



Workplace Violence Prevention & Interpersonal Safety Awareness

for the Code Enforcement Official

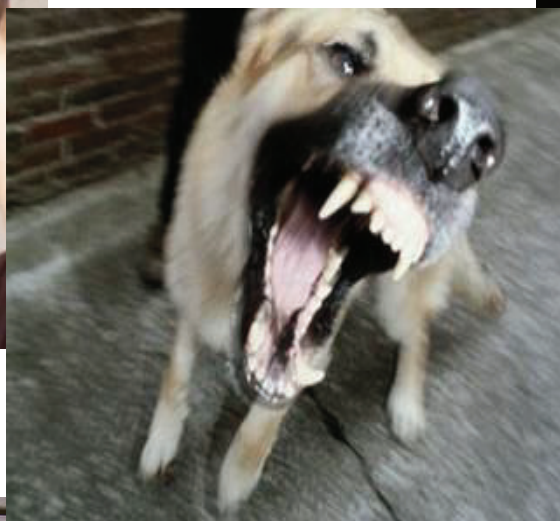
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DMHAS Division of Safety Services
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**Upon completion,
you will be able to....**



- **Recognize the behavioral signs and symptoms of major mental illnesses and substance abuse**
- **Survey the scene for hazards**
- **Use a variety of safety strategies to reduce the risks associated with dangerous and violent behavior**
- **Identify signs and symptoms of excessive job/workplace stress**
- **Identify unhealthy ways of coping with stress**
- **Identify strategies to reduce/prevent and cope with stress**





Overview of Behavioral Disturbances

Behavioral disturbances may be a result of:

- **Situational stress (e.g.. Loss of home)**
- **Individual can no longer cope**
- **Medical or psychiatric problems**
- **Use of substances**



Mental Illness



Mental Illness affects...

- **Thinking** - (mood congruent) loss of touch with reality, disorganized and confused thoughts
- **Feelings** - (mood congruent) preoccupation, withdrawal
- **Perceptions** - hallucinations, delusions



Psychosis

Associated with diagnosis of schizophrenia, depression and manic-depression; unintended response to medications or from illegal substances

Major behavioral symptoms of psychosis:

delusions, hallucinations, difficulty concentrating, confusion, disorientation, memory impairment

What you'll see/experience:

garbled speech, not respond appropriately, appear to talk to themselves, moodiness, easily frustrated, agitated, angry or appear distracted

How to respond:

Confused, disorganized speech:

- **Keep interactions brief and to the point**

Delusional content to speech:

- **Don't argue about reality/challenge the belief**



Depression

Behavioral symptoms:

- **Sadness, lack of feeling pleasure**
- **Fatigue, difficulty sleeping (too much or little)**
- **Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, may want to die**
- **Feelings of depersonalization/derealization**
- **May be irritable, easily angered**

What you'll see/experience:

- **Have difficulty concentrating, listening**
- **Not care about being involved**
- **Not attend to physical hygiene or appearance**

How to respond:

- **If the person expresses any thoughts of suicide or self harm, report it immediately.**



Borderline Personality Disorder

Behavioral symptoms:

- **Impulsivity**
- **Suicidal gestures, threats of self-mutilating**
- **Inappropriate, intense anger**
- **Paranoid Ideas**
- **Unstable relationships**

What you'll see/experience:

- **Like you one minute, hate you the next**
- **Try to engage you to be a friend**
- **Moody, dramatic**

How to respond:

- **Don't respond to baiting comments**



Bipolar Disorder-Mania

Behavioral symptoms:

- **Talkative/rapid speech**
- **Grandiose ideas**
- **Difficulty staying on task, finishing tasks**
- **Difficulty sleeping, usually decreased need**

What you'll see/experience:

- **Appear almost "high", racing around, talking fast**
- **Appear down and sad, barely talking, or slow talking**
- **Be moody, easily angered**

How to respond:

Rapid/Racing Speech

- **Ask individual to slow down**
- **Interrupt periodically, and encourage person to take deep breaths**



Pervasive Developmental Disorders

Behavioral symptoms:

- **Difficulty with reciprocal social interactions**
- **Reading social cues**
- **Stereotyped, repetitive behaviors**

What you'll see/experience:

- **Appear not to be listening**
- **Be repetitive in communication**
- **Be focused on a particular activity and do it all the time**

How to respond:

- **Keep interactions brief and to the point**
- **Discuss one issue at a time**



Brain Injuries

May be caused by a traumatic injury or another medical illness. Impairment is related to extent of injury.

What you'll see/experience:

- **Difficulty in communication**
- **Inability to think clearly, logically**

How to respond:

- **Keep interactions brief and to the point**



Dementia

Behavioral symptoms:

- **Loss of ability to speak/understand language**
- **Loss of ability to carry out purposeful movements**
- **Loss of ability to recognize familiar objects, persons, situations**
- **Memory impairment**

What you'll see/experience:

- **Appear confused, lost**
- **Have difficulty following directions**

How to respond:

- **Keep interactions brief and to the point**
- **Repetition may be necessary**



Hoarding

Definition:

Compulsive purchasing, acquiring, searching and saving of items that have little or no value

Behavioral symptoms:

- **Inability to throw away possessions**
- **Functional impairments (e.g. loss of living space)**
- **Suspicion of other people touching items**
- **Obsessive thoughts and actions (e.g. fear of running out of an item)**



Hoarding

What you'll see/experience:

- Have great difficulty categorizing or organizing possessions
- Have severe anxiety when attempting to discard items
- Be distressed (overwhelmed or embarrassed by possessions)

**May also be symptom of another disorder e.g.,
OCD, OCPD, ADHD, Dementia, Schizophrenia &
Depression*



Risk Factors for Violence

High Risk Factors:

- **History of violence (single greatest factor)**
- **Substance abuse, especially alcohol**
- **Untreated acute psychosis (command hallucinations; belief thoughts are controlled)**

Other High Risk Factors:

- **Neurological/Developmental Disorders**
- **Criminal/Pathological Violence**
- **Removal or loss of home (especially day of)**



Behavioral Cues of Anger

What you see/observe physically:

- **Facial expression**
- **Hands/Arms**
- **Body movement**

What you hear/should listen for:

- **Content of speech**
- **Tone of voice/affect**
- **Level of anger**



Communicating Your Message

- **Treat people with respect**
- **Appear confident, calm, non-threatening**
- **Avoid sudden movements**
- **Speak with purpose: steady, gently, clearly**
- **Avoid staring, but maintain eye contact**
- **Listen, and show that you are listening**



Verbal Techniques/Guidelines

Conflict Resolution:

- **Nutralize**
- **Empathize**
- **Actively listen**
- **Resolve**

Verbal De-Escalation: Verbal Overdosing

Basic guidelines for Verbal De-escalation:

- **Be concise**
- **Maintain a safe distance, ready stance**
- **Do not be provocative (Watch your body language)**
- **Avoid power struggles- agree or agree to disagree**



DMHAS Emergency Resources

Services are available in most communities:

- **Crisis phone lines**
- **Mobile Crisis Teams**
- **Full-time, on-site crisis intervention staff**

Other Resources:

- **CIT (Crisis Intervention Teams) Police Teams that interface with DMHAS Clinicians**

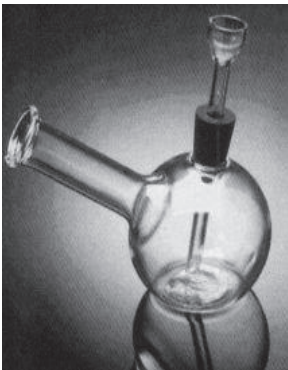
WHAT TO REPORT (to DMHAS or other agencies):

- **Define the nature of the behavioral disturbance**
- **Share all pertinent information**
- **Describe the assistance you are seeking**

Situational Awareness *for the Site Visit*

Key factors to consider:

- **Hazards of the scene**
- **Combative/ potentially violent individuals**
- **Physical indications of an unstable scene**





Situational Risk Factors

- **Communities with high crime rates or in rural areas where you are more isolated**
- **Individuals with a history of violence including criminal charges or co-occurring substance abuse disorders**
- **Gang violence**
- **Domestic violence in the home**
- **Animals in the home**
- **Active drug activity in the home**
- **Persistent self-destructive or aggressive behavior with or without conscious homicidal intent**
- **Individual access to/or in possession of weapons**



Personal Safety for the Site Visit

Prior to the Visit:

- **Carry a fully charged phone**
- **Make sure car is prepped and ready**
- **Pick the safest travel route**
- **Dress for safety**
- **Leave a schedule with names, locations and times**
- **Have a mental plan and rehearse it**



Personal Safety for the Site Visit

Upon arrival and During the Visit:

- **Back into driveways or park facing direction of traffic**
- **Observe your surroundings - stay alert and closest to the door**
- **Survey the scene and look for exits**
- **Keep open areas free of objects than can be thrown**
- **Stay behind barriers**
- **Make sure you have a clear escape path**
- **Retreat if you feel unsafe (emergency personnel follow your protocol)**



Dog Attack Prevention

- **Keep your distance**
- **Don't approach a strange dog**
- **Avoid petting animals**
- **Never disturb a dog that's caring for puppies, sleeping or eating**
- **Never reach through or over a fence to pet a dog**
- **Don't run past a dog**
- **If a dog approaches to sniff you, stay still**

What to do if.....



- **A dog threatens you: Don't scream**
- **You believe a dog is about to attack you: Try to create a barrier**
- **You fall or are knocked to the ground:
Curl into a ball with your hands over your head and neck. Protect your face**
- **A dog displays aggression towards you: Face the animal**
- **There is more than one dog:**
 - **Back up against a barrier to keep them from surrounding you**
 - **Stay still until the dog(s) back down, then slowly move away facing them**



What to do if...Threatened with a Weapon

Always

- Stay calm and breathe. Manage your fear.
- Use your best judgment about the right thing to do

If Escape is Possible, DO:

- Signal for help
- Seek cover
- Be aware of all floor and possible window exits. Never use an elevator unless directed to do so
- Maintain eye contact with the perpetrator-watch eyes and hands
- Mentally locate objects to use for defense

DON'T

- Move or make sudden gestures
- Block or corner the person
- Argue with the person
- Turn your back to the person
- Risk harm to yourself or others – do not try to be a hero by grabbing the weapon, etc.



What to do if...Threatened with a Weapon

If you must Converse with the Perpetrator, DO:

- Stall for time
- Keep your palms up and open – ready stance
- Keep a barrier between you, the weapon and perpetrator
- Talk in a calm tone of voice
- Use direct, concise statements
- Actively listen, restate and paraphrase as possible
- Personalize the conversation – talk about yourself, family, etc.
- Address the person by name if you know it
- Negotiate – ask for permission
- Assess possible options and offer them (*you can put that down now*)

DON'T:

- Make quick or jerky movements
- Argue, challenge or contradict the perpetrator

Violence Toward Code Enforcement Officials

- **Roanoke Rapids, NC
May 2, 2012**
- **Long Island, NY
October, 2012**
- **Long Beach, CA
July 5, 2012**



Work Place Stress

Job stress is defined as:

the “harmful physical and emotional responses that can occur when the responsibilities of the job does not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker.”*

***The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)**



Effects of Stress

- **40% workers report their jobs are very or extremely stressful***
- **25% of employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their life***
- **75% of employees believe the worker has more workplace stress than a generation ago.***



***The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)**

Signs and Symptoms

Excessive Job/Workplace stress

- **Feeling anxious, irritable, or depressed**
- **Apathy, loss of interest in work**
- **Problems sleeping**
- **Fatigue**
- **Trouble concentrating**
- **Muscle tension or headaches**
- **Social withdrawal**
- **Loss of sex drive**



Unhealthy Ways to Cope with Stress

- Drinking too much
- Overeating/under eating
- Zoning out in front of TV
- Withdrawing from friends, family & activity
- Using pills/drugs
- Sleeping too much
- Procrastinating
- Filling up your days to avoid facing problems
- Taking stress out on others



Healthy Ways to Deal with Stressful Situations

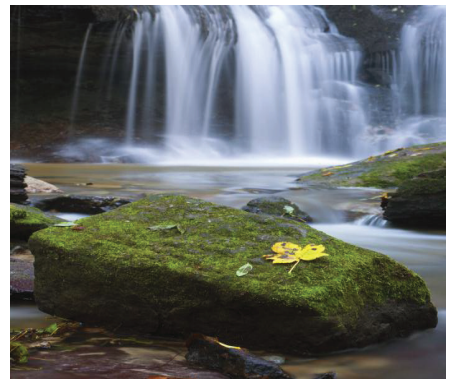
- **Avoid unnecessary stress**
- **Alter the situation**
- **Adapt to the stressor**
- **Accept things you can't change**
- **Make time for fun and relaxation**
- **Adopt a healthy lifestyle**



Impact on Interactions with Others

Remember:

- **Your ability to manage stress has an impact on the quality of your interactions with others.**
- **The better you are managing your own stress, the more positively you affect those around you and the less other peoples stress will negatively affect you.**





Support for the Code Responder

EAP Town of Stamford

- **EAP Provider 1-800-864-2742**
- **Other Support**
- **Family Center Inc. Crisis Response Team
203-977-4939**

