

Steps to RID Your Facility of Threats

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Knowing whether or not a threat is serious is the number one fear of many staff members.

"I know where you park your car."

"I know when you leave this building."

"I know where you live."

Sometimes, our clients say and do things in a fit of frustration or in an irrational moment, and at other times, they mean what they say. How do you know which threats will really be carried out? It is difficult to build a "profile" of someone who might follow through on a threat; however, we can put procedures in place to help staff feel confident that they are not alone. Taking these three simple steps can help you RID your facility of threats.

RID: Report, Investigate, Document

Report: Create reporting procedures for staff. Develop a clear definition of a threat and a protocol for staff to feel safe reporting a threat. Communicate with staff and train them to know when to take a threat seriously. Remind staff that if something doesn't feel right, they should pay attention to the increased anxiety they may feel. Staff may say things like "I'm not sure what it is, but my gut is telling me something isn't right." Give staff a forum to voice their concerns. Many times, staff don't report things because they're afraid of being laughed at or ridiculed.

Investigate: Once a threat is reported, assure staff that their report will be taken seriously. Take action. Have a plan and follow it. Assess the risks and danger of the threat. Assure staff that all steps are being taken to keep them as safe as possible.

Document: Design a user-friendly form for reporting and following up. Provide a confidential debriefing/documentation session for staff so they feel free to express their fear and anxiety without a lot of "red tape." Document the incident from the very beginning behavior, not just the threat itself. This can assist in determining a pattern of behavior that all staff can be made aware of so that they can take reasonable precautions.

Help Staff Build Their Tool Box

After the threat has subsided, don't sweep the incident under the carpet. Touch base with staff on a regular basis without making them feel as though they are being "picked on" or that it may have been their fault. Continue educating staff. Provide training on the importance of staying calm when confronted with threats. Focus on the crucial first response of maintaining a safe, neutral body posture. Educate staff about how to minimize risks by avoiding belittling comments, sarcasm, or flip remarks that may compound anger. Establish a workplace violence prevention program to keep employees safe in the future. Mr. Abraham Maslov said that if all you have is a hammer, all you will ever see is nails. Provide an opportunity through training for staff to build their own tool box and help **RID** the risks and dangers of threats in your facility.