

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE VIOLENCE AGAINST EDUCATORS AND CREATE SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS

Suggested Audience: K-12 Educators and School Administrators



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This brief addresses how educational and school psychology principles can be applied to improve teacher well-being and reduce violence against educators.

WHAT IS EDUCATOR-DIRECTED VIOLENCE?

Educator-directed violence includes verbal (e.g., threatening harassment, obscene remarks or gestures), physical (e.g., bitten, scratched, hit), and property (e.g., personal or classroom property damaged or stolen) acts against teachers and school staff and is common in U.S. schools.^{1,2} This violence affects educators' well-being and can come from students, parents, administrators or colleagues.^{3,4} Safety concerns affect teachers' mental health, making classroom management difficult and thereby compromising educational quality.^{3,5,6,7}



HOW PREVALENT IS EDUCATOR-DIRECTED VIOLENCE AND WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS?

- Educators identifying as male, special educators, and those working in urban school settings experience more victimization than those with other characteristics.^{8,9}
- Physical violence is highest among elementary school educators, while verbal violence is highest among middle and high school educators.³
- Educators may experience anxiety, stress, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and physical health issues as a result of educator-directed violence, contributing to higher turnover rates, emotional exhaustion, and a diminished sense of job satisfaction.^{10,11}

VIOLENCE AGAINST EDUCATORS IS UBIQUITOUS IN SCHOOLS, WITH UP TO 80% OF EDUCATORS EXPERIENCING VERBAL/THREATENING VIOLENCE FROM STUDENTS.³

- The issue has far-reaching effects on educators' well-being, career retention, maintaining a positive school climate, supporting student outcomes, and recruiting new people into the teaching profession.^{4,12,13}

PREVENTING VIOLENCE

- Employ a leadership style that models an inclusive school climate of **mutual respect**.^{14,15}
- Implement evidence-based programs that take a **preventive approach** to violence.¹⁶
- Engage educators in discussions and decisions regarding **restorative justice** (e.g., a focus on rehabilitation through reconciliation) and **trauma-informed** discipline practices.¹⁷
- Train educators to leverage socio-emotional skills to support **de-escalation strategies** and use culturally relevant practices.¹⁶
- Focus efforts on **improving school climate** to prevent educator-directed violence.⁹

EDUCATORS NEED TO BE FAMILAR WITH SCHOOL ACTION PLAN FOR ADDRESSING VIOLENCE

- Promote educator well-being through violence prevention strategies and supports, including respect, empathy, and active listening, when violence occurs.¹⁸
- Provide educators with tiered support (e.g., support from administrators, districts, etc.) to improve well-being. For example, support may be provided in matters of classroom management, discipline, and instructional practices.¹⁹
- Facilitate peer mediation (e.g., active-listening exercises) and conflict resolution to improve relations between educators and students.²⁰
- Sustain ongoing violence prevention practices and solicit input from school personnel, parents, and students.²⁰

ACTION STEPS



By engaging educators and the broader school community in discussions and employing proactive, evidence-based approaches, school leaders can mitigate the adverse effects of violence and foster a safer, more supportive educational environment.

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