

VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY

PURPOSE

Workplace Violence is an occupational safety and health matter. Employers cannot afford to simply react to violent incidents; they must try to prevent them.

The safety and security of Clackamas County employees, volunteers, customers, vendors, contractors, and the general public are of vital importance. Because the County recognizes that violence in the workplace is a problem nationally that needs to be addressed by all employers, the following statement of policy regarding this issue is set forth.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Clackamas County employees, volunteers, customers, vendors, contractors, and the general public.

POLICY STATEMENT

Threats and acts of violence made by an employee or member of the public against another person's life, health, well-being, family or property will be dealt with in a Zero Tolerance manner by Clackamas County.

Acts or Threats of Violence Defined

"Threats or acts of violence" include conduct against persons or property that is sufficiently severe, offensive, or intimidating to alter the employment conditions at Clackamas County, or to create a hostile, abusive, or intimidating work environment for one or more Clackamas County employees.

MAIN COMPONENTS of PREVENTION PROGRAM

As with any effective safety and health program, there are five main components to a program for preventing Workplace Violence.

1. Management commitment
2. Employee involvement
3. Worksite analysis
4. Hazard prevention and control
5. Training

To reduce and to prevent Workplace Violence various experts recommend specific steps.

- A Extensive pre-employment screening
- B Special care for discipline and termination
- C Good atmosphere for reporting incidents
- D Expedient action on incident reports
- E Effective grievance procedures
- F Proper security measures
- G Policy dealing with violence aftermath
- H Readily available EAP services

While implementing all of these steps may seem to be expensive, or time consuming, surveys show that employers with effective policies and programs report lower rates of Workplace Violence as well as lower levels of burnout and stress related illnesses. Although the main goal of Workplace Violence prevention is to protect the employer's most valuable resource - its employees, effective and comprehensive policies can also protect the employer from litigation should an episode occur.

Examples of Workplace Violence

General examples of prohibited workplace violence include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ◆ All threats or acts of violence occurring on Clackamas County property, regardless of the relationship between the County and the parties involved in the incident
- ◆ All threats or acts of violence not occurring on County property but involving someone who is acting in the capacity of a representative of Clackamas County
- ◆ All threats or acts of violence not occurring on County property involving an employee of the County if the threats or acts of violence affect the legitimate interests of Clackamas County

Specific examples of conduct that may be considered "threats or acts of violence" prohibited under this policy include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ◆ Hitting or shoving an individual
- ◆ Threatening to harm or harming an individual or his/her family, friends, associates, or their property
- ◆ The intentional destruction or threat of destruction of property owned, operated, or controlled by Clackamas County
- ◆ Making harassing or threatening telephone calls, letters or other forms of written or electronic communications
- ◆ Intimidating or attempting to coerce an employee to do wrongful acts that would affect the business interests of the County
- ◆ Unauthorized possession of or inappropriate use of firearms, weapons, or any other dangerous devices on County property, in County vehicles, or in any personal vehicle which is used for County business

While employees of the County may be required as a condition of their work assignment to possess firearms, weapons or other dangerous devices, or permitted to carry them as authorized by law, it is the County's policy that employees are to use them only in accordance with departmental operating procedures and all applicable State and Federal laws.

POLICY APPLICATION

Clackamas County's prohibition against threats and acts of violence applies to all persons involved in the County's operations, including but not limited to County personnel, contract and temporary workers, and anyone else on County property. Violations of this policy by any individual on County property, by any individual acting as a representative of the County while not on County property, or by any individual acting off of County property when his/her actions affect the public interest or the County's business interests will be followed by legal action, as appropriate. Violation by any employee of any provision of this policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

One exception to the application of this policy lies in the Public Safety area. These policies are not meant to be applied during the course and scope of the enforcement, emergency or mandated interactions. Sheriff Department standards and Public Safety guidelines, as well as department policies and procedures apply in those situations.

POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES

The County Administrator

Insofar as is reasonably possible, the County's Administrator, or the County Administrator's designee, is responsible for:

- ◆ developing procedures that are designed to reasonably achieve prompt and appropriate response to any threat or act of violence
- ◆ developing procedures to assure accountability among employees for threats or acts of violence committed in the workplace
- ◆ establishment of oversight of investigations of threats or acts of violence committed in the workplace
- ◆ assuring avenues of support for employees who experience violence
- ◆ communication of this policy and administrative procedures to employees, manager and supervisors

Managers/Supervisors

Managers and supervisors are responsible for:

- ◆ assessing situations
- ◆ making judgments on the appropriate response
- ◆ responding to reports of or knowledge of threats or acts of violence
- ◆ evaluating immediately and confidentially any report of threat or act of violence
- ◆ taking action where possible to protect an employee from further threats or acts of violence initiating the investigation process
- ◆ making the employee aware of mental health services (including EAP services) and requiring their participation when warranted

Employees

All employees are responsible for:

- ◆ refraining from threats or acts of violence
- ◆ seeking assistance to resolve personal issues that may lead to threats or acts of violence in the workplace
- ◆ reporting to managers and supervisors any dangerous or threatening situations that occur *in* the workplace
- ◆ reporting situations that occur *outside* of the workplace which may affect workplace safety

POLICY GOALS

To achieve the goals and objectives of this policy, Clackamas County **has implemented and will continue to evaluate** the following:

- ◆ establish procedures and methods for implementing policies which address violence in the workplace
- ◆ provide training to managers, supervisors, and other employees on prevention of and handling of workplace violence
- ◆ evaluate the physical environment for safety and consider modifications
- ◆ evaluate progress in achieving the goals and objectives of this policy

POLICY QUESTIONS

Employees shall refer any questions regarding his or her rights and/or obligations under this policy to the Risk & Benefits Division in the Department of Employee Services.