workshops	Hands-on learning with role-playing scenarios.	High-risk roles (e.g., security, healthcare)
Online eLearning Modules	Flexible, on-demand training for remote or hybrid teams.	Office staff, administrative roles
Scenario-Based Simulations	Interactive role-playing of real-life workplace violence situations.	Customer service employees, managers
Microlearning (Short Videos & Infographics)	Quick, engaging lessons that reinforce key concepts.	All employees as refresher training
Manager & Leadership Training	Focuses on policy enforcement, de-escalation, and employee support.	HR, supervisors, senior executives

Best Practice: A blended training approach using multiple formats ensures engagement and knowledge retention.

Measuring the Effectiveness of Workplace Violence Training

Training must be monitored and evaluated to ensure it meets organisational safety goals.

Workplace Violence Training Evaluation Checklist

- Have all employees completed mandatory training?
- Are employees demonstrating de-escalation techniques in real situations?
- Have incident reports decreased since implementing training?
- Do employees feel safer and more confident in handling aggression? (Survey feedback)
- Have security policies and response protocols improved post-training?

Best Practice: Conduct post-training surveys and review incident data to assess the program's effectiveness.

Workplace Violence Training Feedback Survey Template

1. Did the training provide you with useful strategies for handling workplace aggression?

◯   ◯   ◯
YES   NO   SOMEWHAT

2. Do you feel more confident in recognising and de-escalating violent situations?

◯   ◯   ◯
YES   NO   SOMEWHAT

3. Which topics would you like more training on?

SUGGESTIONS

Best Practice:
Review survey responses and adjust training programs based on employee needs and feedback.

Key Takeaways for Workplace Violence Training

- Training reduces workplace violence risks and improves employee preparedness.
- All employees should receive tailored training based on their job roles.
- A mix of in-person, online, and scenario-based learning improves engagement.
- Training must be evaluated regularly to ensure effectiveness and compliance.
- Employee feedback is essential to refining and updating workplace safety programs.

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Key Takeaways from Section 5

- Hiring employees with prior remote or rural experience enhances adaptability and job satisfaction.
- A self-assessment tool helps candidates determine if they are suited for remote work before applying.
- Structured interviews help identify candidates with strong problem-solving, communication, and resilience skills.
- Onboarding programs should include training on self-management, mental well-being, and digital security.
- Retention strategies should focus on professional development, regular check-ins, and remote employee engagement.
- Case studies demonstrate that targeted recruitment and onboarding reduce turnover and improve long-term success.

Final Thought:

A strong recruitment and onboarding strategy ensures that employees entering remote and isolated work environments are prepared, engaged, and supported for long-term success.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Workplace Safety

To ensure long-term workplace safety, organisations must continuously monitor, evaluate, and improve their violence prevention and response strategies. Monitoring workplace safety helps to:

- Identify trends in workplace violence incidents
- Ensure compliance with WHS laws and regulations
- Measure the effectiveness of prevention strategies
- Improve training programs and workplace policies

This section outlines key performance indicators (KPIs), reporting tools, and continuous improvement strategies to enhance workplace safety.

Key Metrics for Evaluating Workplace Violence Prevention

Tracking specific data points helps organisations measure the effectiveness of violence prevention efforts.

METRIC	HOW TO MEASURE IT	TARGET OUTCOME
Workplace Violence Incidents	Track number of reported incidents monthly/annually.	Decrease in incidents over time.
Incident Response Time	Time taken to respond and resolve a violent incident.	Faster response times to improve employee safety.
Employee Perception of Safety	Conduct safety surveys every 6 months.	80%+ of employees should feel safe at work.
Effectiveness of Training Programs	Compare pre- and post-training surveys on confidence in handling violence.	Increase in employees feeling prepared to handle aggression.
Repeat Incidents in High-Risk Areas	Identify workplace locations with multiple violent events.	Implement enhanced safety measures where needed.

Best Practice: Regularly review and adjust prevention strategies based on real-time data to improve effectiveness.

Workplace Violence Incident Review Process

Every violent workplace incident should be reviewed and assessed to ensure proper handling and future prevention.

Step-by-Step Incident Review Process

1. **Review the Incident Report** – Ensure all details were documented accurately and completely.

2. **Identify Root Causes** – Determine if the violence resulted from policy gaps, security failures, or communication breakdowns.

3. **Evaluate Response Effectiveness** – Assess how quickly security and management intervened.
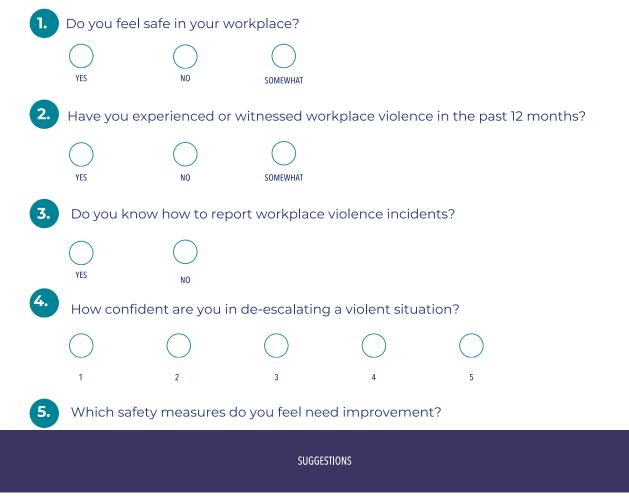
4.   Check for Patterns – Identify if certain roles, locations, or departments experience repeated aggression.
5.   Implement Corrective Actions – Adjust training, policies, or security based on findings.

Best Practice: Conduct post-incident debriefs with employees to gather additional insights on improving workplace safety.

Employee Safety Surveys & Feedback Mechanisms

Organisations should actively gather feedback from employees on workplace violence prevention strategies.

Employee Safety Survey Template

1. Do you feel safe in your workplace?

◯   ◯   ◯
YES   NO   SOMEWHAT

2. Have you experienced or witnessed workplace violence in the past 12 months?

◯   ◯   ◯
YES   NO   SOMEWHAT

3. Do you know how to report workplace violence incidents?

◯   ◯
YES   NO

4. How confident are you in de-escalating a violent situation?

◯   ◯   ◯   ◯   ◯
1   2   3   4   5

5. Which safety measures do you feel need improvement?

SUGGESTIONS

Best Practice: Conduct biannual safety surveys and use feedback to enhance training, security, and policies.

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A successful workplace violence prevention program evolves over time through continuous monitoring, assessment, and improvement.

Key Strategies for Ongoing Improvement

- Regular Policy Reviews – Update workplace violence policies based on new risks and employee feedback.
- Annual Workplace Safety Audits – Conduct formal safety audits to ensure compliance with WHS laws.
- Employee Training Updates – Refresh de-escalation and emergency response training yearly.
- Incident Trend Analysis – Use data analytics to identify workplace safety trends and adjust prevention strategies.
- Cross-Industry Learning – Adopt best practices from similar industries to improve safety measures.

Best Practice:

Continuous monitoring ensures policies remain relevant and employees stay protected.

Key Takeaways for Monitoring and Evaluating Workplace Safety

- Tracking key metrics helps measure violence prevention effectiveness.
- Incident reviews ensure proper handling and continuous policy improvement.
- Employee feedback is crucial for enhancing workplace safety measures.
- Regular policy updates and safety audits improve long-term risk management.
- Data-driven decision-making leads to better workplace violence prevention strategies.

Conclusion & next steps

To create safe and supportive workplaces, organisations must implement proactive strategies to prevent and respond to workplace violence effectively. This section summarises the most critical actions for organisations to prioritise.

Prevention

- Workplace violence risk assessments should be conducted regularly to identify potential hazards.
- Comprehensive training programs should educate employees on violence prevention, de-escalation, and emergency responses.
- Clear workplace violence policies should be implemented, including zero-tolerance measures and reporting procedures.
- Security measures (e.g., cameras, controlled access, security personnel) should be used where necessary.
- Employee well-being programs should support staff dealing with high-stress roles or aggressive interactions.

Response

- A structured response plan should be in place for handling violent incidents efficiently and safely.
- Incident reporting systems must be accessible, confidential, and easy to use.
- Workplace investigations should follow clear, unbiased procedures to determine the cause of incidents.
- Post-incident support (e.g., counselling, legal aid, paid leave) should be available for affected employees.

Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

- Incident data tracking helps identify trends and areas for safety improvement.
- Employee feedback surveys provide insights into workplace safety culture.
- Regular policy reviews and training updates ensure ongoing effectiveness and compliance.

Best Practice: Organisations should view workplace safety as a continuous process that requires regular evaluation, employee involvement, and leadership commitment.

Action Plan for Organisations

To create a safer, violence-free workplace, organisations should follow this structured action plan:

STEP	ACTION ITEM	TIMELINE
1. Risk Assessment	Conduct a workplace violence risk assessment.	Every 6 months
2. Policy Implementation	Develop and communicate a clear workplace violence policy.	Immediately
3. Employee & Leadership Training	Provide mandatory training on violence prevention and de-escalation.	Annually
4. Reporting & Investigation Systems	Ensure confidential reporting mechanisms and clear investigation procedures.	Ongoing
5. Strengthening Security Measures	Evaluate and implement physical security improvements if necessary.	As needed
6. Employee Support Systems	Provide mental health resources, EAPs, and crisis counselling.	Ongoing
7. Continuous Monitoring & Evaluation	Use data-driven insights to update workplace safety policies.	Quarterly

Best Practice:

Assign workplace safety champions to oversee violence prevention efforts and ensure ongoing compliance.

Building a Culture of Safety and Respect

Creating a safe workplace goes beyond policies and training it requires a strong organisational culture that promotes mutual respect, accountability, and psychological safety.

Leadership Commitment: Senior management must actively promote workplace safety, respond to concerns, and lead by example.

Open Communication: Employees should feel safe and encouraged to report concerns about workplace violence.

Recognition of High-Risk Roles: Workers in high-risk positions (e.g., healthcare, security, customer service) should receive additional training and support.

Proactive Conflict Resolution: Workplace conflicts should be managed early to prevent escalation into violence.

Diversity & Inclusion Considerations: Workplace safety policies should address marginalised groups who may experience targeted aggression or harassment.

Best Practice: Regular team discussions, role-specific training, and leadership support foster a culture of safety, well-being, and accountability.

Final Thought: Creating a Workplace Free from Violence

Preventing workplace violence is not just a legal requirement—it's an ethical and organisational priority. Safe workplaces are more productive, engaged, and resilient. By taking proactive steps to assess risks, educate employees, and implement strong policies, organisations can:

- Reduce workplace violence incidents
- Protect employee mental and physical well-being
- Enhance workplace culture and retention
- Strengthen compliance with WHS regulations

Final Call to Action:

Organisations should take immediate steps to evaluate and enhance their workplace violence prevention strategies. A safe workplace benefits everyone—employees, customers, and the organisation as a whole.

Balance in the Workplace is an Employee Assistance Program developed by **Centacare FNQ**, a local organisation committed to delivering quality **Mental Health and Wellbeing Services** since 1981.

For more information about Balance in the Workplace and how it can support you or your team, please contact:

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