**Workplace Violence Prevention**

**Conversation Starters for Home Care Professionals**

**Scenario 2:** Bullying/Intimidation Between Coworkers

*An employee reports that a fellow employee has been intimidating/bullying them in the workplace.  This has been going on for several weeks.  The suspect employee has been taking small items from clients’ homes*. *After the reporting employee discovered this, the suspect employee threatened to expose the reporting employee for tardiness at work and said they would get them fired.  The reporting employee is relatively new to the company*,*and the suspect employee has been with the company for several years. The suspect employee has told them that “No one will believe you” and “I’m friends with the boss.”  This has all come to your attention secondhand, as the reporting employee has not told the management but did tell a coworker who has relayed the story to you.*

1. Who is the appropriate person for the employee to report this information to?
2. What is our process for this sort of allegation?
3. Should this be handled in a discreet manner?
4. What can we do if the reporting employee does not wish to make a statement to management formally?  What can we do to ensure they feel safe in doing so?
5. If we find there the allegations are substantiated, how will we go about reporting this to clients who may have been victims?
6. Do we cover employee-to-employee issues in our Workplace Violence Policy?

**NOTES:**

**Facilitator Notes:**

1. Employees should understand where to report criminal behavior and how that process works.  Train employees in this process regularly and in how follow-up will be conducted.  Make sure follow-up processes include the employee.  When processes do not, employees feel that their report is “wasted” or ignored.
2. This is a point for discussion.  When we have an internal investigation of ANY inappropriate behavior reported by other employees, how do we investigate it while protecting the accused employee and the reporting employee?  It may be necessary to remind participants that the accused is not guilty of anything in this statement alone.
3. The answer is YES.  Participants should understand the possible loss of good employees that could be caused if the situation is not handled well.  Not only could they lose both the accused and reporting employees, but other employees that see the situation may look for other employment if the situation is handled haphazardly.  For instance, if the reporting employee is punished for tardiness despite coming forward.  Another example would be if the accused employee were fired based on the accusation alone without further proof of wrongdoing.  The key to successful navigation can be transparency once the situation is resolved.
4. We should still investigate the issue, as we may have an employee committing regular criminal acts.  We also want to build an environment of openness and trust where employees feel they can come to supervisors if there is an issue.  This is why the optics of this situation can be so important.
5. This is something that must be done.  Any attempt to hide this issue from clients could be seen as making other employees an accessory after the fact to these crimes.
6. If not, a policy review should be recommended.

**Further Discussion Points:**

* What if the allegation is found to be false?  How will we handle it?
* What if we cannot substantiate the claims?  How will we handle it? Will we document it? (YES)
* This scenario can be given with minor changes to a supervisor who is threatening an employee with termination if they do not work over their normal shift or perform menial tasks not in the normal scope of their employment.