



Teacher Injuries from Interactions with Students

One type of workplace injury the Comp Alliance has seen spike over the past few years is student-inflicted injuries to teachers. Currently, teachers injured in this manner are the leading school district claim in frequency and total costs to the program. A recent survey conducted by the American Psychological Association showed that 14% of school employees have been victims of physical violence in schools. Here are a few corrective measures to consider in addressing teacher injuries from physical interactions with students:

- Although security may be present in your building, teachers usually need to act as first responders to a negative, physical incident. Train them accordingly.
- Take a defensive posture, never be the aggressor or agitator when it comes to student behaviors. Don't threaten or raise your voice.
- Remain calm and emit a sense of control; don't act afraid or scared. Be strong but firm in your audible commands.
- Use de-escalation or conflict resolution techniques and seek training in this area, if necessary.
- Get help. Call for other teachers, security, or administrators to assist.
- Keep yourself calm. Students feed off your emotions so if you show increased stress through your voice or movements, you may inadvertently escalate the situation.
- Maintain eye contact when you can, but don't impede on their personal space, as getting too close can appear as an aggressive physical tactic.
- Try to be a barrier between aggressive students, if it is safe. Remember to keep yourself safe, continuously assess the situation, and protect other students.
- Make sure the other students are safe. When dealing with a verbally aggressive student, try moving the rest of your students to the perimeter of the classroom. If you are dealing with a physically aggressive student, that may mean moving your students to the hallway or another safe location.
- Report and track teacher injuries, including near misses, resulting from student interactions. Review these incident reports routinely, involving your Safety Committee. Address their cause, location, and situation and recommend corrective actions.

For many teachers, the start of the school year brings wonderful thoughts of a happy, successful year with new students. Consider their safety and assist when they need to respond to negative situations. Utilize professional assistance for staff post-incident, including mental health counseling and de-escalation training, should it be necessary.