



A. INTRODUCTION

Stanislaus County employees provide a wide variety of services and service a wide range of clients, some of whom may be under severe stress and have nowhere else to turn. Providing these services can place County employees at risk for exposure to violent or threatening behavior; sometimes the very nature of their work or location of their work, places employees at higher risk of random violence. Risk of violence can also come from within the workforce from co-workers or those associated with co-workers.

This policy, as well as the procedures, guidelines and appendixes have been developed to address all forms and types of security and workplace violence issues. It also affirms the County's commitment to providing a safe and healthful working environment for its employees while maintaining an atmosphere conducive to openly and fully serving the public.

All employees are required to familiarize themselves with all aspects of this policy, including the procedures, guidelines and appendixes that have been developed to prepare for and reduce workplace violence.

This policy, and its accompanying procedures, guidelines and appendixes shall be incorporated into the County's Injury and Illness Prevention Program.

B. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy, together with its procedures, guidelines and appendixes is to:

1. Reduce the risk of workplace violence.
2. Protect employees and the public from injury should an incident of workplace violence occur.
3. Identify the types and levels of workplace violence.
4. Identify potential perpetrators and threats of violence.
5. Improve the ability to defuse a hostile situation through training, awareness and avoidance.
6. Establish a means for reporting and responding to all incidents of security and workplace violence issues. Compliance with this security and anti-violence policy is a condition of employment. Due to the importance of this policy, employees who violate any of its

terms, who engage in or contribute to violent behavior, or who threaten others with violence will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination. Legal action may also be taken by the County where appropriate.

C. SCOPE

This policy applies to security risks, threats of violence, or violent acts by customers, clients, patients, visitors or any other members of the public towards County employees. It also applies to violent acts or threats of violence, either verbal or implied, made by an employee, contractor, student, volunteer or other individual providing services or acting on behalf of the County.

All employees are covered under this policy. Each employee is responsible for notifying his/her immediate supervisor or manager if that employee believes that he/she, or someone else, knows of and/or has been reported or may be a potential victim of a security threat or workplace violence incident.

D. DEFINITIONS

1. Serious threat is defined as any threat in which there is credible evidence that violence would or could occur.
2. Security threats/breaches are defined as something or someone that exposes staff, property, clients or visitors to potential harm.
3. Types of Violence

The State of California Department of Industrial Relations Division of Occupational Health and Safety (CAL-OSHA) identifies three types of workplace violence:

Type I: A Type I violent act is committed by an assailant who has no legitimate relationship to the workplace.

Employees who have face to face contact and exchange money with the public, who work late at night and early morning hours, and who often work alone or in very small numbers are at greatest risk of a Type I incident. Occupations at risk of a Type I incident are cashiers, custodians, and security guards.

Type II: A Type II violent act involves violence or a threat of violence by a recipient of a service provided by the County employee such as a patient, client, customer, passenger, criminal suspect or prisoner.

County employees provide a wide range of services to clients and public, and may have to confront individuals who are not satisfied with the services provided or disagree with the resolution of a matter. Certain clients and patients may be emotionally disturbed or

have a mental disability which impairs their judgment; they may make threats or commit acts of violence on employees who are trying to offer their help or assistance.

Employees who are at risk for Type II acts of violence include public safety and correctional personnel, medical care providers, mental health providers, deputy district attorneys, public defenders, family support officers, social service, building inspectors, code enforcement and animal services workers.

Type III: A Type III violent act consists of an assault by an individual who has some employment-related involvement with the workplace. A Type III event usually involves a threat of violence or an act of violence resulting in a fatal or nonfatal injury by a current or former worker, supervisor or manager; a current or former spouse or lover; a relative or friend; or some other person who has a dispute directly involving a worker or workers at the workplace.

4. Prohibited Behaviors

Examples of conduct which may be considered threats or acts of violence include, but are not limited to:

- a. Violence: aggressive acts or initiation of physical force exerted for the purpose of violating, damaging or abusing others.
- b. Threat: an expression of direct (intent to take action), or indirect (what could happen) intention to inflict pain, injury or punishment upon another person or property.
- c. Intimidation: inspiring fear in a person by a show of force or a promise of force.
- d. Unlawful physical fighting: the unlawful act of aggression or initial force in physically contending with another with the intent to overpower and/or cause harm.
- e. Threatened or actual destruction of County or personal property.
- f. Harassing or threatening phone calls.
- g. Stalking: willfully, maliciously and repeatedly following or harassing another person. A stalker can be anyone from an anonymous admirer to a co-worker to a former spouse, or a client or customer.
- h. Bringing unauthorized dangerous weapons into the workplace: weapons include instruments, articles, or substances which in the possession of an employee or under the circumstances of which it is used or is threatened to be used, is readily able to cause physical injury or death.

E. POLICY: SECURITY/VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE: ZERO TOLERANCE

1. Stanislaus County is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for its employees while maintaining an atmosphere conducive to openly and fully serving the public. Security breaches and threats of violence and/or violent acts directed towards County employees or others, or by any employee, contractor, or other person performing services for the County is prohibited and will not be tolerated. Immediate and appropriate criminal action, as well as disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with current County disciplinary policy, will be taken by the County in order to protect its employees and others from security breaches or violent acts.
2. In order to provide a safe and healthy working environment and to reduce the risk of violence in the workplace, each department shall:
 - a. Train all employees and staff in security, workplace violence reduction, prevention, response, and reporting.
3. Each employee shall:
 - a. Provide a copy of any temporary or permanent restraining order which the employee has obtained which lists County property as a protected area to his or her supervisor or department head.
 - b. Report all security threats, threats, or acts of violence which occur on County premises which they experience, witness or which they otherwise become aware of to their supervisor, or if the supervisor is the individual making the security threat, threat, or performing the act, then report to the departmental safety representative, department head, or to the County Safety Officer in the CEO-Risk Management Division.
 - c. Report all threats or acts of violence which they experience while acting in the scope of their employment off County premises, or which relates to the legitimate business interests of the County.
 - d. Report any threats or acts of violence occurring off County premises of which they are a target if there is a reasonable basis to believe that the violence will follow them to the workplace.
 - e. Not make intentionally false and/or misleading reports. No employee will be disciplined, retaliated against or discharged for reporting any legitimate security threat, threat, or act of violence, however, employees found to have made intentionally false or misleading reports will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
 - f. In the case of imminent danger or violence where immediate assistance must be

sought, contact law enforcement by dialing 911, 9-911 from some County phones, 558-HELP from cell phones and then report the incident to his or her supervisor as outlined above.

- g. Report all security threats, threats, or acts of violence which relate to legitimate County business interests, regardless of any relationship which relationship which may exist between the individual who initiated the threat or engaged in the violent act and the individual who was the victim of that conduct.
 - h. Report any County personnel or any other individuals who are on County premises who exhibit an unusual fascination with incidents of workplace violence or an unusual fascination with firearms (especially automatic or semi-automatic weapons).
 - i. Report all suspicious packages found on or near County premises to his or her supervisor or department head; said suspicious packages will be treated as a possible explosive device in accordance with the procedure outlined in the Bomb Threat Policy.
4. It shall be the responsibility of each supervisor to also:
- a. Follow Section 4, Number d.
 - b. Become familiar with the early warning signals of violence and report any employee or other party who displays one or more of those warning signs whenever a supervisor has a reasonable basis for concern or a reasonable belief that an employee or other party should be evaluated.
 - c. Prepare, and give to the department head, a County Security/Violence in the Workplace Incident Report based on information from the reporting employee and/or personal observation which includes specific information concerning the conduct at issue including 1) who engaged in the conduct, 2) what conduct is at issue, 3) against whom the conduct was directed, 4) what specifically was said or done, 5) whether the party at issue engaged in any physical conduct that would indicate he/she plans to follow through on a threat, 6) names of witnesses to the conduct at issue, 7) the time and place where the conduct occurred, 8) whether there is any previous history of violent or threatening conduct, 9) the relationship of the person to whom the conduct was directed and the person undertaking the conduct, and 10) any other information which will aid in the investigation.
 - d. Ask the reporting employee whether he/she has any suggestions for maximizing security and minimizing the risk of violence based on the information known to them.
 - e. Carefully document objective facts and relevant personal feelings so that trained professionals will have access to the information necessary to reach fair and

accurate conclusions (subjective statements should be included only if they relate to the recording employee's or supervisor's personal feelings of fear or intimidation, and subjective conclusions should be avoided).

5. Nothing in this policy alters any other reporting obligation established in other County or departmental policies, or in state or federal law.
6. Security risk/violence prevention requires a commitment from every employee. Any employee who is concerned about security or the possibility of workplace violence shall immediately discuss the matter with his or her supervisor. Retaliation against those who report such concerns is strictly forbidden.
7. Dangerous weapons, including guns, knives and explosives are not permitted at the workplace or on County property, including parking lots, unless they are carried subject to permits issued pursuant to California law. Any employee, who has such permissive use, must notify and obtain written permission as follows:
 - a. Employees working for the Sheriff, District Attorney or Probation must obtain written permission from his/her Department Head.
 - b. All other workers require a written recommendation from their Department Head to the CEO who must give final written authorization. In the absence of the CEO, County Counsel may give written authorization.

Protective devices such as mace or pepper spray that employees carry for personal protection are permitted. The employee must meet all the requirements of California State law, and notify and obtain permission from their department head if they intend to use such devices within the scope of their work.

8. The legislature of the State of California has specifically addressed the special safety and security issues facing hospital emergency department personnel, patients, and visitors through legislation (AB 508); these special concerns are of vital importance to the County as well, and these policies and procedures are intended to apply to any County hospital emergency department and staff, including behavioral health facilities and staff, pursuant to AB 508. Acts or threats of physical violence, including intimidation, harassment and/or coercion which involve or affect County staff will not be tolerated.

F. PROCEDURES

1. INTRODUCTION

The following procedures have been developed in order to assure uniform compliance with the County's zero tolerance policy against violence in the workplace.

2. PURPOSE

These procedures are designed to assist County staff and departments in their efforts to carry out the County's policy and to describe the methods by which the policy will be implemented throughout the County. These procedures also describe how staff is expected to assess and identify potential risk, seek means to reduce that risk, and train staff in workplace violence reduction, prevention, and response. Finally, these procedures describe the means by which security threats or workplace violence will be reported.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Department Heads

The department head is ultimately responsible for implementing the County's policies and ensuring that there is prompt action in response to security risk, incidents, threats, and reports of workplace violence. To assist in this task, each department shall also have a Departmental Safety Committee which will develop and implement the County's policies, procedures and guidelines within the department. The Department Safety Committee shall recommend to the department head any issue that is a workplace violence problem.

The County Safety Committees and County Safety Officer in the CEO-Risk Management Division can serve as a resource to the departments and can provide suggestions and consultation to department management and Department Safety Committees regarding risk reduction strategies for creating a secure physical working environment.

The department head shall have the following responsibilities:

1. Implement policies and procedures in the department.
2. Annually conduct security risk assessment of department and/or facility(s) to identify areas of potential risk.
3. Develop and adopt procedures reflecting the unique needs of the department for preventing or reducing the risk of workplace violence; guidelines have been developed by the County which may be helpful in conducting the risk assessment and in identifying risk reduction strategies.
4. Develop and adopt procedures for responding to incidents of workplace violence.
5. Assure that all acts and threats of violence or potential violence are promptly reported on the Security/Violence in the Workplace Incident Report form with

distribution per the form.

6. Train staff regarding policy and procedures upon implementation of the policy and annually thereafter.
7. Direct and oversee investigations of incidents, threats and reports of workplace violence when they occur in the department.
8. Ensure a physical environment that provides safety and security to employees while maintaining accessibility to clients and public.
9. Ensure that any surveillance cameras, physical barriers, metal detectors or designated security areas are used in a manner which is conducive to the provision of public services.
10. Determine whether or not employees shall be required to wear employee identification badges, and establish rules and instruction for such use.
11. Develop rules regarding access to facilities by visitors, contractors and vendors.

b. Managers and Supervisors

Managers and Supervisors shall:

1. Have direct responsibility to make workplace security and safety their highest concern.
2. Provide support for employees in the event of a real or perceived threat of security and workplace violence.
3. Provide information and training regarding workplace violence for employees.

c. Employees

Employees shall:

1. Participate in training.
2. Read and review all policies, procedures and guidelines pertaining to security risks/incidents and workplace violence.
3. Immediately report the loss of a building key, proximity card, or other access device to his or her immediate supervisor.

4. THREATS OF VIOLENCE BY EMPLOYEES

All acts or threats of violence by County employees are to be treated as disciplinary issues and should be immediately reported to the employee's immediate supervisor. Supervisors are responsible for reporting all threats or acts of violence to the CEO-Risk Management Division, Safety Unit and the department head for response and appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination. When advised of threats or acts of violence, the department head is encouraged to notify the CEO-Personnel and/or County Counsel. The County advocates a preventative approach whereby civil service rules and regulations are fairly and consistently administered and where troubled employees receive guidance and assistance through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP); referrals should therefore also be made to the EAP when appropriate.

5. INVESTIGATION OF SECURITY INCIDENTS/THREATS/ACTS OF VIOLENCE OR POTENTIAL VIOLENCE

- a. Security incidents, threats and acts of violence or potential violence will be investigated at the departmental level.
- b. When appropriate, law enforcement will be notified if they have not yet become involved, and criminal charges may be filed.
- c. If the threat is serious, or if an injury has occurred, the incident will be reported to and may be further investigated by the County CEO-Risk Management Division.

6. INCIDENT REPORTS

The County Security/Violence in the Workplace Incident Report form shall be filled out whenever there is a security incident, threat, act of violence, or potential violence.

7. RESPONDING TO SECURITY INCIDENTS OR VIOLENT ACTS

Anyone who is threatened with imminent violence, who witnesses violence, or is the victim of an act of violence, should immediately notify law enforcement by dialing 9 1 1 (9-9 1 1 from County phones). Individuals must use their best judgment in responding to individual threats or incidents; however, all employees are expected to obey law enforcement and/or other persons in authority regarding directions to evacuate, take cover, or respond appropriately to risk reduction activities that might be taking place in response to an incident. CEO-Risk Management Division, Safety Unit will be notified.

Guidelines developed by the County which augment these policies and procedures should be reviewed by all employees and may be used in training as a means of familiarizing staff with recommended risk reduction strategies.

After a violent act or threat of violence has occurred, the County will provide support and guidance to the victim(s), witnesses and others, and the affected employees will be offered services through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

8. EVACUATION/EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS

Each department shall establish evacuation procedures for every work location for responding to threats or acts of violence as required and in accordance with Section 6 of the County Safety Manual. If there is more than one department located in a County building, all departments should collaborate in the development of a coordinated emergency action plan which includes a specific evacuation plan.

The Chief Executive Officer of Stanislaus County, or his/her designee, is the only officer who can order an evacuation of a department without the presence of immediate danger. Examples of threats or acts of violence that could trigger an evacuation include credible bomb threats or the presence of an armed gunman in the workplace. If an immediate danger is noted, the management and supervisory staff are to assume primary responsibility for facilitating the evacuation of all employees and the public when appropriate, and for taking all necessary actions to ensure a safe and orderly evacuation.

9. TRAINING

Training on how to respond to all types of workplace violence can help county employees minimize the risk of violence and injury. In order to effectively deal with workplace violence, a copy of the County's policies, procedures, guidelines and appendixes for reducing workplace violence shall be reviewed by all employees.

Training will include an explanation of the policies, procedures guidelines, and familiarize with the appendixes that have been developed by the County to augment its policies and procedures. Training shall occur initially for all employees upon implementation of the policy procedures, and at regular intervals thereafter. New employees shall receive initial training during orientation.

Departments will structure training as described in Section 3 of the County Safety Manual, and in a manner that meets their own unique and specific needs. As a minimum, all employees will receive, upon hire, written information about the workplace violence policies, procedures, guidelines and appendixes as well as training in recognizing the warning signs of workplace violence and in risk reduction strategies.

G. GUIDELINES

1. OFFICE SAFETY

- a. Employees who unlock the building in the morning should:
 - 1. Check the building for open doors, missing items, open windows and any disorder.
 - 2. Leave the building immediately if it is suspected that an intruder is present and dial 9 1 1 (non-County phone) or 9-9 1 1 (County phone) from a safe location to report any problem or suspected problem.
 - 3. Institute a buddy system if at all possible.
- b. An employee who is working alone in any area should keep outside doors and windows locked.
- c. If the workplace must accommodate the public or has public access requirements, the department head should see that procedures are adopted that reflect concerns re: employee's safety while maintaining public access during business hours.
- d. Purses and valuables should be kept out of sight at all times.
- e. When interacting with the public, employees may have minimal control over how the contact will progress and the contact could turn violent more quickly than one could react. As a guideline it is recommended that employees keep something between themselves and others during interaction. This may be a chair, counter or desk.
- f. Employees should always maintain a safe distance between themselves and others. There are ways to reduce the risk of such harmful contact:
 - 1. Stay out of reach or hitting distance by either hands or feet. Also position yourself in sideways to the other person in a manner that protects you from any frontal attack.
 - 2. When entering a room position yourself so that no one can enter behind you.
 - 3. Do not allow anyone to come between yourself and the door.
 - 4. Always provide at least one clear means of egress/exit and two if possible.
 - 5. Leave before the contact turns violent.
 - 6. When retreating, back out of the doorway--do not turn your back to a violent person!
- g. When securing the building at the end of the day employees should make sure the

building is empty including restrooms, and that no one person is left inside alone (if possible).

- h. Plan ahead if leaving the building alone:
 - 1. Move your vehicle to a safe location beforehand.
 - 2. Move quickly and be aware of your surroundings.
 - 3. Look around and be observant.
 - 4. Walk in well-lighted areas as much as possible.
 - 5. If something is wrong, call a pre-established department before leaving the building for assistance, or dial 9 1 1 from non-County phones, or 9-9 1 1 from some County phones, or 558-HELP (558-4357) from cell phones.

2. PARKING LOT AND CAR SAFETY

- a. Use the buddy system whenever possible.
- b. Face traffic, and avoid doorways, bushes and other potential hiding places.
- c. Have your keys in hand ready to unlock the car door.
- d. Keep car doors locked when parked whether you are in or out of the car.
- e. Always remove keys from the car even when leaving it momentarily.
- f. Never leave the motor running while unattended.
- g. Be aware of what is happening in the parking lot; observe who is there and what they are doing. If you perceive a problem, return to the building and lock yourself inside. Call a pre-established department, 9 1 1 from a non-County phone, 9-9 1 1 from some County phones, or 558-HELP from a cell phone.
- h. If people ask for directions, politely but firmly tell them you do not know, and stay well away from them.
- i. Check the interior and exterior of the car to make sure no one is hiding on the opposite side, under or inside, before getting near and/or into the car.
- j. Keep your car doors locked when driving and close all windows tightly.
- k. At the end of the workday try to make sure that your co-workers have started their

cars before you leave the parking lot. If someone's car does not start, check on the co-worker's safety prior to your departure.

- l. Avoid parking next to vans, especially vans without windows.
- m. If your car breaks down, open the hood to indicate the need for assistance. Stay in the locked car. If people approach, open your window just enough to ask them to call for help. Do not open your car door.

3. FIELD WORK SAFETY

- a. All fieldwork activities are potentially dangerous. Any case involving child, sexual, spousal, drug or alcohol abuse, either past or present, is a higher risk activity and extra care should be taken to assure personal safety.
- b. The following guidelines should be considered as ways to increase your safety and reduce your risks:
 - 1. Wear County identification badges.
 - 2. If possible or appropriate, call clients before you leave the office so they will be expecting you.
 - 3. Before leaving the office, leave an itinerary, and if traveling by automobile, the automobile description and license plate number, with your supervisor or co-worker. This is especially important if your schedule takes you to a potentially risky home or area.
 - 4. Know the area you are going into. Familiarize yourself with business establishments or other safe locations you can go to in an emergency.
 - 5. If you feel a visit will be higher risk than usual, inform your immediate supervisor. Your supervisor should determine, before you go on the visit, an estimated time of arrival and return or other safety precautions, such as a second person or specific back-up procedure in the event of a problem. If you do not return in a timely manner, help can be notified without delay.
 - 6. Park as near as possible to the location where you are doing business. Park facing out toward the road so you can leave quickly. On any high risk visit consider using a County car.
 - 7. Car doors need to be kept locked and windows rolled up.
 - 8. Before exiting the car look around to make sure no one is hiding. When returning to the car, check the interior and exterior to make sure no one is hiding on the

opposite side, under or inside before getting into the car. Be careful when getting out of the vehicle into a gang type crowd.

9. Wear appropriate clothing. Do not wear expensive looking jewelry. Following accepted standards for professional appearance can reduce vulnerability in potentially unsafe situations.
10. Pants and flat-soled non-slip shoes with closed toe and heel should be worn for maximum mobility.
11. When entering a home, take with you only what you need to conduct your business, i.e. forms, clipboards, etc. Don't take a purse and valuables (leave these items at the office, out of sight in the locked car, or in the trunk). Keep your ID and car keys in a pocket. If you do have to make a hasty exit you will not have to worry about leaving behind any valuables. Forms and clipboards are replaceable.
12. Approach the area slowly. Be aware of avenues of escape and possible ways to get help if needed. If things do not feel right at any time during the visit, leave immediately. Your appointment can be changed to another day.
13. Watch for animals or signs of animals in the yard. Do not enter a yard when a dog is present, unless accompanied by the resident. Ask the resident to physically control or lock up the animal during the visit.
14. While knocking, stand to the side of the door rather than in front of the door. Do not enter the house until someone meets you at the door. Show your County identification or business card to the person who answers the door. Assess the situation before entering. Give and obtain preliminary information outside. Ask who is home. Ask for permission to enter. Be aware of body language of everyone in the house. Remember, you cannot know who or what may be inside. If the client is not at home, remain outside while talking to the person answering the door. Inform the person that you will return at another time.
15. If persons appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, leave and return at another time. Avoid quick movement(s) in this situation. Move slowly and confidently as you leave.
16. Position yourself where no one can come in behind you. Stay between other people and the door. If you begin to feel uneasy or unsafe, leave.
17. If you need to make a retreat, back out of the area when leaving. Do not turn your back to someone in this situation.
18. Project authority. Always scan the environment.

19. If you are asked to leave the home, do so immediately.
20. If any trouble starts, leave when safe to do so. If the situation is unsafe, call or ask someone to call 9 1 1 from a non-County phone, 9-9 1 1 from some County phones or 558-HELP (558-4357) from a cell phone.
21. Any time you have a question about possible danger, or see signs of drug(s), weapon(s) or other illegal activity, leave immediately and call your supervisor.

4. VIOLENT AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR (TYPE II)

a. IDENTIFYING VIOLENT OR POTENTIALLY VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

Be aware that there are certain danger signs that may precede a violent act:

1. Observe the client's body language, facial expressions and tone of voice to see if he/she is getting agitated.
2. Clenched fists, flushed face or tense posture are signals for you to be cautious.

b. HANDLING VIOLENT AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

When confronted with violent, threatening, or aggressive behavior, these suggestions may be helpful in de-escalating the violence or in escaping the situation:

1. Project calmness: move and speak slowly, quietly and confidently.
2. Be an empathic listener: encourage the person to talk while you listen patiently.
3. Focus your attention on the other person to let them know you are interested in what they have to say.
4. Maintain a relaxed yet attentive posture and position yourself at a right angle rather than directly in front of another person.
5. Acknowledge the person's feelings. Indicate that you can see that he or she is upset.
6. Ask for small specific favors such as asking the person to move to a quieter area.
7. Establish ground rules if unreasonable behavior persists. Calmly describe the consequences of any threatening or violent behavior.
8. Use delaying tactics which will give the person time to calm down. For example,

offer a drink of water (in a disposable cup).

9. Be reassuring and point out choices. Break big problems into smaller, more manageable problems.
10. Accept criticism in a positive way. When a complaint might be true, use statements like "you could be right," or "I see your point. Maybe we need to take another look at this." If the criticism is unwarranted, ask clarifying questions.
11. Ask for the person's recommendations. Repeat back to the person what you feel he or she is requesting of you.
12. Position yourself so that a visitor cannot block your access to an exit.
13. Avoid styles of communication which generate hostility such as apathy, brush-offs, coldness, condescension, robotism, going strictly by the rules or giving the run-around.
14. Don't reject all of a client's demands from the start.
15. Don't pose in challenging stances such as standing directly opposite someone, hands on hips or crossing your arms.
16. Avoid physical contact, finger pointing or long periods of fixed eye contact.
17. Do not make sudden movements which can be seen as threatening. Notice the tone, volume and rate of your speech and adjust your speech if necessary.
18. Do not challenge, threaten or dare the individual. Never belittle the person or make him/her feel foolish.
19. Don't criticize or act impatiently toward an agitated individual.
20. Do not attempt to bargain with a threatening individual.
21. Avoid trying to make the situation seem less serious than it is.
22. Do not make false statements or promises you cannot keep.
23. It is unwise to try to impart a lot of technical or complex information when emotions are high.
24. Avoid taking sides or agreeing with distortions.
25. Don't invade an individual's personal space. Stay out of the reach or hitting

distance by either hands or feet. Also position yourself sideways to the person in a manner that prevents any front attack.

c. PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM IMMINENT VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

1. Try to keep a desk or other barrier between you and the client, making sure that the client does not block your escape route.
2. If the client is directly in front of you, step back so that you are out of striking range.
3. If you sense that a client is going to commit a violent act at any second, don't hesitate to leave immediately. Find an excuse to leave the area, or if required, simply leave and get help from co-workers or security. Don't hesitate to call law enforcement if necessary. It is better to disrupt a work site than to be injured.

d. MEDIA ATTENTION FOLLOWING ACT OF VIOLENCE

1. Media is often drawn to workplace violence events. County policy regarding media interaction should be followed if there is media interest. Do not speak with the media directly, unless directed by your supervisor, department head, PIO or previously established department's protocol.
2. If an individual later seeks to interview you regarding a workplace violence incident refer that individual to your supervisor.

5. PRE-VIOLENCE, SIGNS AND WARNINGS

a. IDENTIFYING PRE-VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

Violent acts by co-workers or other persons known to you are often preceded by a number of warning signs or changes in behavior. Since these changes can be subtle, it is important to observe behavior carefully. Warning signs can include:

Veiled or open threats of violence, such as predicting bad things are going to happen, especially threats that are detailed or appear to be well-planned.

A history of disciplinary actions, or poor reactions to discipline or performance evaluations.

1. Irritability, belligerence or hostility.
2. Excessive focus on guns, police or the military; subscription to paramilitary magazines or boasting of weapons collections,

3. Changes in behavior, such as deterioration of work performance or an increase in concentration problems; becoming withdrawn, increasingly angry, agitated or out of touch with reality,
4. A resumption or escalation in drug and/or alcohol abuse.
5. Reacting with great stress to workplace events such as layoffs, discharges, demotions, re-organizations, labor disputes, or to personal or family problems such as divorce, bankruptcy, etc.
6. Depression.
7. Paranoia such as statements that everyone is against them or by panicking easily.
8. An increased propensity for aggressive behavior with disregard to the safety of self or co-workers.
9. Crossing a co-worker's or supervisor's physical boundaries (getting in their face), physical posturing or aggressiveness, stalking, excessive phone calls, etc.
10. A known personal history of violent, reckless or anti-social behavior.
11. References to or identification with mass murderers and infamous incidents of workplace violence, such as "post office shootings".
12. Having a fascination with recent incidents of workplace violence and expressing approval of the use of violence under similar circumstances.
13. An obsessive involvement with the job which becomes the sole source of identity.
14. A loner with little or no involvement with co-workers.
15. A combination of the use of stimulants, paranoid behavior, and the purchase of weapons, which can be a particularly risky mixture.
16. Unwelcome name-calling, obscene language, and other abusive behavior.
17. Intimidation through direct or veiled verbal threats.
18. Throwing objects in the workplace regardless of the size or type of object thrown, or regardless of whether a person is the target of a thrown object.
19. Physically touching another employee in an intimidating, malicious, or sexually harassing manner, including such acts as hitting, slapping, poking, kicking, pinching, grabbing, and pushing.

20. Physically intimidating others, including acts such as obscene gestures, “getting in your face,” and fist-shaking.

b. PRE-EMPLOYMENT SCREENING FOR VIOLENT PROPENSITIES

1. All applicants should be thoroughly screened before hiring; usually this involves verifying all references and seeking to learn if the potential employee has a history of problems at prior places of employment. Efforts should be made to obtain whatever information can be legally sought.
2. In certain areas of employment, for example law enforcement, pre-employment screening can include criminal checks. Check with the Recruitment Unit of the Chief Executive Offices for information regarding criminal checks if you are unsure whether this is an option for your department.

6. STALKING

- a. Stalking is defined as “willfully, maliciously and repeatedly following or harassing another person”--a stalker can be anyone from an anonymous admirer, a co-worker, a former spouse or client/customer.
- b. The best way to prevent stalking is to not let a relationship, even a casual one, develop or continue any farther than you want it to.
- c. Stalkers often have never learned to take “no” for an answer, so you must be clear and firm. When declining an unwanted invitation, make sure your answer cannot be interpreted in any way to mean “maybe”. Don’t give a reason or excuse that may only provide a challenge in the mind of the initiator.
- d. If a person does not accept your refusal to become involved in a relationship, take the situation seriously.
- e. If you think you are being stalked, notify your supervisor and local law enforcement.
- f. If a coworker is engaging in this behavior tell your supervisor. It can then be dealt with as sexual harassment.