

# Understanding and Preventing Workplace Violence



**Alameda County  
Health Care Services Agency**

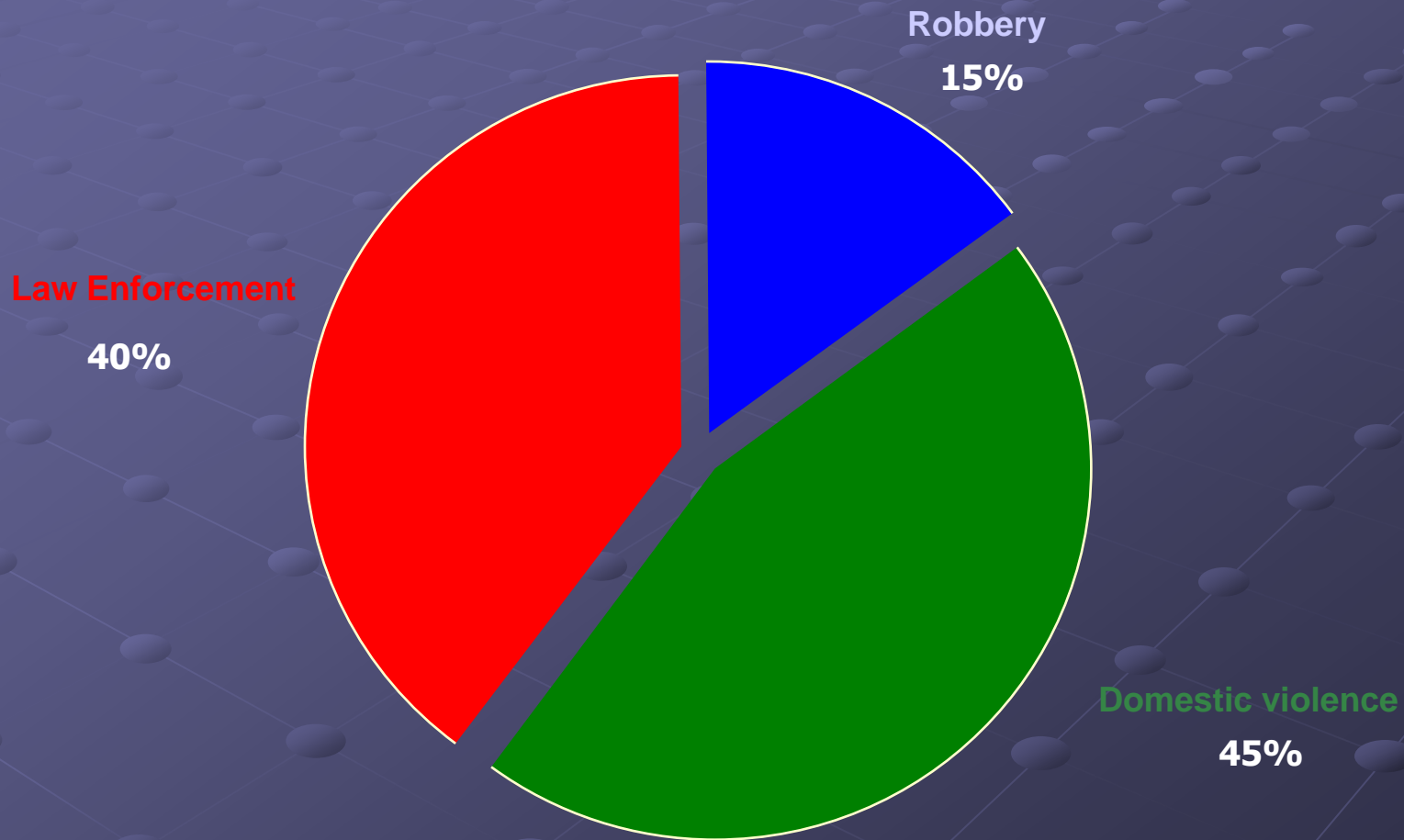
# Why WPVP Training?

- **Raise awareness**
- **Understand County Policy**
- **Recognize warning signs**
- **Steps to prevent incidents**
- **Resources for responding to WPV**
- **Allay fears of WPV**

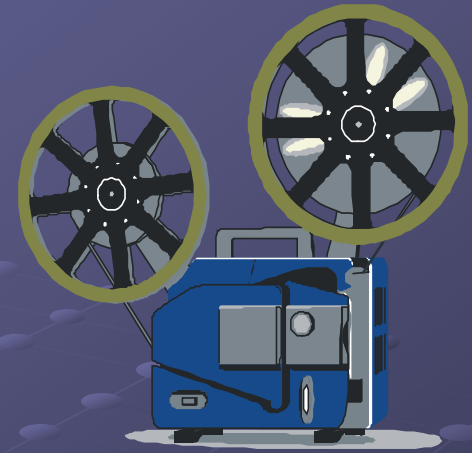
# WPV Background

- **Leading cause of workplace death for women**
- **2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for men**
- **Costs employers \$4.2 billion/year**
- **1,000-1,100 deaths/year since 1995**
- **1 of 6 fatal injuries from WPV**
- **Weekly at work: 20 murders, 18,000 assaults**
- **CDC: epidemic**
- **Over half WPV incidents not reported**

# Workplace Violence Incidents



**Video**



***Workplace Violence: Recognizing  
and Defusing Aggressive Behavior***

# What is Workplace Violence?



- Threats and/or acts of violence committed in the workplace
  - *Intention to hurt, punish, intimidate*
- Violence: intentional force causing
  - *Physical injury*
  - *Mental/emotional harm*

# Workplace Violence Situations

- Threatens employee safety
- Impacts employee's physical or psychological well-being
- Damages County property

# 3 Types of Perpetrator

- **Type 1: No relationship to workplace**
- **Type 2: Services to/from workplace**
- **Type 3: Employee, former employee, family member**



# 3 Levels of Violence

- Level A, B, C
- Levels increase in severity
- From “rudeness” to injury

# Examples of Level A

- Refusal to cooperate with immediate supervisor to a reasonable work request
- Spreading rumors and gossip to harm others
- Consistently arguing with or badgering co-workers
- Belligerence toward customers or co-workers
- Constantly swearing at others
- Making unwanted sexual comments
- Sudden or gradual change in behavior

# Examples of Level B

- Arguments with customers, vendors, co-workers and management
- Refusal to obey policies and procedures
- Sabotaging equipment and stealing property for revenge
- Verbalizing wishes to hurt co-workers and/or management
- Sending sexual, violent or weird notes to co-workers and/or management
- Stalking/Physical confrontations
- Intimidating behaviors

# Examples of Level C

- **Suicide threats**
- **Physical fights**
- **Destruction of property**
- **Committing murder, sexual or physical assault, and/or arson.**

# Workplace Violence Initiators



- Lay-off
- Termination
- Conflict with co-worker or supervisor
- Disciplinary action
- Job stress
- Financial problems
- Alcohol or drug issues
- Harassment
- Racial, ethnic, cultural, gender or lifestyle conflicts
- Domestic disputes
- Family problems
- Loss of status/pay/prestige

# Warning Signs

- History of violence
- Mental illness
- Romantic obsession
- Chemical dependency
- Frustration over circumstances
- Pathological blaming
- Absence of emotional control
- Interest in weapons
- Threats of violence

# Counterproductive Responses

- Threat information is not reported
- Reported information is minimized
- Failure to assume responsibility for resolution
- Relying on incorrect information
- Hasty discipline or termination
- Fear motivated accommodation
- Over-involvement
- Lack of multidisciplinary collaboration

# Reacting to Potentially Violent Situations

- **Assess your personal feelings about the person.**
- **Describe the person's behavior.**
- **Assess how the behavior affects you.**
- **Determine your need for assistance in handling the problem.**



# Workplace Violence Prevention

*10 minute break*

# **WORKPLACE VIOLENCE CASE STUDIES**

# WPV Case Studies

- **Case #1:**
  - **Administrative Assistant & Custodian**
- **Case #2:**
  - **Argumentative Co-worker**
- **Case #3:**
  - **Co-worker with emotional instability**
- **Case #4:**
  - **Abused Co-worker**

# Conflict Resolution: Angry or Hostile Customer or Coworker

- **Stay calm; listen attentively.**
- **Maintain eye contact**
- **Be courteous. Be patient.**
- **Keep the situation in your control.**
- **Report the situation to your supervisor as soon as you can.**

# Conflict Resolution: Person Shouting, Swearing, and/or Threatening

- **Speak in a calm, slow, and quiet manner.**
- **Signal a co-worker or supervisor that you need help (panic button, prearranged code words/signal).**
- **Do not make any calls yourself.**

## Conflict Resolution: Threatening with a Gun, Knife or other Weapon

- Stay calm. Quietly signal for help.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Stall for time.
- Keep talking--but follow instructions from the person who has the weapon.
- Don't risk harm to yourself or others.
- Never try to grab a weapon.
- Watch for a possible chance to escape to a safe area.

***Alameda County recognizes the importance of providing a safe work environment. In order to maintain a safe work environment, Alameda County prohibits all types of violent behavior as well as unauthorized possession of weapons at any County work site. Conduct which is prohibited includes, but is not limited to violence, threats of violence, intimidation, physical fighting, or unauthorized possession of weapons by employees.***

# WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION POLICY

- What constitutes violence or threats of violence;
- Conduct that is prohibited;
- Warning signs of workplace violence;
- The importance of reporting workplace violence;
- Agency/Department responsibilities;
- Resources available in the event of a workplace violence crisis;
- How to respond to incidents of workplace violence and/or related behaviors
- Definitions



# Prohibited Conduct

- **No direct threats of violence**
- **No indirect threats of violence**
- **No intimidation**
- **No physical fighting**
- **No unauthorized weapons**

# WPV Incident Response

- **Secure the environment**
- **Provide first aid for any victims**
- **Call for help (911)**
- **Request paramedics & ambulance services, if needed**
- **Notify your Supervisor, Manager, Director or Safety Coordinator**

# Responsibilities: **Employees**

- **Help ensure a safe, harassment-free work environment.**
- **Refrain from any acts or making any threats of violence.**
- **Report any threats or acts of violence to your supervisor/management representative or to the Safety Coordinator.**

# Responsibilities: **Employees**

- **Read and follow the County guidelines for implementing the Workplace Violence Prevention Policy and Contingency Plan.**
- **Contact the Hot Line Number if the Agency fails to respond to an act or threat of violence. (21018 or 510-208-1018)**

# Responsibilities: Managers/supervisors

## ● DEPARTMENT ROLE MODEL

- Maintain safe, harassment-free work environment
- Take threats seriously, including “jokes”
- Take immediate action

## ● INCIDENT

- Consider safety first
- Gather information about the threat or incident, including co-worker, complaints, comments
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Contact WPV Rep/Safety Coordinator to develop action plan

# Responsibilities: Managers/supervisors

## ● MANAGING WORKPLACE THREATS

- Remove employee from work unit (as appropriate); if assistance is needed, contact Police or Sheriff.
- If able to de-escalate situation, meet with employee and seek their input, question intent.
- Contact Supervisor, Manager or Safety Coordinator to determine plan of action (e.g. fitness for duty).
- Contact EAP to provide support for workgroup if necessary.

# Workplace Violence Prevention Policy

- **Read the WPV Policy** – Violence or threats of violence will not be tolerated
- **Notify your Supervisor, Manager, Director, Safety Coordinator or Hot Line Number if you:**
  - Observe or hear direct or indirect threats of violence or intimidation
  - Observe unauthorized use or possession of weapons
  - Notice warning signs of Workplace Violence

# Workplace Violence Prevention Policy

- In an actual incident of WPV:
  - Secure the area
  - Obtain medical aid for any victims
  - Dial 911
  - Request paramedics & ambulance services, if needed
  - Notify your Supervisor, Manager, Director or Safety Coordinator



# QUESTIONS



# Workplace Violence Training

- ✓ Sign-in sheets
- ✓ Verification form
- ✓ Evaluation form

**Thank you for your attention and participation in this training**