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SOME WARNING SIGNS OF POSSIBLE WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

1. **THREATS:** Threats are never "just talk" and, should never be overlooked. Act on all threats and protect employees and children.
2. **ERRATIC BEHAVIOR:** Depressed, gloomy, or unusual behavior may indicate pending action or a major change in one's life.
3. **A FASCINATION WITH VIOLENCE**
4. **FIXATION ON A CO-WORKER**
5. **PARANOIA**
6. **DEPRESSION:** 10% of all Americans suffer from chronic depression.

CHILDREN AND THE AFTERMATH OF VIOLENCE

Memories of violence are not easy to remove. Encourage discussions to help sort out thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Encourage the maintenance of a routine. It is important to represent reality, therefore, confirm the events at a level that meets the child's capacity to comprehend. Falsely minimizing the danger will not eliminate the child's concerns.

Professional advice, evaluation, and treatment for children affected by disaster--especially those who have witnessed violence or death--can help prevent or minimize Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Encourage parents to speak with their pediatrician or family doctor to refer them to a child or adolescent psychiatrist.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry recommends that parents use the following guidelines in the aftermath of violence:

1. Try to spend more time with your child;
2. Children can be expected to have greater difficulty with time of separation (school drop-off, bedtime, etc.);
3. Limit, but do not avoid, your child's viewing of the tragedy on television;
4. Allow the child to discuss the tragedy, but do not force it;
5. Be aware that delayed reactions to this tragedy may occur;
6. Professional advice, consultations, and perhaps treatment for children affected by a disaster can help prevent or minimize further problems.

Parents and staff should also be alerted to look for the following signs that may indicate Post Traumatic Stress:

- * Refusal to return to school and "clinging" behavior; shadowing the mother or father around the house;
- * Persistent fears related to the catastrophe, e.g., fears about being permanently separated from parents;
- * Sleep disturbances such as nightmares, screaming during sleep and bedwetting, persisting more than several days after the event;
- * Loss of concentration and irritability;
- * Behavior problems, for example, misbehaving in school or at home in ways that are not typical for the child;
- * Physical complaints (stomachaches, headaches, dizziness) for which a physical cause can not be found;

- * Withdrawal from family and friends, listlessness, decreased activity, preoccupation with the events of the disaster.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- * **Emergency Evacuation Drills:** Be sure to consider all possibilities. Using fire drill procedures will be insufficient if guns are involved in violent acts. Consider as many possibilities as you can imagine.
- * **Develop a Safe Place** within your center to harbor children and staff.
- * **Develop and use code words:** This will allow you to handle some situations without the children or strangers knowing the plan.
- * **Review access areas** to the building, playground, etc.
- * **Review exterior locations**, for example, parking lots, sidewalks, outdoor lighting.
- * **Consider use of photo I.D. and visitor tags.**
- * **Contact and invite local police to visit your center.**
- * **Program phones for immediate connection to 911.** Also be sure to check 911 to assure service in your area.
- * **Consider installation of video camera at entrances**, etc.
- * **Adopt and enforce policies to enhance safety:** Former employees should not be permitted to return to the center without prior written permission, etc.
- * **Explain importance of safety issues and train staff regularly** regarding policies and procedures. Additionally, ask staff to make suggestions regarding problem areas and solutions.

SAMPLE POLICY

AGENCY NAME

SUBJECT: WORKPLACE SAFETY

POLICY NO: _____

APPROVED BY:

EFFECTIVE DATE: _____

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: _____

DATE: _____

POLICY COUNCIL: _____

DATE: _____

(AGENCY NAME) strives to provide a safe workplace for all employees.

Employees must be keenly aware of their environment and persons who enter any facility. Anyone who is not recognized should be questioned regarding the nature of their visit. Strangers should be escorted to the door.

Former employees are not permitted on the facilities or grounds of (AGENCY NAME) without prior permission. If a former employee returns to the facility notify a supervisor immediately. Former employees will be asked to leave the premises. Local police will be called, if necessary.

All employees must be familiar with and adhere to the rules for releasing children.

Any unusual incidents should be documented and brought to the attention of the supervisor immediately.

Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action including termination.