A workplace free of violence and bullying:
How to deliver the message

A Victorian
Government
initiative

State Government
Victoria

Every day's a challenge has been developed to increase awareness among police, health care workers and the community of the impact that occupational violence has on those working in our health services. It is just one communication tool that may be useful to health services as they develop their own local communication plan to address levels of occupational violence.

Developing an effective communication strategy to support a health service's occupational violence prevention and management plan doesn't have to be complicated and some resources have been developed by Department of Human Services (DHS) to assist. If your health service doesn't have a communications/media unit to assist in developing a communications plan, here are some tips to get you started.

Developing an Occupational Violence Communication Plan

Communication activities in health services should be tailored to reflect the local context. While local context is important, the Taskforce on Violence in Nursing identified that the overarching objectives of all occupational violence communications strategies should be to:

- raise awareness about the impact of violence on its health care workers
- promote the message that violence against its health care workers is unacceptable, and
- discourage a culture of violence being accepted as 'part of the job'.

The next steps in developing your communication plan should include:

1. Identifying your target audience

The primary target audience is anyone who needs to receive your messages for you to achieve your communications objectives. Your primary target audience might be your local police station or specific health service managers/staff at your health service, while your secondary audience may include patients and visitors.

2. Developing the key messages

These are the basic facts that your audience needs to know and should be in all communication. DHS has already developed and tested some messages that balance the need to convey a strong message that violence is unacceptable in our health services without having the unintended consequence of creating negative consumer perceptions regarding the prevalence of violence.

As these messages have already been tested with community focus groups, it is recommended that health services incorporate these same messages into their own occupational violence communication activities and promotional materials.

A workplace free of violence and bullying: Everyone has the right to be safe

A workplace free of violence and bullying is a better place to care for you and your family

A workplace free of violence and bullying: A better place for work, a better place for care

3. Identify the key stakeholders

Stakeholders are those who can directly influence the occupational violence prevention plan and communications at the health service. Getting these people on board is critical to the success of the work and reduces the risk of conflict or problems later on. When developing communication activities for the prevention and management of occupational violence, key stakeholders you wish to consider engaging may include your local police or ambulance services.

4. Develop your communications tools

These are the products that will carry your message to the target audience. Examples include advertisements, newsletters, websites, DVDs, brochures, posters or information sessions.

The following tools relating to occupational violence prevention have been developed by DHS and are available for health services to use:

- suite of posters depicting various health care workers and the key messages
- multilingual card of key messages
- Nurse Safe logo
- *Every day's a challenge – Responding to violence in Victorian health services* (available in DVD format).

These tools and other information are available online:

www.health.vic.gov.au/nursing/promoting/noviolence/ strategy-1-5

5. Develop a plan for managing any issues

Issues management is about how you will address any issues that may be associated with your occupational violence work and the communication activities. For example, developing a 'Question and answer' sheet will mean that people involved in the activities are responding in the same way regarding budgets, timelines or key messages. Health services may need to think about how they might interact with local media in relation to occupational violence as they are often interested in stories that affect staff at their local hospitals.

6. Setting tasks and timelines

It is advisable to set out the tasks as milestones, specifying timelines and responsibility for the tasks. This will assist with monitoring progress, achieving objectives and will help avoid confusion, missed deadlines, misunderstandings and unsuccessful communications.

7. Establishing a budget for communications

Your communications budget needs to be adequate to achieve your desired outcomes. Having a clear idea of your budget will assist you determine which tools can be used and how much external assistance you may be able to afford. Using the resources developed by DHS can help reduce costs. Using existing channels is another way of keeping costs down such as putting an occupational violence update in an existing health service newsletter, presenting to existing stakeholder groups and providing updates via the health service's intranet or by developing posters.

8. Evaluation

Evaluating the success of your communications activities is important and may need to be done at several points, not just at the end. Ideally, the evaluation measures should be in direct response to your objectives. If the objective was to increase awareness about violence in health services, then perhaps a survey of people who were your target audience, to determine whether they are aware of the issue, would be useful. Other ways to evaluate might be to monitor local media stories relating to occupational violence and your health service.

If you want more information about effective communication visit:

Department of Premier and Cabinet website at www.dpc.vic.gov.au – go to 'Guidelines and procedures', then 'Communications', then 'Toolkit'

Media, marketing and public relations section of the Tasmanian Government Communications website at www.communications.tas.gov.au/home/communications_ toolkit/media_and_public_relations

State Government
Victoria

Department of
Human Services