Workplace Violence & Threat Assessment

HR Lunch and Learn

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Today's Objectives

- identify concerning, possibly threatening behaviors

- discuss the continuum of disruptive and threatening behaviors

- discuss prevention and response best practices

Some persons who make threats ultimately pose a threat

Some persons who pose a threat never make threats

Many persons who make threats do not pose a threat

Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks, US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation

A Poll

Does your organization have a workplace violence prevention program?

- Yes

- No

- I don't know

What is Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site. It ranges from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and even homicide. – Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), United States Department of Labor

Types of Violence

- **Predatory/planned/targeted:** premeditated; planning over the course of days, weeks or longer; acts of mass violence tend to fall in this category

- **Reactive/emotional:** a reaction to an imminent threat; a predictable outcome of an _ongoing conflict_
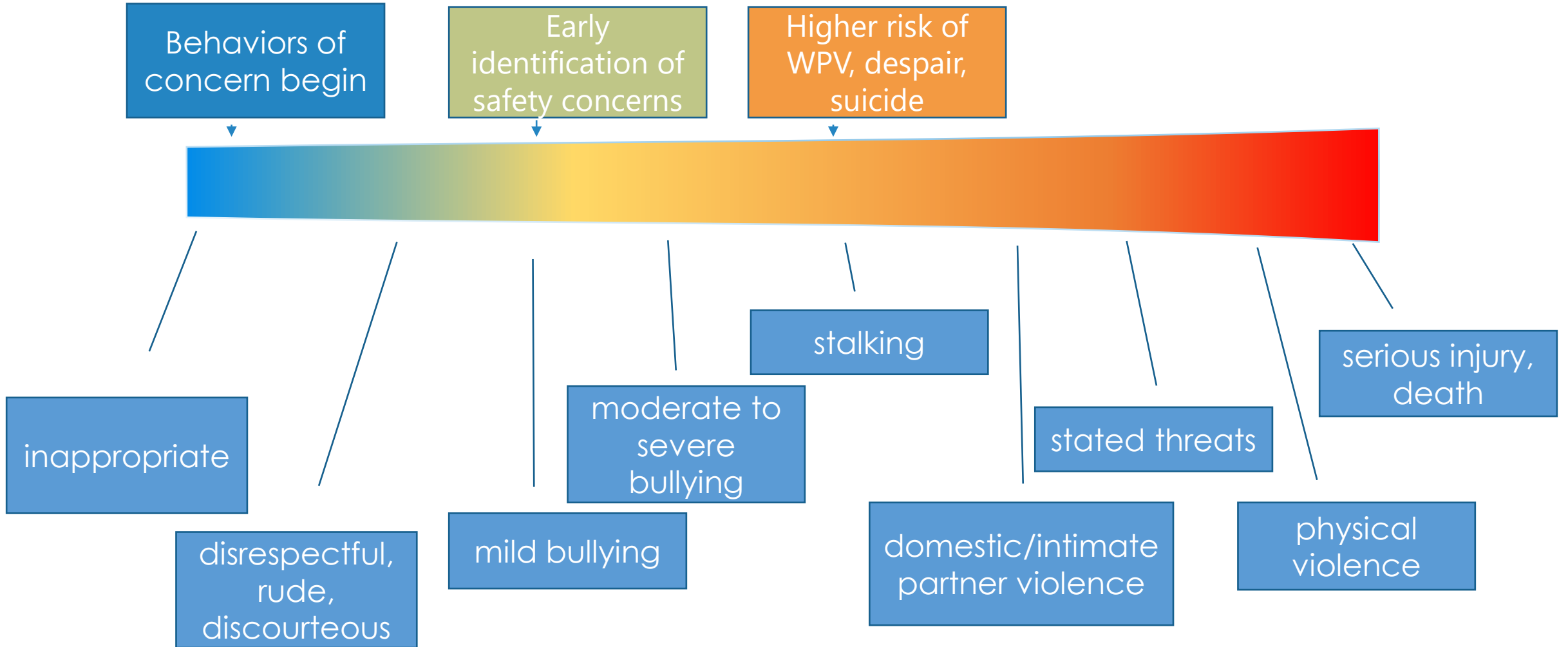
Types of Workplace Violence

- **Criminal intent:** the primary motive is theft

- **Customer/client:** client is typically the aggressor; violence occurs in the normal course of the worker's duties; healthcare and social service workers are at higher risk of being victims

- **Coworker:** lateral violence; horizontal violence; precipitated by interpersonal work-related conflicts, losses, trauma

- **Personal relationship:** domestic violence; intimate partner violence

- **Ideological:** directed at an organization for ideological, religious or political reasons

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Continuum of Disruptive Behaviors

Behaviors of concern begin

Early identification of safety concerns

Higher risk of WPV, despair, suicide

inappropriate

disrespectful, rude, discourteous

mild bullying

moderate to severe bullying

stalking

domestic/intimate partner violence

stated threats

physical violence

serious injury, death

A Poll

Have you ever been the target of disruptive behavior?

- Yes

- No

- I don't know

Motives

- Revenge for a perceived injury or grievance

- Righting a perceived wrong/injustice

- Notoriety or recognition

- Desire to solve a perceived problem

- Desire to kill or be killed

Some Numbers

2 million workers in the US are victims of workplace violence each year.

In 2020, *assaults at work* resulted in:

- 20,050 injuries, 392 fatalities and 5 days away from work (median days)

- 76% reported in health care and social assistance industries

- Of victims of nonfatal workplace violence, nearly 70% were female

- Of victims of fatal workplace violence, nearly 80% were male

Data from: US Bureau of Labor Statistics and National Safety Council

Impact of Workplace Violence

Psychological

PTSD, fear, anxiety, depression, insecurity, depression, fatigue, guilt, blame, shame, anger, self-blame, burnout, low morale

Organizational

Turnover, absenteeism disengagement, distrust, low job dissatisfaction, decreased productivity, legal expenses

Financial

Cost $120 billion/year, $727 million in productivity, litigation can cost up to $3.1 million per incident

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What is Workplace Violence Prevention?

A written program for workplace violence prevention, incorporated into an organization's overall safety and health program, offers an effective approach to reduce or eliminate the risk of violence in the workplace.

Workplace Violence for Healthcare and Social Service Workers, US Occupational Health and Safety Administration

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Workplace Violence Prevention & Workplace Culture

A Workplace Violence Prevention Plan

- Management commitment and employee participation

- Worksite analysis

- Hazard prevention and control

- Safety and health training

- Record keeping and program evaluation

Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence, Occupational Health and Safety Administration

Workplace Violence Prevention Program – case example

Johns Hopkins Hospital/Health System

- 30,000+ employees

- Multiple campuses

Johns Hopkins University

- 7 graduate schools (medicine, business, music, nursing, engineering, international studies, education)

- 12,000+ employees

- 20,000+ graduate students

- Multiple campuses

Workplace Violence Prevention Program – case example

Risk Assessment Team ("The RAT")

- Multiple teams

- Multidisciplinary

  - Human resources

  - Security

  - General counsel

  - Employee assistance program

  - Occupational health

  - Dean/School Administration

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The Process from 30,000 ft

- Report – online, email and phone reporting

- Secure – physical premises, BOLO, employee status

- Triage/Consult – review report, determine if appropriate for The RAT

- Engage/Assemble – entire Team comes together

- Assess – information gathering and review, collateral information, forensic assessments, identify risk factors and protective factors

- Decide – make determination of risk and steps to mitigate risk

- Monitor – monitor the situation post-decision

- Document – case documentation/tracking

- Program evaluation – determine outcome measures, evaluation of outcomes

A Question

What do you think are some of the barriers to implementing and maintain a workplace violence program?

Barriers to Workplace Violence Prevention

- Demands time, energy and focus

- Accountability and ownership

- Reporting mechanisms not clear

- Varying perceptions of violence

- Tendency toward a reactive, not proactive, approach

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Barriers to Workplace Violence Prevention

- Decentralization

- Underreporting

- Discomfort talking about violence

- Stigma, particularly regarding domestic/intimate partner violence

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Workplace Violence Prevention: Threat Assessment

Threat assessment is not the end/completion of the process.

Instead, it informs next steps: decision making, disposition, engagement with the person of concern and potential targets, ongoing monitoring if indicated
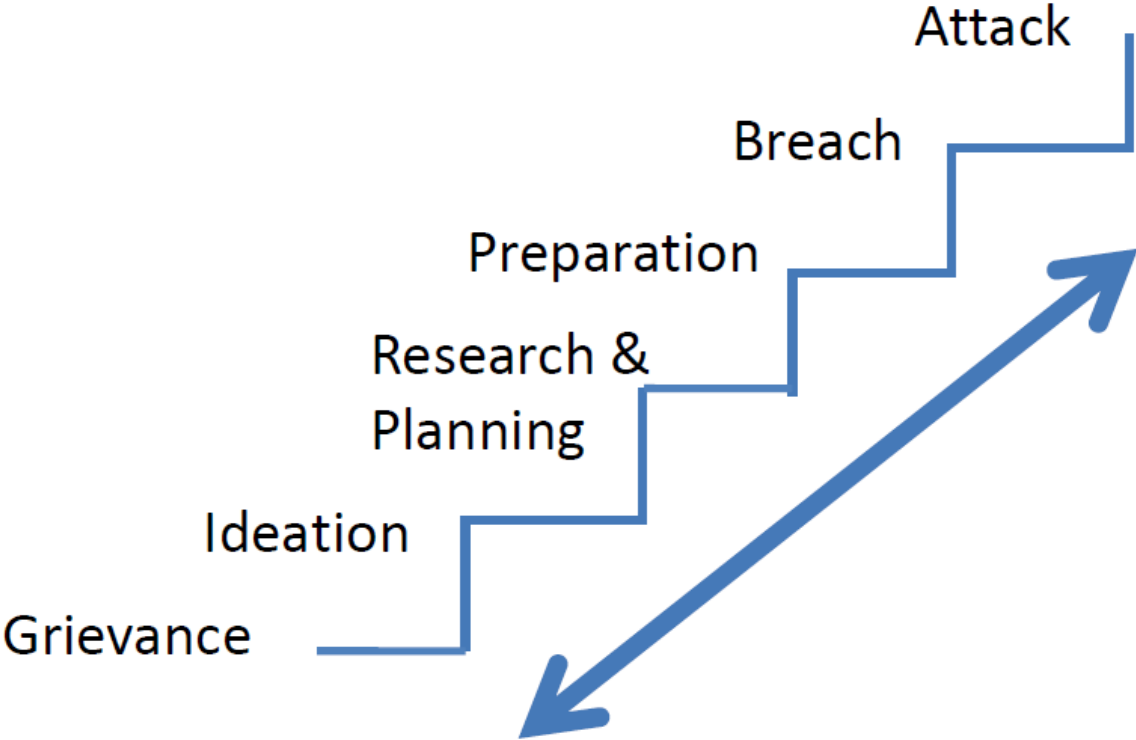
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Threats

- **Threat**: An expressed intent to cause harm or damage

- **Direct threat**: A threat to a specific target or to authorities

- **Threatening behaviors**: bullying; harassment; verbal attacks; hostile gestures, aggressive posturing

Pathway to Workplace Violence

Grievance → Ideation → Research & Planning → Preparation → Breach → Attack

Some Warning Signs

- Statements indicating suicidality, hopelessness, end of life planning

- Negative change in behavior and/or appearance

- Recent interest in explosives

- Recent acquisition of firearms, ammunition, protective gear

- Contextually inappropriate intense interest in or fascination with mass shootings

- Sudden withdrawal/disengagement

- Statements, manifestos, communications of "farewell"

- Recent significant personal loss – divorce/breakups; job loss; loss of status and self-image

Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks, US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation

What Should Employees Do?

- Engage in thoughts, statements and behaviors that promote civility, respect, DEI, psychological safety

- Learn about warning signs

- Attend bystander training and be an upstander

- Avoid direct confrontation

- Secure personal safety and safety of others

- Report cncerns

Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks, US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation

What Should Employers Do?

Design, develop and maintain a workplace violence program

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Workplace Violence/Threat Assessment Resources

Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks, US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Workplace Violence: Awareness and Prevention for Employers and Employees, Washington State Department of Labor & Industries

Workplace Violence, US Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Healthcare and Social Service Workers, US Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Workplace Violence Prevention Resources, The Joint Commission

School and Workplace Violence, US Department of Homeland Security

Data Sources

The Economics Daily (TED), US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Assault Fourth Leading Cause of Workplace Deaths, National Safety Council

OSHA Fact Sheet, Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Threat Assessment Teams

A threat assessment team is an interdisciplinary team focused on mitigating the risks of – and preventing – workplace violence.
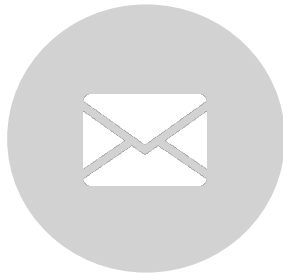
Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks, US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Threat Assessment for School Administrators & Crisis Teams, National Association of School Psychologists

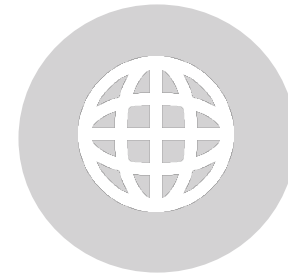Guidance on Threat Assessment Teams, ASIS International

Have a good and safe day

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