

CIVIL CONVERSATIONS #1

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE: HOW CAN YOU HELP PREVENT IT?

Violence rarely occurs without some signs that things are not going well for an individual. Often these signs are apparent to co-workers and supervisors who notice that a person's behavior is changing. Change itself is often an important factor. If we are aware of potential signs of problems, we may be able to help our colleagues and keep our NIH violence-free.

What to Notice:

JOB PERFORMANCE CHANGES

- **Excessive tardiness or absences**, especially if this was not the case in the past
- **Reduced productivity**, especially of a previously efficient and productive colleague
- **Significant changes in work habits**, including alternating high and low productivity or quality
- **Violation of safety or security procedures**, including a sudden increase in accidents

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Changes in health or hygiene**: a colleague suddenly disregards personal health or grooming
- **Strained relationships at work**, including disruptive or isolating behavior different from the past
- **Apparent signs of drug or alcohol abuse**
- **Stress** which may be indicated by excessive phone calls, yelling, crying, or personal difficulties
- **Inability to concentrate** when that was not a problem before
- **Unshakeable depression**, often having low energy, little enthusiasm; making despairing remarks
- **Unusual behavior** for that individual, different from the past
- **Unusual fascination with weapons** or stories of violence in the media
- **Threatening, intimidating, or harassing behavior**

What to do:

If you feel comfortable talking with your colleague, you may indicate your concerns to him or her, based on what you have observed. Let your colleague know what resources NIH has that might help (see reverse). If you are not comfortable speaking directly with your colleague, you should notify your supervisor or seek information through the Employee Assistance Program (301-496-3164), the Center for Cooperative Resolution (301- 594-7231), CIVIL (24845 or 301-402-4845) or other resources listed below.

If you notice several of the potential signs listed above, you should pay attention. You may observe these changes in yourself or in your colleagues, and you should take action. These indicators do not mean that someone will behave violently; however, when violent incidents have occurred throughout our country, some of these signs were usually present ahead of time. If each of us helps ourselves and others, we can help make NIH a safer place for all.

NIH is fortunate to be able to offer a variety of resources to our staff.

Violence prevention and response resources

- **CIVIL** (301) 402-4845 <http://civil.nih.gov/>
A team of experts which helps prevent workplace violence through policy development, education, assessment and response to violent or potentially violent incidents when they occur

- **Police Branch, Division of Public Safety** 911 for emergencies
non-emergencies: (301) 496-5685 www.nih.gov/od/ors/dps/

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline** (800) 799-SAFE TDD (800) 787-8224
Victim assistance and referral service

Additional NIH related resources

- **Employee Assistance Program** (301) 496-3164 www.nih.gov/od/ors/ds/eap/
Confidential consultation services to help address difficult situations that may affect an employee

- **Center for Cooperative Resolution** (301) 594-7231 www4.od.nih.gov/ccr/
Confidential and informal assistance in resolving work-related conflicts or concerns

- **Work and Family Life Center** (301) 435-1619 <http://wflc.od.nih.gov/>
Guidance and advice on balancing work and family, and career development needs
TTY: 301-480-0690

- **Occupational Medical Service** (301) 496-4411 www.nih.gov/od/ors/ds/oms/
Medical services for occupational injuries, illnesses, and health promotion

- **Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution, ORS** (301) 435-2329 www.nih.gov/od/ors/od/cadr.htm
Assistance for ORS staff in managing conflict in a constructive and equitable manner

- **Human Resource Development Division** (301) 496-6211 <http://trainingcenter.od.nih.gov/>
Training in conflict management, communication skills and courses related to violence prevention

- In addition, consider internal resources including your administrative, supervisory, and managerial staff, Human Resources professionals, and unions.