

Professional Risks

As organizations assume responsibility for people with a history of assaultive behavior, they face a clear pattern of risks. These include:

1. the risk that individuals who attempt to injure themselves or others will be successful;
2. the risk that employees who work with or around assaultive behavior will be seriously injured during an assaultive incident;
3. the risk that employees will contribute to avoidable injury of others by failing to respond to and assist with assaultive incidents, or by responding with excessive force;
4. the risk that a lack of teamwork will contribute to injury;
5. the risk that managers will contribute to the injury of others by being unable or unwilling to provide employees with adequate supervision, security, or training;
6. the risk of public censure when an assaultive incident results in permanent disability, disfigurement, or death; and
7. the risk of formal penalties from the courts or legislature when an assaultive incident results in permanent disability, disfigurement, or death.

These risks are minimized by

- closely supervising employee response to assaultive behavior;
- strongly wording and strictly enforcing policies regarding assaultive incidents; and
- providing regular in-service training and periodic review of the skills and knowledge necessary for the emergency response to assaultive behavior.

**In-service training is no substitute for
competent supervision!**

Exercise

1. Think of a client with whom you have worked who exhibited one or more of these conditions or features that would present a safety risk, **when the client exhibit assaultive behaviors.** What were the conditions or features?

2. What are the symptoms of these conditions or features that you would look for if a client were exhibiting assaultive behaviors?

3. Describe a safe and effective intervention that could be used when you observe these symptoms.

4. Describe an intervention that should be avoided.