

# Violence Prevention

Training for the County Field Worker

*Presented by  
Sacramento County Safety Office  
&  
Detective Rosemarie Codog*

# *Workplace Violence Is a Reality*

Most encounters will be pleasant, But,  
*if they turn ugly,*  
*it's just you and the angry party, in their territory.*

- Previous training focused on office environment
- Several historical incidents involving field workers
- Penal Code 692 – 694 provides for the lawful resistance to the commission of a public offense

# *Assisting the County Employee In the Prevention of a Violent Situation When Making Field Visits*

- County Policy
- Resolving Conflict/Verbal Defense
- Basic Threat Assessment and Personal Safety in the Field
- Scenarios

# Training Objectives

- To make you *aware* of the potential for violence in the workplace
- To show you how to *conduct* a threat assessment
- To show you how to *protect* your safety in the field
- To increase your ability to *recognize* early warning signs of a potentially violent person or situation
- To show you how to *report* workplace violence threats or incidents
- To help you understand how to *defuse* violent situations using conflict communication skills
- To teach you problem solving in times of stress

# Employer's Duties to Employees

- Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970
- Cal/OSHA Guidelines (August 1994)
- County Policy and Program Regarding Workplace Violence Prevention

# County Policy on Workplace Violence Prevention

- Purpose:

- To provide a work environment free of fear, violence, aggression, intimidation and/or harassment, by responding to all threats and supporting all possible methods of prevention.

# County Policy Summary

- Chapter 9.42 of the County Code prohibits possession of weapons by any employee in County facilities (Penal Code Violation)
- Establishes Countywide and Departmental Crisis Management Teams
- Provide mandatory workplace violence training program
- Supports preventative and post-trauma counseling through the County's Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

# Department Responsibility

- Enforce provisions of policy
- Take proactive measures in response to Workplace Violence
- Establish a “Department Crisis Management Team (or person)”
- Initial Security Assessments
- Report and investigate all threats and acts of workplace violence

# Department Responsibility

- Workplace Violence Incident Report Form
- Send to:
  - Direct Supervisor
  - Department WPV Coordinator
  - County Safety Office
    - (MC 58-600)
    - Fax 876-5158
- Questions:
  - Tom Williams (876-5028)
  - Robert Stovall (876-5024)
  - Paul Myers (876-5004)
  - Julie Cobb (876-5027)
  - France Duran (875-1405)
  - General Information (876-5026)
  - Detective Rosemarie Codog (875-1273/rcodog@sacsheriff.com)

# You Are At Risk!

- County employees who work in the field within the community are placed in situations where one wrong decision can make them a victim of workplace violence.
- Assaults and violent acts (Homicide & Suicides) account for more work place fatalities than traditional causes.
- 11% of Work Place Fatalities in California in 2010 were due to Homicide.

Source: Board of Labor Statistics

# Workplace Violence Definition

- Cal/OSHA defines workplace violence as acts which take place on the employer's premises and at other locations where employees are engaged in work related activities or are present as a condition of employment.

# Definitions

- **Violence** includes physical violence or threats of physical violence that would lead a reasonable person to fear for his/her safety. Violence may be described as “verbal” or “physical”

# Definitions

- *Verbal violence* “is displayed by verbal abuse or harassment involving unwanted acts of language that threatens to harm someone”

# Definitions

- *Physical violence* “is unwelcome contact between two parties. This also includes sexual assaults and property damage”.

# Definitions

- Harassment

- threatens harm, including obscene phone calls, stalking

- Imminent

- ready to take place, about to occur, starting to happen

- Threat

- intent to cause harm to safety, health or property

# Examples of Violence

Physical Assaults

Suicide

Stalking

Vandalism

Intimidation

Threats

Theft

Bomb Threats

Rapes

Murder

# Who Commits Workplace Violence

- Clients
- Co-workers
- Significant others
- Strangers

# Warning Signs That Can Indicate an Unsafe Environment

- Hostility
- High Crime Area
- Gang members, gang graffiti (criminal element)
- Reinforced storm doors, excessive locking devices
- Video Surveillance
- Vandalism-bullet holes in vehicle/residence/business
- Locked rooms, secret doors, blocked doors/storage

# Warning Signs (cont)

- Weapons in open view such as firearms, knives, explosives and unconventional weapons (clubs, baseball bats, pool cues, hockey sticks) placed near entrances or windows, chemicals, hot liquids, open flames, etc. which may also be tools of their trade
- Drugs, drug use, and / or drug paraphernalia
  - To include persons obviously under the influence
- Pirating of electricity, electrical equipment not common for the trade
- Vicious animals protecting entry ways

# Warning Signs

Strange odours.

Blacked-out windows.



Unusual traffic flow.

Blinds down and extremely bright indoor lighting through gaps.

Hoses and pipes for ventilation or water supply.

Chemical containers and waste.

# Pirating of Electricity



# Pirating of Electricity

## (Elk Grove Pot Homes)



# Pirating of Electricity (Elk Grove Pot Homes)



# Excessive Chemicals Laying Out



# Vicious Animals Protecting Entry Ways



# Reinforced Storm Doors / Windows



# Work Place Risk Factors for Potential Work Place Violence

- Attitude, stress, personal biases, unfamiliarity and fear
- Exchange of Money
- Working in high crime areas or any area alone, early in the morning or late at night
- Availability of valuable items: Clothes, purses, jewelry, computers, phones, etc.
- Performing public safety functions in the community
- Working with patients, customers or clients known to have a history of violence

# Work Place Risk Factors for Potential Work Place Violence

- Work locations where employees have a history of assaults or who may have exhibited belligerent, intimidating or threatening behavior to others in the past
- Discretionary decisions that delay the client obtaining results due to county policy, rules, regulations, paperwork errors, etc.
- Working in situations which are highly emotional by nature
  - Inspectors suspending privileges, taking away licenses and closing business operations
  - CPS workers removing children from a home
  - DHA workers doing home visits and sanctioning clients

# Attitude

by Charles Swindoll

- The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life.

Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home.

The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.

And so it is with you... we are in charge of our Attitudes.

# Professionalism

- Do not take things personally
- Maintain your professionalism
  - Keep your composure
  - Be polite, excuse yourself if you cannot
- Do not get personal. Stay focused on the entire situation.
  - It is not our job to create tension, our job is it to complete our task with as little tension as possible.

# Safety Plan

## *Always Have A Plan!*

- County employees who do field work need to always be cognizant of their surroundings to stay safe
- Employees also need to practice safety plans to be able to follow through in an unsafe, stressful situation
  - including verbal and physical actions to remain safe.

# Safety Plan Considerations

- **Always tell someone where you are going!**
  - Time leaving, direction headed, approximate time back, and contact information such as cell phone number.
  - Check in with unit after visit.
  - The one time you do not may be the time you need help!
- **Do your homework:**
  - **Research clients if possible**
    - Utilize background checks by requesting assistance through your supervisor from investigators or local law enforcement
  - **Know the area you are visiting!**
    - Drive by the location you are to visit and look for warning signs
    - Plan escape routes: Park vehicles where it is visible and you can exit area quickly

# Safety Considerations

- Know the local law enforcement agency responsible for the area
  - Get to know the assigned officers if you frequent an area
  - Get familiar with the Problem Oriented Policing Officers. (P.O.P.) They can assist in doing background/intelligence on the client. They may also be willing to assist with a standby without long delays.
  - Program the emergency cell number for your most frequented Law Enforcement jurisdiction.
    - Most 911 calls from your cell phone go to local agency now but some still go to California Highway Patrol.

## **Sacramento Area Law Enforcement Agencies Emergency Numbers for cell phones (916 area code)**

- Sacramento Sheriff Dept. 874-5111
- Sacramento Police Dept. 732-0100
- Elk Grove Police Dept. 714-5111
- Rancho Cordova P.D. 362-5111
- Citrus Heights P.D. 726-3015
- California Highway Patrol 861-1300

# Safety Plan Considerations (cont)

- Do not focus only on the task, watch the body language of the clients and patrons.
- Call and wait for a standby from law enforcement if you have an uneasy feeling (instinct) due to warning signs you can articulate
- During your visit place yourself closest to the exit of the premises if possible
  - If something is not right make an excuse to leave the meeting.
    - Always leave some paperwork in your car to give you an out if needed.
- Report all incidents of Work Place Violence no matter how minor
  - Other employees may need warning to keep safe during future contacts with the subject (s).
- Report all illegal and suspicious activity even if it is not your job/expertise/ area of responsibility.
  - We are all working together to stay safe.

# Safety Plan Considerations (cont)

- If things go bad, remember your attitude can make or break the situation
  - Stay calm and listen - maintain eye contact
  - Watch the persons eyes and hands
  - Watch the persons body language for signals of escalation or de-escalation
    - Escalation: Clenched fists, sweating, heavy/fast breathing, clenched jaw/teeth, turning red, squinted eyes, voice changes, fighting stance
    - De-escalation: slumped shoulders, sitting down, able to follow directions, slow breathing, relaxed body tone, calm voice
  - Be courteous and patient (address by name- Mr. or Mrs.)
  - Refocus on goal oriented suggestions/direction (you getting to a safe place)
  - Reduce level of emotions w/calm voice
    - aggressiveness or agitation is usually met with an equal or heightened response
  - Keep body language neutral but confident
    - Use affirmative body language

# Safety Plan Considerations (cont)

- Encourage person to be seated or stay seated
- Be ready to react if assaulted- keep hands free or use clip board/equipment as shield
- Listen actively to what the aggressor is angry about
- DO NOT argue back
- Build a rapport, use of names
- Attempt to refocus the conversation away from the source/subject of anger while moving towards safety/exit!

# Safety Plan Considerations (cont)

- Be empathetic - willingness to help
- Try not to negotiate or promise anything that can not be accomplished, but do what is necessary to stay safe
  - Your agency may/will have to deal with this person again and credibility will be needed
- Attempt to move to position of advantage to give yourself an escape route
- Redirect person's energy - step away, put hands up
- (Defend and Retreat)
- The GOAL at this point is to escape to safety and summon help!

# If threatened with a weapon

- Stay calm, keep eye contact, and signal for help
- Never grab the weapon
- Watch for a chance to escape
- Do not go to a second location
- Stall for time, keep talking, follow instructions
- Don't risk harm or injury

# Law Enforcement Response and reporting process

- If law enforcement responds to assist be clear of what your options are:

Crime vs. Incident Report

# Crime Report

- If you believe a crime occurred, you should request a crime report be taken at the scene the day of the incident.
- Supervisors are not the victim, you are. It is your responsibility .
  - Third party information is not admissible in court.

# Incident Report

- Report to document there was an incident, it did not meet the elements of a crime, but it was note worthy.
- Should also be requested at the scene by the party involved, but can be called in after the fact . In some circumstances an online report can be made.

# Felony vs Misdemeanor

- Felony- Punishable by 1 year or more of incarceration in a state penal institution. Does not have to occur in the officer's presence; arrest can be made without citizen's arrest.
- Misdemeanor- Punishable by less than 1 year of incarceration in a county detention facility. If it **does not** occur in officer's presence one must sign a citizens arrest.
  - Usually cited out unless belief crime will continue.

# Adjudication Process

- Arrest made, report taken.
  - Suspect booked into jail until arraignment unless they bail out.
    - Arraignment in 48 hours
  - Citation: Suspect is given a citation to appear in court on a specific date.
- Report forwarded to jurisdiction detectives.
  - Detectives have 48 hours for follow up work and submit to the district attorney's office for intake review and charging of the crime.
  - If D.A.'s office files charges then court proceedings start.
  - If no charges are filed then the case is usually closed.
    - D.A.'s office does not prosecute all arrests for various reasons.

# Applicable Enforcement Codes

- **California Health and Safety Code Sections:**
- **Section 114390(d)**. It is a violation of this part for any person to refuse to permit entry or inspection, the taking of samples or other evidence, access to copy any record as authorized by this part, to conceal any samples or evidence, withhold evidence concerning them, or interfere with the performance of the duties of and enforcement officer, including verbal or physical threats or sexual or discriminatory harassment.
- **Section 114395**. Except as otherwise provided in this part, any person who violates any provision of this part or regulation adopted pursuant to this part is guilty of a misdemeanor. Each offense shall be punished by a fine of not less than twenty-five (\$25) or more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) or by imprisonment in the county jail for a term not exceeding six months, or by both fine and imprisonment.
- **Section 114411**. The enforcement agency may, after providing opportunity for a hearing, modify, suspend, or revoke a permit for serious or repeated violations of any requirement of this part or for interference in the performance of the duty of the enforcement officer.

# Enforcement Codes

- Penal Codes:

- **71. (a)** Every person who, with intent to cause, attempts to cause, or causes, any officer or employee of any public or private educational institution or **any public officer or employee** to do, or refrain from doing, any act in the performance of his duties, by means of a threat, directly communicated to such person, to inflict an unlawful injury upon any person or property, and it reasonably appears to the recipient of the threat that such threat could be carried out, is guilty of a public offense punishable as follows: (1) Upon a first conviction, such person is punishable by a fine not exceeding ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), or by imprisonment pursuant to subdivision (h) of Section 1170, or in a county jail not exceeding one year, or by both that fine and imprisonment. (2) If the person has been previously convicted of a violation of this section, such previous conviction shall be charged in the accusatory pleading, and if that previous conviction is found to be true by the jury, upon a jury trial, or by the court, upon a court trial, or is admitted by the defendant, he or she is punishable by imprisonment pursuant to subdivision (h) of Section 1170.\*\* (b) As used in this section, "directly communicated" includes, but is not limited to, a communication to the recipient of the threat by telephone, telegraph, or letter.

- \*\* Second offense makes it a felony

- **422.** (a) Any person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death or great bodily injury to another person, with the specific intent that the statement, made verbally, in writing, or by means of an electronic communication device, is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out, which, on its face and under the circumstances in which it is made, is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to convey to the person threatened, a gravity of purpose and an immediate prospect of execution of the threat, and thereby causes that person reasonably to be in sustained fear for his or her own safety or for his or her immediate family's safety, shall be punished by imprisonment in the county jail not to exceed one year, or by imprisonment in the state prison.

# Additional Codes

## Welfare and Institutions:

- **5150.** When any person, as a result of mental disorder, is a danger to others, or to himself or herself, or gravely disabled, a peace officer, member of the attending staff, as defined by regulation, of an evaluation facility designated by the county, designated members of a mobile crisis team provided by Section 5651.7, or other professional person designated by the county may, upon probable cause, take, or cause to be taken, the person into custody and place him or her in a facility designated by the county and approved by the State Department of Social Services as a facility for 72-hour treatment and evaluation.

# Recommended Reading

*The Gift of Fear*

by Gavin DeBecker

And

Your department's workplace violence policy



# **Workplace Violence Scenarios**

Group Activity

# Scenario 1

- What do you do?
- What is your plan?

# Scenario 2

- What are your warning signs?
- What steps do you take to stay as safe as possible?

# Scenario 3

- What do you do?
- What is your plan?

# Scenario 4

- While an EMD Environmental Specialist is conducting an inspection, the responsible party (RP) begins to raise his/her voice. The RP begins to yell and waive their arms.
- What do you do?
- What is your plan?

# Scenario 5

- While driving from a site (on County business) an unknown driver starts to express road rage toward the County employee. The road rage driver honks his horn, yells at the County employee and signals for him/her to pull off the road.

The road rage driver then pulls in front of the County employee's vehicle and applies his/her brakes.

(This scenario could be if the County employee is in a County vehicle or a personal vehicle.)

- What do you do?
- What is your plan?

# Scenario 6

- .
- What do you do?
- What is your plan?

# **Debriefing / Questions**

**[http://insidehra.saccounty.net/county\\_safety\\_office.htm](http://insidehra.saccounty.net/county_safety_office.htm)**