OSHA ISSUES NEW GUIDELINES FOR PREVENTING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

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Overview of the Guidelines

Healthcare and social service workers face significant risks of job-related violence and it is OSHA’s mission to help employers address these serious hazards. The new publication updates OSHA’s 1996 and 2004 voluntary guidelines for preventing workplace violence for healthcare and social service workers.

OSHA’s violence prevention guidelines are based on industry best practices and feedback from stakeholders, and provide recommendations for developing policies and procedures to eliminate or reduce workplace violence in a range of healthcare and social service settings. These guidelines reflect the variations that exist in different settings and incorporate the latest and most effective ways to reduce the risk of violence in the workplace. Workplace setting determines not only the types of hazards that exist, but also the measures that will be available and appropriate to reduce or eliminate workplace violence hazards.

For the purpose of these guidelines, we have identified five different settings:

■ Hospital settings represent large institutional medical facilities;

■ Residential Treatment settings include institutional facilities such as nursing homes, and other long-term care facilities;

■ Non-residential Treatment/Service settings include small neighborhood clinics and mental health centers;

■ Community Care settings include community-based residential facilities and group homes; and

■ Field work settings include home healthcare workers or social workers who make home visits.

Development of an Effective Workplace Violence Prevention Program:

In the guidelines, OSHA recommends that healthcare providers develop a prevention program that would include the following five key program components:

1. Management commitment and employee participation;
2. Worksite analysis/Tracking and Trending;
3. Hazard prevention and control;
4. Safety and health training;
5. Recordkeeping and program evaluation.

View the OSHA Guidelines >>

The guidelines are intended to cover a broad spectrum of workers, including those in: psychiatric facilities, hospital emergency departments, community mental health clinics, drug abuse treatment centers, pharmacies, community-care centers, and long-term care facilities. Healthcare and social service workers covered by these guidelines include: registered nurses, nurses’ aides, therapists, technicians, home healthcare workers, social workers, emergency medical care personnel, physicians, pharmacists, physicians’ assistants, nurse practitioners, and other support staff who come in contact with clients with known histories of violence. Employers should use these guidelines to develop appropriate workplace violence prevention programs, engaging workers to ensure their perspective is recognized and their needs are incorporated into the program.