Working with Vulnerable Populations

CHALLENGE

Vulnerable populations include a wide range of people and characteristics. Whether your nonprofit serves children, people experiencing domestic violence, or aging adults, you want to create safe environments for them to receive services as well as ensure safe workspaces for employees and volunteers. When working with vulnerable populations, a few potential concerns to consider are trauma, security, and workplace violence. Your nonprofit may have other concerns or challenges to consider specific to the community members served by your organization.

ACTIONS

This is a broad topic that may include your nonprofit's employees, volunteers, and people you serve. This resource is meant to start a conversation, and does not cover all actions that could help address the topic.

- ❑ Study the physical design of your workspace and know when people might be alone in your nonprofit's space.
  - Review where there are locked doors or barriers that would prevent a quick escape.
  - Improve visibility through placement of furniture, windows, or mirrors.
  - Pay close attention to people entering your nonprofit's space after regular business hours when fewer people, if any, are around.
- ❑ Have visitors sign-in when they arrive at your nonprofit's workspace. Have a staff "in and out" board or system so you can more easily determine who is in the building.
- ❑ Create and follow policies and procedures for working with minors.
- ❑ Deepen your understanding and practices related to trauma-informed care.
- ❑ Take a mental health first aid course. Learn how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance abuse.
- ❑ Make sure first-aid trained personnel are available to provide quick and effective first aid. Make sure first-aid supplies are readily available and appropriate to your organization's work and work site.

RESOURCES

- **OSHA resources:**
  - [Evacuation Plans and Procedures eTool](#) — This eTool will help small, low-hazard service organizations implement an emergency action plan and comply with OSHA emergency standards.
  - [Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence](#)
- **L&I resources**:
  - [Workplace Violence: Awareness and Prevention for Employers and Employees](#)
  - [Online Safety Trainings webpage](#) — From the "by course title" list, scroll to the letter W for presentation materials on working alone safely and workplace violence prevention.
- [Mental Health First Aid](#)