

STAYING SAFE IN SOCIAL WORK

Fall Workshop for Students & Interns
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Michael Schock, Ph.D. & Nancy Rodenborg, Ph.D.
Schock@augsborg.edu & Rodenbor@augsborg.edu

Why concern over safety now?

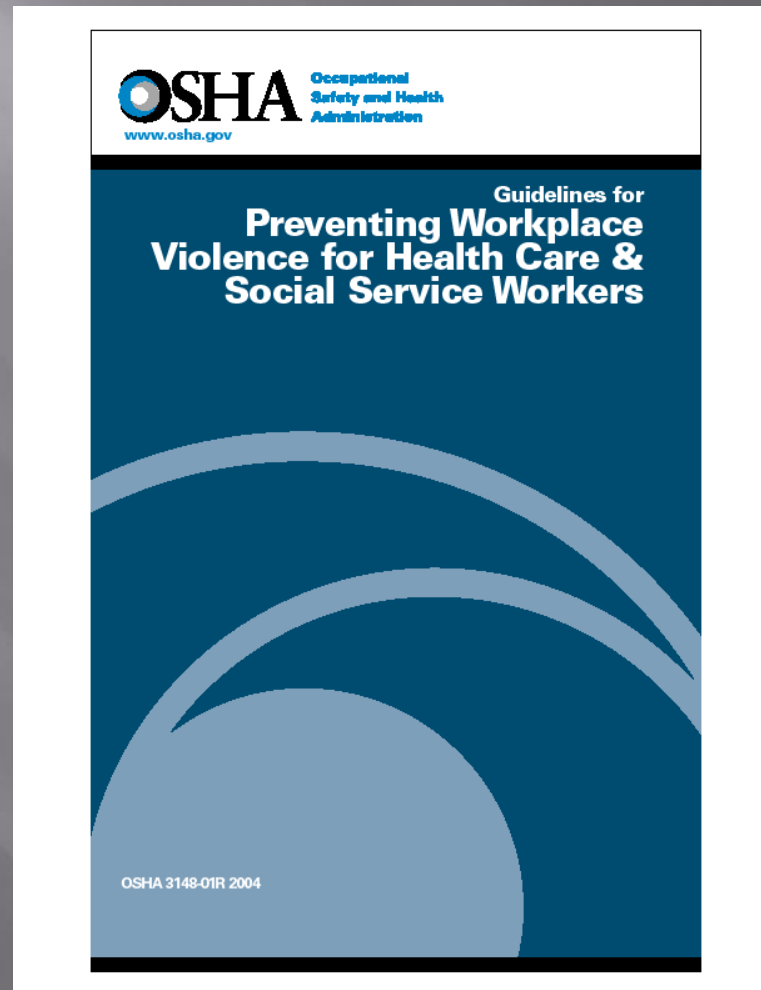
- ▣ Incidents at Augsburg

- ▣ National safety concern ~ Terri Zenner

<http://capwiz.com/socialworkers/issues/bills/?bill=10051326>

- ▣ OSHA statistics

Occupational Safety & Health Administration



OSHA – Incidence rates for injuries from assaults & violent acts*

In 2000

- Overall private sector worker injury: 2
- Health service workers overall: 9.3
- Social service workers: 15
- Nursing/personal care facility workers: 25

*Bureau of Labor Statistics rates measure the number of events per 10,000 full-time workers – in this case, assaults resulting in injury.

Workshop goals

- ▣ Better understand social work best practice in professional safety
- ▣ Understand environment and client risk factors
- ▣ Identify methods for safety in field work

Risks, What Risks?

- ▣ Before you think of safety and risk, think of human relationships, positive regard, empathy...
- ▣ Then think about safety for self, client, groups.

Framework for today

- ▣ Empathy
- ▣ Respect
- ▣ Protection

Student & Intern Safety: **AID-ER**

- ▣ **A**nticipate (environment/history)
- ▣ **I**dentify (Their physical/verbal cues; your intuition)
- ▣ **D**e-escalate (communication skills)
- ▣ **E**xit (when **D** doesn't work)
- ▣ **R**estore (document, report, debrief)

Anticipate - Professional

- ▣ Responsibility to your client
 - Read...Read...Read...

- ▣ Respect for your client
 - Don't 'set up' your client

- ▣ Client dignity

- ▣ Client self-directed goals

- ▣ Seek supervision

Anticipate - Environment

- ▣ Settings are never static time/day
- ▣ Check value of information
- ▣ Most at risk? Clients
- ▣ Know safety and personnel policies, practices and resources
- ▣ Seek supervision

Anticipate - Client history

- ▣ Check client history:
 - Severe violent behavior
 - Severe parent/caretaker abuse
 - History of fighting
 - Difficulty getting along with authority
 - Seek supervision

Initial Contact with Individuals



Identify - General

- ▣ Establish rapport
- ▣ Under influence of alcohol or drugs
- ▣ Feels overwhelmed, hopeless, stressed
- ▣ Verbalizes being angry, upset in general
- ▣ Is angry specifically at you or your agency

Identify-Physical

- ▣ Appears Agitated/ Pacing
- ▣ Forced or intrusive eye contact
- ▣ Tense facial expressions
- ▣ Movement into personal space
- ▣ Indirect threats of violence
- ▣ Touch...tight or constraining

Identify-Verbal

- ▣ Indirect threats of violence
- ▣ De-humanizing language
- ▣ Raised voice/labored speech
- ▣ Escalating voice or tone

Reduce Opportunity & Consequences

Anticipate

- ✓ Expect negative reaction
- ✓ Don't expect it to go away on its own
- ✓ Respect your client

De-escalate

- ☐ Identify choices
- ☐ Seek to expand alternatives
- ☐ Attribute behavior to situation rather than person

- ✓ Avoid labeling or judgmental language
- ✓ Use empathic communication

- ✓ Plan small, feasible steps
- ✓ Reward efforts and progress

- ✓ Identify non-negotiable requirements AND available choices
- ✓ Support wise choices and explain consequences for questionable ones
- ✓ Emphasize freedoms still available

De-escalate

- ▣ **R**espect your clients
- ▣ **A**ctive use of empathic listening
- ▣ **F**ollow their lead,
 - “What do you need from me?”

De-escalate

- ▣ **I**nterpret their behavior cautiously
 - “You look like you are getting more upset, is that right?”

- ▣ **P**rofessional self-disclosure (bringing self to forefront) (Weinger, 2001)

- ▣ **B**e sensitive and alert to differences in cultural expression, beliefs

De-escalate

- ▣ **S**peak with patience, clearly, slowly, firmly
- ▣ **M**onitor conversation...3 minute rule
 - (Sheafor & Horejsi)
- ▣ **D**ecreasing agitation? Do not interrupt
- ▣ **I**ncreasing agitation? Gently interrupt
 - ▣ “I need to say something right now...”

De-escalate

- ▣ **W**ear sensible, professional clothing
- ▣ **K**eep religious apparel/ornaments discreet
- ▣ **Y**our response is based on gender: of both worker and client

De-escalate

- ▣ **R**educe eye contact: Don't stare/glare
- ▣ **R**emain self confident and pleasant
- ▣ **M**aintain client's hope
- ▣ **S**upport normal emotional responses

De-escalate

- ▣ **A**nnounce your actions before you move
 - You'll see me writing down a few ideas, I need to do this ...

- ▣ **K**eeP hands visible

- ▣ **B**e sensitive and alert to differences in cultural expression, beliefs

Repair

- ▣ Document events
objective/subjective
- ▣ Seek supervision
- ▣ Follow agency policy
- ▣ Seek support/debrief
- ▣ **Seek supervision**
- ▣ **Document**

Resources

- ▣ Griffin, W., Montsinger, J., & Carter, N. (1995). Personal safety handbook: Targeting safety in human services. Durham NC:ILR, Inc.
- ▣ Hepworth, Rooney, R.H., Dewberry-Rooney, G. Strom-Gottfried, K. & Larsen (2006). Direct social work practice: Theory and Skills. 7th edition. Brooks-Cole.
- ▣ Rooney, R. H. (1992). Strategies for work with involuntary clients. New York: Columbia Press.
- ▣ Sheafor, B.W. & Horejsi, C.R. (2006). Techniques and guidelines for Social Work Practice (7th edition). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- ▣ Weinger, S. (2001). Security Risk: Preventing client violence. Washington, D.C.:NASW