

## **Bargaining for Workplace Violence Prevention**

### **Background**

Workplace Violence has become an epidemic, especially in the healthcare and social services fields. Not only is violence in the workplace increasingly common where violence has historically been assumed to be a part of the job (e.g. law enforcement) but it is also prevalent in almost every occupation that deals with the public. Injuries and deaths related to workplace violence can't be tolerated. Most incidents are predictable and often preventable. Like any other workplace hazard, it is the responsibility of the employer to take reasonable measures to minimize the likelihood of workplace violence. One step that employers can take is to adopt a comprehensive workplace violence prevention program.

A comprehensive workplace violence prevention program should include the following elements:

- Management commitment & employee involvement
- Worksite analysis & risk evaluation
- Prevention & control
- Confidential means of reporting
- Protection and support for witnesses or victims of violence
- Training
- Recordkeeping & program evaluation

### **Tips for Bargaining Language on Workplace Violence Prevention**

1. Know if your members are covered by any local or state regulations. If yes, are they adequate for the conditions in which you or AFSCME members work?
2. Prevention is the key! Consider existing policies, procedures and practices that may increase or contribute to the risk of workplace violence. Also, consider what additional programs or resources (mental health services, physical security) may be necessary to build a program that truly is preventative in nature and delivery.
3. Create a threat assessment team – not all threats are the same and there are so many different facets to consider when assessing a threat or when made aware of potential signs of violence.
  - Best practices show that a good threat assessment team should consist of individuals with appropriate skills and training. This can include de-escalation, mental health first-aid, and access to law enforcement, social workers. The threat assessment team should thoroughly and properly evaluate the situation while taking into consideration the content (i.e., the words or deeds used), context (i.e., what happened before, during and after a threat is made), and circumstances (i.e., surrounding facts).
4. Do not, or at least be very cautious, on including language that states there is a zero-tolerance policy.
  - While 'zero-tolerance' sounds good and reassuring in theory, in practical application it can mean a less effective policy.
  - When zero tolerance means that the same, severe punishment is applied to similar incidents regardless of history and circumstances, it can dissuade workers from reporting potential warning signs or concerns. Research shows that workplaces that have a zero-tolerance policy deter reporting of bad conduct; bystanders may fear their reports could lead to immediate and harsh repercussions without due process, and possible retaliation against the reporter.

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