

Workplace violence prevention and response

RESOURCE GUIDE



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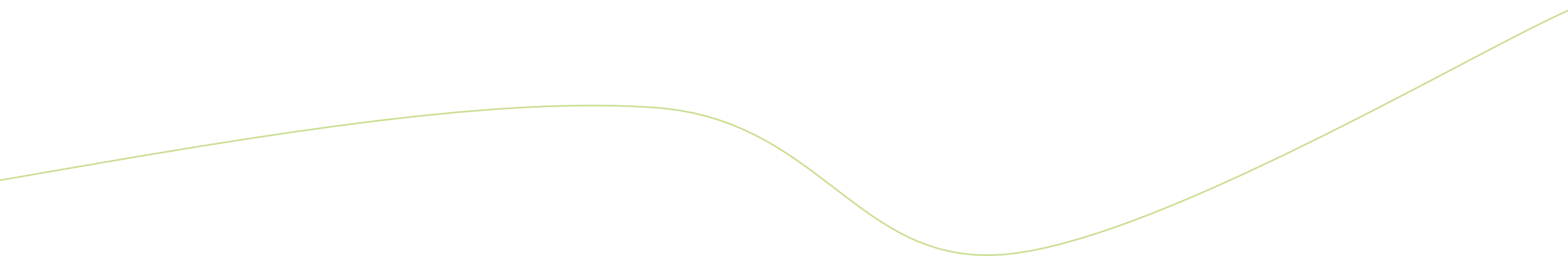
Why are we concerned?



**Violence can
impact any
workplace, at
any time!**



Recent events in the news, and experiences of community members have highlighted the need for organizations to be better prepared to prevent and respond to workplace threats.



Workplace violence is defined as an act or threat of physical violence, intimidation, harassment, bullying, or any other disruptive behavior ⁽¹⁾

In most workplaces where risk factors can be identified, the risk of assault can be prevented or minimized if employers take appropriate precautions.

People are often negatively impacted emotionally, cognitively, or behaviorally for variable amounts of time during and after a crisis at work.

Nearly 2 million workers report having been victims of workplace violence each year ⁽²⁾

One of the best protections employers can offer their workers is to establish a zero-tolerance policy toward workplace violence

Prevention



Environmental and facility safety

Conduct a security assessment looking at building access for staff and public, lighting, whether staff wear identification, window and lock security, and other elements of a facility's layout to ensure staff access to exits and safe spaces in the event of a confrontation or threat.

Encourage employees to report vulnerabilities

Train Employees to recognize potential dangers beyond escalated mood that require a call to 911

Implement a No-Tolerance policy on violence or threatening behavior

Consider additional security measures as appropriate for your organization (i.e. security cameras)

Consider security personnel as appropriate

Establish an outside lockbox for emergency agencies who may need access



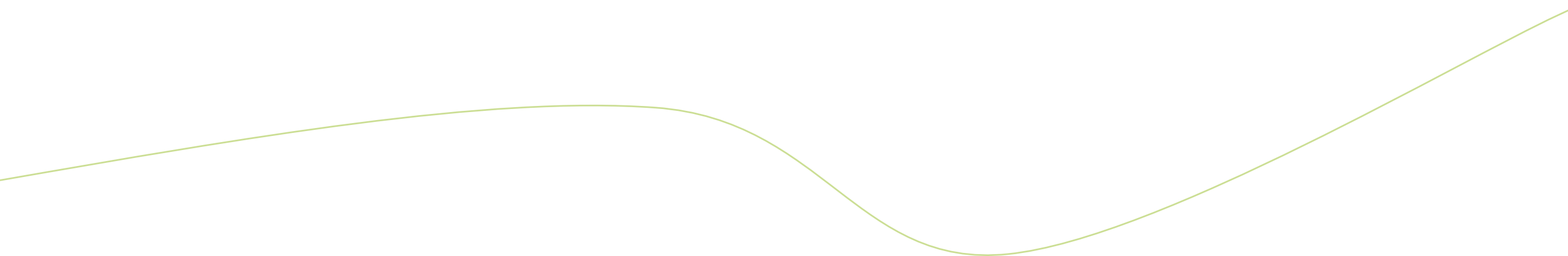
Situational awareness



**What
is it?**



The act of being aware of what is happening around you, taking everything into account and adjusting your behavior to reduce the risk of injury to you, your family, your coworkers, or your business operations.



Why is situational awareness important?

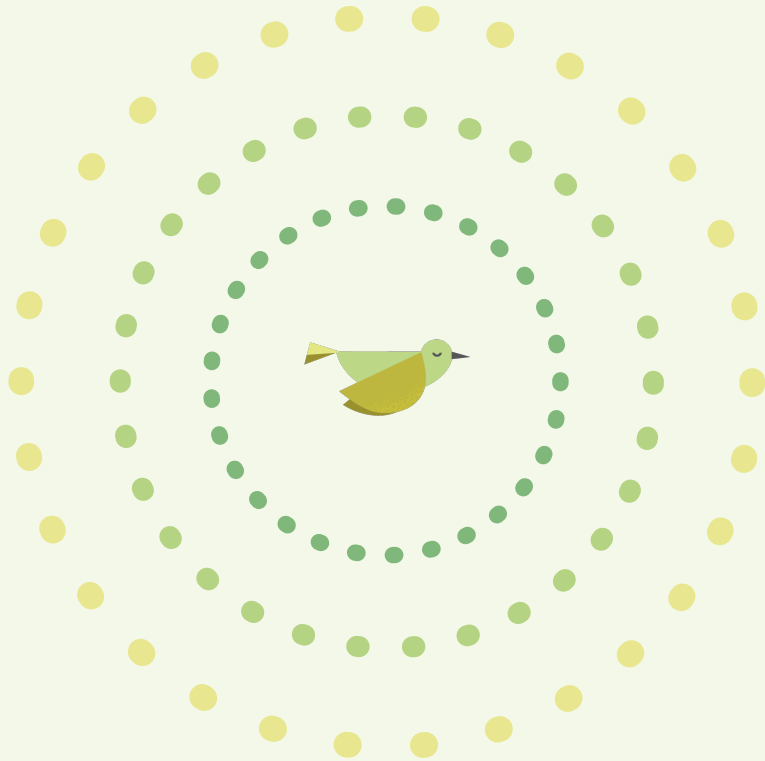
Provides a mental model for perceiving, thinking, evaluating and acting in a systematic way

Being alert makes you a less vulnerable target

Encourages trust in your intuition and/or instincts

Helps you to spot anomalies and learn what “normal” looks and feels like in a given situation

Conditions you to act based on your observations, rather than reacting automatically



Developing a mindset of situational awareness

5 behaviors for effective awareness

Intentionally and persistently practice the following behaviors:

Be aware of your surroundings

Stay vigilant and minimize distractions

Notice and evaluate other people

Take action

Trust your senses and intuition

Be aware of your surroundings

- Know what “normal” looks like in your environment
- Observe and listen for things that are abnormal
- Scan for unusual or suspicious objects
- Don't presume abnormalities are innocent or fine
- Know where all exits/entrances are – have an exit strategy
- Know locations of safety equipment and protective gear

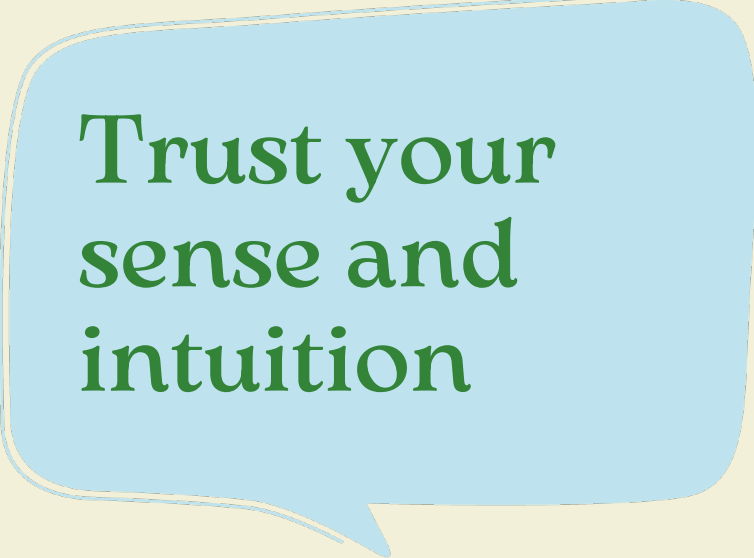


Notice other people

- Observe people around you
- Watch for abnormal behavior
- Know warning signs of high-risk behavior:
 - Loud, aggressive speech
 - Trembling, shaking, or sweating
 - Aggressive acts or violent gestures
 - Tense posturing
 - Frequently changing body position, pacing
 - Argumentative or angry demeanor
 - Approaching others personal space
- Protect against entry into your personal space

Stay vigilant and minimize distractions

- Be attentive and focused
- Minimize distractions
(i.e. cell phones, ear buds, background noise)
- Be aware of and minimize fatigue



Trust your sense and intuition

Your brain is constantly comparing patterns of current environmental clues to stored patterns of previous experiences. Your brain's analysis of these patterns is what provides you with intuition:

- **“Trust your gut”**—your intuition understand more about a situation than you consciously realize
- **Tune into your emotions and bodily clues**—when something doesn't feel right, at some level, it probably isn't



Take action

- Don't give in to "normalcy bias", the act of ignoring prospective threats because it's unlikely a dangerous situation might occur
 - Take indications of danger seriously
 - Don't delay in responding to alarming/abnormal behavior
 - Decide upon course of action
- Act upon office safety protocols/procedures to mitigate risks
 - Follow rehearsed safety scenarios
 - Employ de-escalation techniques
- Communicate concern to others
 - Report vulnerabilities or threats
 - Call 9-1-1 if appropriate

Situational awareness frameworks

Organizations should establish a behavioral framework for employees to follow to encourage quick decision-making and consistency.



Two of the most commonly practiced frameworks are:



The OODA Loop (U.S. Air Force strategy)
The SLAM Technique

OODA loop (U.S. Air Force strategy)

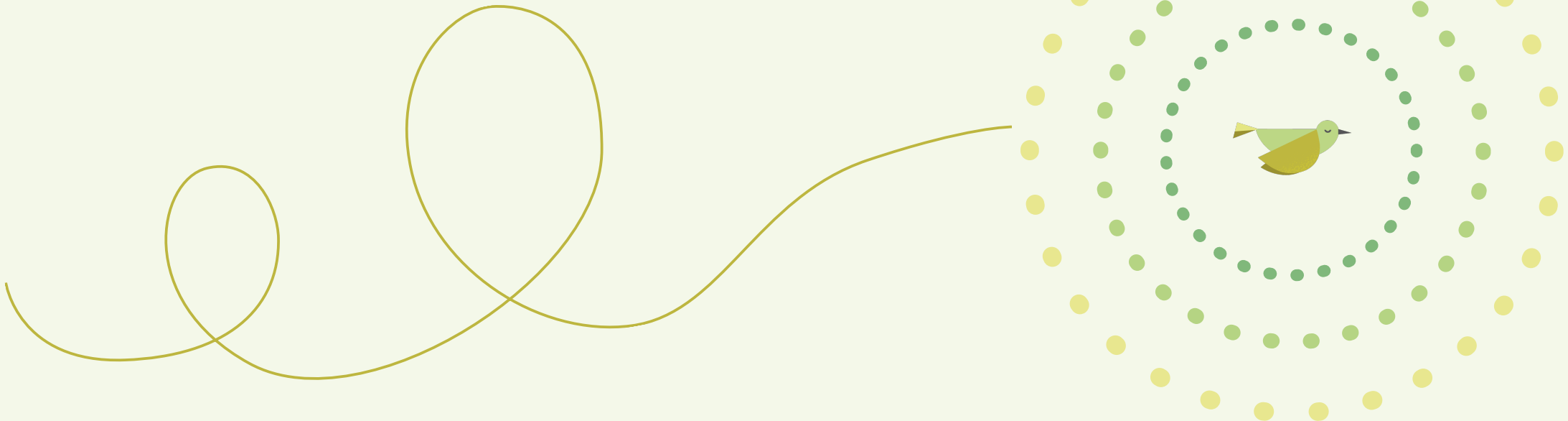
A process to assess confusing or rapidly evolving situations.

Observe the situation

Orient yourself to the reality of your surroundings, eliminating your assumptions and biases

Decide what you are going to do

Act confidently with your ongoing awareness



SLAM

Stop—
decrease distractions,
stop your current work,
make sure you are not
in a situation when you
are facing away from
an escalated person,
and try not to be
looking down at your
phone so you can
maintain presence in
the moment.

Look—
at your work area and
find the hazards that
are present to you and
your workmates.

Assess—the situation
and what would need
to happen to ensure
safety

Manage—the current
situation using
protocols/procedures
appropriate to your
business/setting.



Prepare and train for emergencies

Key components of trainings to prepare staff to handle difficult interactions that have potential to become dangerous include:

Recognizing an
escalated individual

Training in verbal
de-escalation techniques

Recognizing an
imminent threat

Practicing emergency
scenarios and
evacuation drills

Train staff to:

- Use person-first language to reduce stigma
- Choosing appropriate language to reduce the stigma around mental illness and substance use disorders



Emergency response



Best practices

Organizations should establish a behavioral framework for employees to follow to encourage quick decision-making and consistency.



Verbal de-escalation



Individuals who are agitated but cooperative may be amenable to verbal de-escalation techniques.⁽³⁾

An obviously angry individual should always be considered potentially violent.

Higher risk behaviors to be aware of include:

- Provocative behavior
- Angry demeanor
- Loud, aggressive speech
- Tense posturing (e.g., gripping arm rails tightly, clenching fists)
- Frequently changing body position, pacing
- Aggressive acts (e.g., pounding walls, throwing objects, hitting oneself)

Staff should call 911 if they are dealing with an individual who is actively violent, uncooperative, extremely agitated and/or not responding to verbal de-escalation techniques.

Supporting staff



Psychological First Aid (PFA)



Initial disaster
response
intervention



Promote safety
Stabilize victims emotionally
Connect individuals to help/resources

Address immediate concerns and needs / NOT to provide on-site therapy

PFA core actions

Contact and engagement

To respond to contacts initiated by colleagues, or to initiate contacts in a **non-intrusive, compassionate, and helpful manner**.

Safety and comfort

To **enhance** immediate and ongoing safety and provide physical and emotional comfort.

Stabilization (if needed)

To **calm and orient** emotionally overwhelmed or disoriented colleagues.

Information gather: current needs and concerns

To **identify immediate needs** and concerns, gather additional information, and tailor response/interventions.

Practical assistance

To **offer practical help** to colleagues in addressing immediate needs and concerns.

Connection with social supports

To **help establish brief or ongoing contacts** with primary support persons and sources of support, including family members, friends, and community helping resources.

Information on coping

To **provide information about stress reactions and coping** to reduce distress and promote adaptive functioning.

Linkage with collaborative services

To **link colleagues with available services** needed at the time or in the future.



Communication

“When people are stressed and upset, they want to know that you care before they care what you know.”

– Will Rogers

Best practices for leaders⁽⁴⁾

The leader

Utilize informed compassion.
Know your people and how they best respond.


Vulnerability

Be vigilant in identifying factors that have potential to negatively impact people.

CCO model

Compassion
Conviction
Optimism

Message development to staff

- Prepare communications, keep it short/simple/repeated
 - Positives should outnumber negatives 3:1
 - Messages should be delivered in order or importance prioritizing primacy and recency (do not include the most important message in the middle).
 - Don't be afraid to admit if you do not know. Make a commitment to follow up.
- 

Supervisors⁽⁵⁾

Promote a sense of
calm and control

Avoid snap
decisions

Identify a trusted
colleague to bounce
ideas off

Take breaks
when needed—
do not overwork

Reward and
compliment others
for their work



After action review and organization assessment of readiness



Root cause analysis

No name, no blame

Review what happened, if protocols were followed, what went well, and what needs to be improved

Reach out to internal supports/legal communications to determine best route for communicating with community members if needed

References



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Thank you

