

Juvenile Justice Vision 2020 Training Event
Safety and Security for Juvenile Justice Professionals
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Presented by: Dr. Brian Johnson

Report by: Patrick Sussex

Safety and security issues can arise inside and outside of the workplace. This presentation focused on general and specific safety vulnerabilities, and on effective countermeasures that enhance safety in the workplace, on the street, and at home and in personal lives.

Clients and sometimes their families are often in crisis or high stress, and while crisis can bring out the best in some people, it can also bring out the worst. The safety of practitioners is augmented when security is a mindset and culture. Complacency is the enemy of that culture.

Workplace violence is defined as violent acts (including physical assaults and threats of physical assaults) directed toward persons at work or on duty. Common causes of violence and associated criminal activities include pathopsychologies, substance abuse, learned behaviors, power and control issues, poor conflict resolutions skills, stress and frustration, and fear of being detained. While there is no single profile, national statistics list these factors as the most common to violent persons:

- Past history of violence
- Young, single males
- Lower social-economic status
- Mental illness
- Displaced/regressed anger
- Attitudes/beliefs against system and authority
- Fear of being placed into custody

Juvenile justice practitioners have increased concern about work-related violence because many clients have one or more of the factors listed above, and juvenile justice by its nature includes a more difficult client base. Larger caseloads result in less assessment or knowledge of the threats presented by individual clients, and workers often visit more dangerous neighborhoods.

Nationally, violence makes up almost one-quarter of injuries and illnesses that result in days away from work in state governments. The top employment sectors impacted are nursing and residential care, hospitals, and justice, public order, and safety workers.

Workers are often impacted more by the fear of victimization itself than by actual crimes. The quality of their work life—feelings of safety and well-being—is lessened when workers witness

or must respond to violent actions and other crimes. The result can be hyper-vigilance and increased stress.

Being aware of vulnerabilities and incorporating counter measures into work cultures and everyday practices can reduce the risk of victimization and improve work life quality by reducing fear and stress.

Work with Administration to make safety and security an organizational philosophy. Experts recommend:

- Identify risks, vulnerabilities, and threats in both common and uncommon situations
- Develop a security plan that includes the “four D’s”; physical and psychological deterrence, detection, delay, and deny
- Have layers of security
- Be proactive with prevention, not reactive
- Have policies and procedures that support an effective security plan
- Know what do to and why in the event of a threat or incident
- Avoid complacency; don’t take shortcuts

The theoretical perspective is that crime and violence occurs during routine activities of juvenile justice practitioners when there are a lack of capable guardians, there is a motivated and likely offender(s), and there is a suitable target. Practitioners have the most control over the suitable target, themselves. Recommendations for reducing your profile as a target include:

- Inventory objects that can be used as a weapon in offices and work spaces and remove those items or store them more securely
- Inventory what items you bring into work that could be used as weapons and only bring those items that are essential into the workplace
- Arrange offices so that you can exit quickly; do not place clients between you and the exit
- Have awareness of self and others when with clients; don’t isolate with clients
- Have adequate and unobstructed views of outside and parking areas
- If feasible have fencing and dedicated staff parking but do not identify individual parking spots
- Keep doors locked and access controlled
- Have a system for summoning help (IE. a panic button)

Home visits and youth transports also represent higher risk situations for violence. Suggestions for home visits include:

- Drive by the home and visually assess before pulling in
- Don’t park where you can be blocked in

- Stop, look, and listen when approaching home and before entering home
- Limit what you carry inside
- Ask occupants to remain in your view
- Let people know where you will be and when you expect to return
- Cultivate relationships with local police to enhance emergency response
- If any doubt about safety, leave immediately

Suggestions for youth transports include:

- Pre-plan transports
- Communicate plan effectively with home office and with destination
- Use two-person transports
- Search and secure juvenile (in accordance with county/agency policy)
- Use hands-on escort techniques (in accordance with county/agency policy)
- Drive SAFELY, follow all traffic laws

This session summary by no means lists all of the information presented or available. Practitioners are encouraged to research the subject and develop plans that enhance their safety, and the safety of clients and communities.