EVERYTOWN
FOR GUN SAFETY

GUN VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

A Guide for Employers in the Aftermath of Gun Violence

Gun violence is personal to most Americans. Fifty-nine percent of Americans reported that someone they know or cared about experienced some form of gun violence.[1] Survivors may struggle physically and emotionally afterward. Regardless of the location, the cost of care often overwhelms families financially. Unfortunately, such violence can happen in workplaces. In 2022, 435 people were taken by gun violence in a workplace – a 12 percent increase from the previous year.[2] According to the Gun Violence Archive, since 2019, there have been 16 mass shootings in workplaces.[3] We are a country made up of gun violence survivors. These survivors are your colleagues, employees, and customers. The purpose of the resource is to provide trauma-informed guidance to employers after a workplace gun violence incident.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

A single act of gun violence touches many people. It impacts those who were there at the time of the shooting. It also impacts those who were not. Consider the following groups in each stage of recovery:

→ Loved ones of victims who were killed
→ Wounded survivors and their loved ones
→ Witnesses of the violence
→ Employees who were not present
→ The greater community impacted by the event – those with shared identities to victims and survivors of the shooting or people who live or work nearby.

RAPID RESPONSE (THE FIRST 72 HOURS)

Communicate: Communication is crucial during and after the incident. Use websites and social media accounts to update employees' families and the greater community. Some workplaces create a toll-free number for those seeking updated information. A number in response to an incident of gun violence in the workplace often includes any known information about the situation and contacts for assistance. Notify employees who are not onsite to prevent them from coming to work.

Connect employees with mental health resources: After a traumatic event, it can help to talk to a professional like a mental health counselor. To identify what mental health resources are available in your community, dial 2-1-1 or visit the website 211.org. Another option is to call your county's behavioral health authority for recommendations. In the case of the death of an employee, employers often hire grief counselors to come to the workplace. Similarly, in the case of gunfire in a workplace, onsite trauma counselors can support staff. Onsite counselors make it easier for employees to access help. Their presence also normalizes mental health care. Crisis

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[1]Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, "Gun Violence Survivors in America," February 1, 2023, https://everytownresearch.org/report/gun-violence-survivors-america/.
[2]United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI). Table 2: Fatal occupational injuries for selected events or exposures, all United States, 2018-22. https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cfoi.t02.htm.
[3]Gun Violence Archive, "10 Year Review," 2013-24. August 19, 2024. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/.

hotlines are a free and confidential resource for those in distress. Click here for a comprehensive list of the hotlines available across the country. Share the most relevant ones with employees and community members. For instance, if the incident is related to domestic violence, employers should share the numbers for hotlines that specialize in domestic violence.

Consider financial stressors: If workplaces have the means, they may supply meals for staff and families most impacted. Some workplaces provide lodging for families outside the immediate area. When financially feasible, many workplaces choose to pay for funeral expenses and any out-of-pocket medical care. For workplaces with financial constraints, they can direct staff to government-funded victim and witness assistance grant programs. Individual programs vary by state. Some states provide emergency grants to cover funeral expenses, while others reimburse after the fact. Approving the claim and receiving the funds may take a year or longer. The forms can be challenging to fill out. Victim advocates are available to help in many states.

Involve the community in healing: Some communities organize vigils to remember the victims and honor those impacted. These usually take place 48 hours to 72 hours after the gun violence incident. Vigils provide a space for community members to express their sorrow and grief. The best practice is to avoid conversations and speeches about politics as this may polarize community members. Instead, the focus should be on remembering those taken by gun violence and showing support to the grieving. The victims' families may or may not choose to participate. It is their decision. Temporary memorials often form in front of the workplace where the violence occurred. Families, friends, and community members may leave flowers, candles, and handwritten notes. Memorials may also serve as an informal meeting place to connect and grieve. Community connection is a vital part of the healing journey.

REOPENING

Some workplaces reopen days after an incident of gun violence. Others take weeks or months. Other workplaces may never reopen. These questions may help workplaces determine their response under their unique circumstances.

1. How do families of victims, survivors, and other employees feel about potentially reopening? What would they like you to consider when weighing the idea of reopening?

   → In the case of the shootings in Lewiston, Maine on October 25, 2023, there was a large amount of support from community members that wanted the bowling alley to reopen in order to allow for continued community connection.

2. Does the workplace fill a community need that would otherwise be unmet?

   → ***If yes***, is there a nearby building where the workplace could move? In the longer term, consult with families of victims, survivors, and other employees to determine how to use the former space. Some destroy the building entirely. Others transform it into a memorial, park, or community center.
   → ***If not***, what resources can be available to employees in the early days of their return? How can the workplace best support employees who are not ready to return? What can increase feelings of physical safety? What renovations can change how the workplace looks? Is there a desire to change the company's name? The best practice is to host an optional open house ahead of reopening so employees and survivors may share responses to these questions. An open

forum allows employees and survivors to support one another and seek support from trained mental health professionals.

****Note**: In order to minimize re-traumatization, employees should not return to a workplace where traces of the violence remain or if it is an active crime scene.

LONG-TERM RESPONSE

Educate employees about financial resources: Several programs are designed to help those struggling financially.

→ Employee assistance programs offer confidential, supportive professionals to help solve problems that may interfere with work.
→ Workers' compensation provides funding for expenses related to both physical and psychological workplace injuries. In some cases, it can also cover lost wages.
→ As mentioned, victim and witness assistance grant programs may provide financial relief.

Prioritize the mental well-being of all staff: Normalize mental health support by informing all staff about free and low-cost options. In most cases, crisis emotional support staff differ from the available long-term mental health professionals. Psychological first-aid training may encourage a culture of peer support. Staff should have opportunities to connect with each other. Managers must recognize that reduced productivity is a common response to tragedy, grief, and trauma.

Acknowledge the devastation and honor the victims: Consider a permanent memorial. Promote mental health resources around the date that marks the incident of gun violence. For example, some workplaces choose to host annual vigils. Invite those most impacted by the tragedy to make decisions alongside you.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund has a network of businesses across sectors who work together to end gun violence through protecting employees and customers, pushing for policy change or promoting gun safety measures.

Everytown for Gun Safety Survivor Network is a nationwide community of survivors working together to end gun violence. The Survivor Network connects survivors to each other, amplifies the power of survivor voices, offers trauma-informed programs, provides information on direct services, and supports survivors who choose to become advocates.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration offers a variety of resources available on their website ranging from defining workplace violence to information on prevention programs to job-specific guidance.

Mass Shootings Protocol & Playbook is a guide created by United on Guns to help local leaders prevent, prepare for and respond to gun violence.

School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide was created by Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund and the National Education Association to help state and local leaders, members, and staff prevent, prepare for, respond to, and facilitate recovery from gun violence in all education settings.