

WELCOME

**WORKER SAFETY  
FOR THE APS SUPERVISOR**

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## WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

- Where do you stand and where does your agency stand on keeping yourself and your workers safe?
- Each one of us will expend a certain amount of time, money, and effort to achieve the level of safety we feel comfortable with. This can be affected by personal experience and available resources.
- Each agency will expend a certain amount of time, money, and effort to achieve the level of safety it feels it needs. This can be affected by agency experience and available resources.

# THE AGENCY SAFETY POLICY

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- A well-written safety policy lets workers know what they can expect from the agency and what the agency expects from them.
- Having a well-written safety policy makes supervision easier. Workers have a clearer understanding of what they are permitted to do and support they can expect.
- Working without a safety policy is like being on the high-wire without a safety net.

## QUESTION:

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Does your agency have a written personal safety policy which makes it clear what workers are to do when interacting with clients and others in threatening or dangerous situations?

# OVERVIEW OF A SAFETY POLICY

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- **Policy/Items Addressed:**  
The specific issues covered.
- **Protocol:**  
What actions are expected or permitted. Protocol defines “What I am supposed to do when safety is at risk”.
- **Implementation:**  
Everyone follows the protocol every time. Failure of implementation erodes confidence in the policy.

## QUESTIONS:

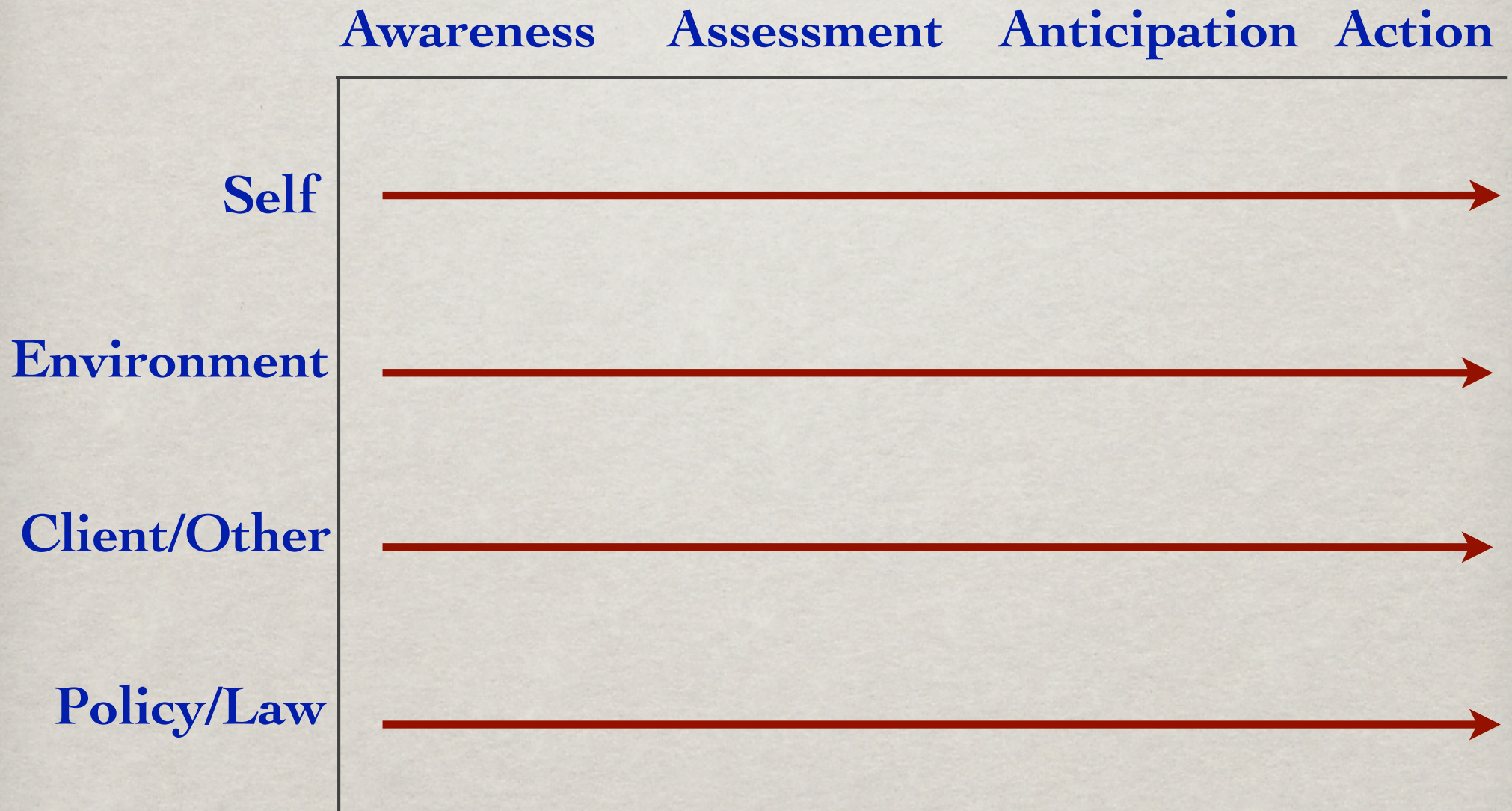
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1. If you do have a written safety policy, how often is it reviewed?
2. How are workers kept up-to-date with changes?

# ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

- Workers are encouraged to speak about safety concerns.
- Supervisors are available to talk with workers about safety.
- Supervisors admit their own concerns and vulnerabilities.
- Safety committee meets regularly, addresses concerns, and implements new policies and protocols in a timely manner.
- Support is given for difficult choices.
- *Everyone* at the agency fosters organizational climate.

# THE FOUR A'S OF SAFETY

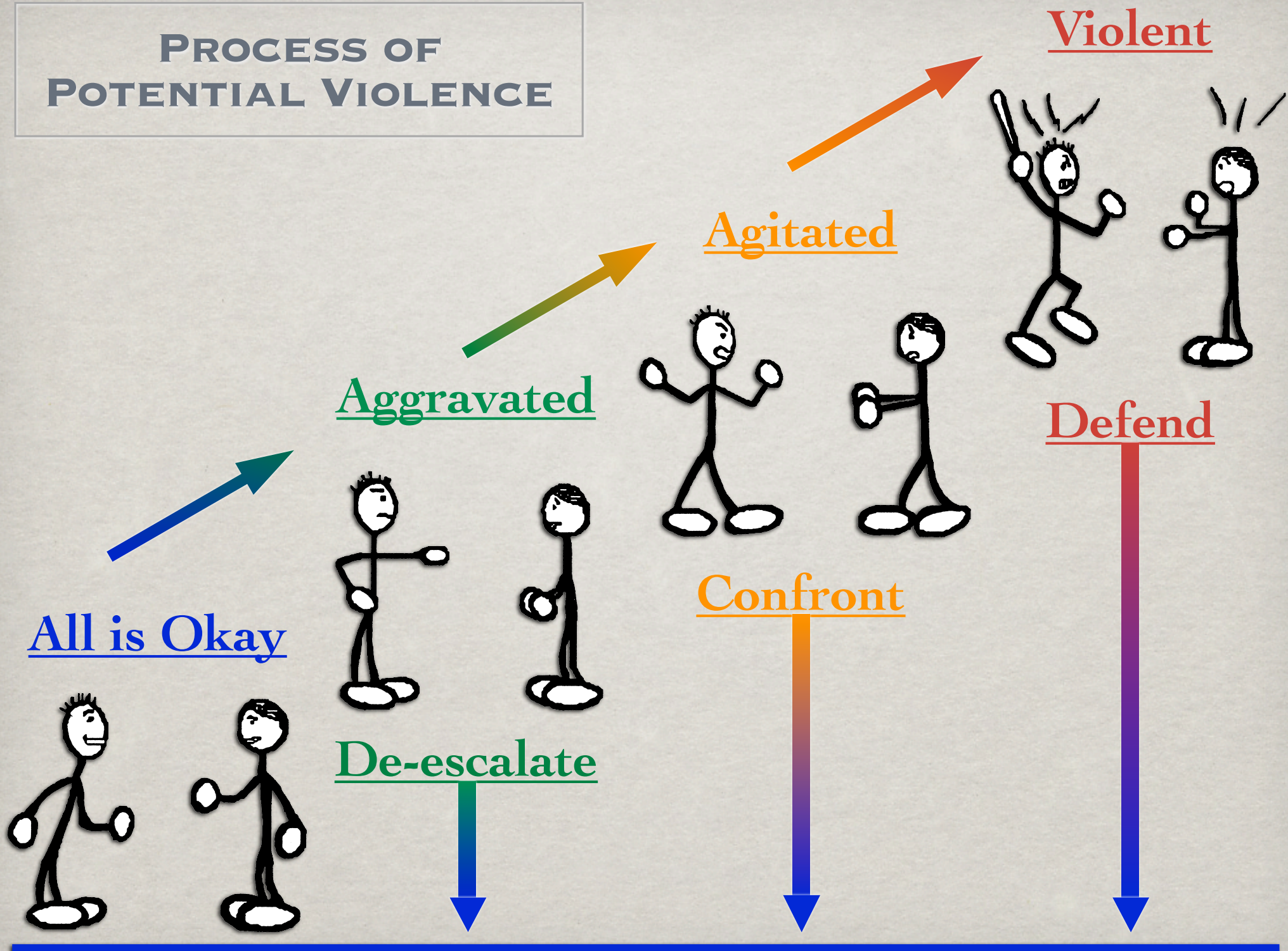


## QUESTIONS:

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1. What are the safety concerns your workers have?
2. Are your concerns similar to theirs?

# PROCESS OF POTENTIAL VIOLENCE



# HOW WE COMMUNICATE

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Non-Verbal: body language, facial expression

Voice: tone, volume, pitch, cadence, intonation

Words: actual word choice

# FRUSTRATION

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Frustration results from not having a goal met or not having a goal met fast enough.

# INTERVENTIONS: FRUSTRATION

- Ask a question about unmet goals to reveal the source of the frustration.
- Identify the goal as:
  - Reasonable
  - Lofty
  - Impossible
- If the goal is reasonable or lofty, work on ways to obtain it. Lofty goals tend to take longer to achieve.
- If the goal is impossible, be honest, unless it compromises your safety.

# **FEAR**

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Fear is the real or perceived expectation of some type of danger or pain whether physical or emotional.

## INTERVENTIONS: FEAR

- Ask a question about “discomfort” to reveal the pain (source of the fear).
- Do not move in toward someone who is in fear until you are sure you are not the cause of their fear or until you are invited to comfort them.
- Fear is often the result of a lack of information and the mind running away with itself. More information can help.
- Reassure and talk to them. Provide physical and psychological space.

# ANGER

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Anger is a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, exasperation, or hostility directed toward some real or supposed grievance.

It can be a survival oriented protest.

It can be a way of avoiding some other emotion such as guilt or shame.

## INTERVENTIONS: ANGER

- If possible, validate the anger. Often their behavior is a means to convey how upset they are.
- Be aware of your own triggers. Are you reacting to their anger or your fear of their anger?
- Avoid confronting, challenging, or blaming them.
- Find the cause of the anger; usually some other emotion.
- Set clear behavioral limits: “It’s okay to be angry; not okay to threaten, throw, hit, etc.”
- Pay attention to their visual focus. People in anger tend to look at what they are angry at or going to vent on.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. How confident are you that history of violence has been noted in a client's file?
2. Since past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior, what resources do you use to predict potentially threatening or dangerous behavior of clients?

# PRINCIPALS OF DEFUSING

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1. Deal with the feelings first
2. Avoid coming across as a bureaucrat
3. Each situation is different
4. Strive to control the interaction
5. Begin defusing early
6. Be assertive, not aggressive or passive

# PRINCIPALS OF DEFUSING

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7. If you lose control, you lose, period
8. What you focus on, you get more of
9. Don't supply ammunition
10. Don't ask questions you don't want to hear answers to
11. Avoid inadvertent errors
12. Avoid high risk, high gain behavior

## ACTIONS TO TAKE

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- Maintain Eye Level
- Keep Calm
- Calm Them
- Clarify Their Feelings
- Invite Discussion
- Change/Modify Your Voice
- Set Behavioral Limits
- Set Physical Boundaries
- Maintain 2 Arms Length
- Use Body Language

# ANTICIPATE

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- Your reactions
- Limits of your patience
- What they need
- Your strengths and skills
- When do you leave?

# ANTICIPATE

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- Will the behavior exhaust itself?
- Who is the behavior a danger to?
- What is the target of the behavior?
- Is physical violence unavoidable?
- What is the desired outcome of my actions?

## QUESTION:

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Does your agency have a written policy that permits workers to use physical self-defense?

# CRITERIA FOR PHYSICAL SELF DEFENSE

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- The danger has to be real: The person threatening has to have the ability to carry out harm against you.
- The danger has to be imminent: It has to be happening here and now.
- You need to and *want* to exhaust all other available options before using physical force.
- Use equal force.

THANK YOU!

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