



Violence and Aggression at Work

HSE's definition of work-related violence is 'any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work'. Employers have a responsibility to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. Employers may want to include bullying and harassment within the above definition.

In the Health and Safety Risk Assessment (M 250B) you will assess the risks of violence and aggression at work, your current precautions and whether any further changes are required to minimise the risk. The factors to consider include security, the design of the reception area, chaperoning, customer care techniques, how potentially aggressive patients are identified and post aggression counselling.

Following the risk assessment, adapt Zero Tolerance on Violence and Aggression Policy (M 233-VAW). Train your team, review the risk assessment and policy on a regular basis and amend them as required.

Find out if there is a problem:

- Consult with your team
- Keep detailed records of incidents, including verbal abuse and threats e.g. an account of what happened, details of victim, assailant and witnesses, the outcome, work time lost, location and possible causes
- Classify all incidents e.g. fatal injury, major injury, injury or emotional shock requiring first aid, out patient treatment, counselling, absence from work (how much) or feeling of being at risk or distressed

Decide what action to take:

- Use the above records to check for patterns like common causes, areas or times, to help you to decide any steps that need to be taken
- Decide who might be at risk
- If possible, identify potentially violent people in advance
- Check whether precautions already in place are adequate

Possible action:

- Ensure team members are trained to spot the early signs of aggression and can either avoid or cope with it and to anticipate factors which might make violence more likely
- Provide team members with the information they might need to identify clients with a history of violence
- Ensure the waiting area is welcoming and friendly and patients have access to magazines etc
- Provide regular information to the public about delays etc
- Publicise complaints procedure
- Consider physical security measures where necessary e.g. alarm systems, video cameras, security locks, wide reception counters etc
- Provide team members with a means of calling for assistance e.g. an alarm button
- Secure fixtures and fittings to avoid them being used as a weapon
- Ensure drugs, syringes etc are securely locked away
- Bank cash frequently but vary the route, time etc
- Encourage cheque/card payments
- Review the action taken to ascertain if its working

It is a good idea to have planned the provision of support for the victim of any violent incident and the following areas should be considered:

- Debriefing
- Time off work
- Counselling
- Legal help



- Other employees

If it is necessary to make an outside visit e.g. in an emergency:

- Ensure your whereabouts is recorded
- Check patient records for an abusive history
- Familiarise yourself with the location, and type of area
- Take a chaperon if possible
- If you are concerned for your safety ask the local police
- Do not enter the premises if you have any doubts

Following an incident:

- Contact the police
- Consider de-registering the patient (by applying to the Health Authority/Health Board or by giving the patient three months notice, during which emergency care must be provided)
- Where the incident/accident is reportable under RIDDOR the enforcing authority must be informed
- Consider legal action
- Provide the relevant support to the victim

Further guidance and details are available from:

The Health and Safety at work etc Act 1974 (HSW Act)

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR)

Safety Representatives and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 (b)

Violence at work – a guide for employers, INDG69, 1996