

## **Session 4 – Workplace Violence**

Workplace violence, originating from dissatisfied customers, clients, or patients, cause much turmoil, stress and in some cases, aggravating circumstances, and injuries. Not only does physical violence exists, violence can also take other forms such as verbal abuse, mental abuse, discrimination, bullying and harassment. All the different types of violence has risen in the past few years. The main impacts of workplace violence are pain, suffering, anxiety, stress and financial repercussions on an organisation due to absenteeism and increased insurance premiums of workers. It can be costly to a company to overlook workplace violence and several occupations such as police officers, fire fighters, health personnel, enforcement authorities amongst others can face workplace violence. The employer is just as responsible, under health and safety legislation, for protecting employees from violence as they are for any other aspects of their safety.

### **Workplace Violence Prevention Program**

This program is based on a four-point action plan:

#### **1. find out if there is a problem;**

This involves conducting a risk assessment to identify the hazards involved. It is essential to have the involvement of employees and in such occasion, the use of a questionnaire may be beneficial. A record of the incidents in details should be made so that to have an overview of the whole picture of the incident. The records should include:

- a description of what happened;
- details of who was attacked, the attacker and any witnesses;
- the outcome, including how people were affected
- and how much time was lost;
- information on the location of the event.

#### **2. decide on what action to**

An evaluation of the risk should be made and people who might be harmed should be identified as well as the likelihood of the hazard. The threats may be from the public or co-workers at the workplace or from employees visiting customers 'places to provide a service. Involvement and consultation of employees at risk or any other person will ensure that these stakeholders commit to the measures as

implemented. Other factors such as the level of training, information, general working environment and job design play a vital role on the level of risk.

Those people at risk could include those working in:

- reception or customer service points;
- enforcement and inspection;
- lone working situations and community-based activities;
- front-line service delivery;
- education and welfare;
- catering and hospitality;
- retail petrol and late-night shopping operations;
- leisure facilities, especially if alcohol is sold;
- healthcare and voluntary roles;
- policing and security;
- mental health units or in contact with disturbed people;
- cash handling or control of high value goods.

### **3. take the appropriate action;**

To approach and prevent workplace violence, a well-defined programme ought to be included in the Safety Policy and equally governed as any other attributes of the health and safety procedures and plans. Measures need to be established and complied with to consistently foster a conducive environment at the workplace. Moreover, insights from law enforcement, as well as involvement as appropriate, should be compulsory to guarantee a distinct prevention programme against workplace violence.

### **4. check that the action is effective.**

To secure a continuous monitoring practice of the records and any other reported incidents, investigations and appropriate measures should be adopted. The plan of action should be faithfully inspected and amended if found unsound. Support and encouragement towards victim's grievances should be duly considered and attended to, in order to rectify the said discrepancies, through guidance, leave-of-absence, legal counselling as well as support from co-workers.