

# **County of Alameda**

## **Workplace Violence Prevention Policy**

### INTRODUCTION:

Across the nation incidents of workplace violence and threats of violence have significantly increased in recent years. Immediate victims as well as others are affected by incidents of workplace violence or threats of violence, including fellow employees, family members and clients. The physical injuries, emotional distress and potential loss of life resulting from incidents of workplace violence may have long-term effects. Incidents of violence or threats of violence may also have an impact on productivity and the effectiveness of the organization for an extensive period of time.

Alameda County recognizes the importance of providing a safe work environment. For this reason this Workplace Violence Prevention Policy has been developed. Agencies/Departments are encouraged to develop supplemental policies and/or procedures as may be required to address specific operational needs in order to further assist in the prevention of workplace violence. This policy which is in conformance with California OSHA guidelines is intended to identify the following:

- What constitutes violence or threats of violence;
- Conduct that is prohibited;
- Warning signs of workplace violence;
- The importance of reporting workplace violence;
- Agency/Department responsibilities;
- Resources available in the event of a workplace violence crisis; and,
- How to respond to incidents of workplace violence and/or related behaviors.
- Definitions

### WHAT CONSTITUTES VIOLENCE OR THREATS OF VIOLENCE:

CAL OSHA defines workplace violence in three main categories:

- Type I - *An incident where the assailant has no legitimate relationship to the workplace and usually enters the workplace to commit a robbery or other criminal act.*
- Type II - *An incident involving a violent act by a recipient of a service provided by an employer.*
- Type III - *An incident committed by someone seeking revenge for perceived unfair treatment by a co-worker, a supervisor, a manager, or an incident involving a domestic dispute where an employee is threatened at work by someone with whom the employee has a personal relationship.*

For the purposes of this policy, workplace violence includes, but is not limited to, violence, direct or indirect threats of violence, intimidation, physical fighting, or unauthorized possession of weapons.

*PROHIBITED CONDUCT:*

The County takes the issue of workplace violence very seriously. For this reason, conduct which is prohibited includes, but is not limited to violence, direct or indirect threats of violence, intimidation, physical fighting or unauthorized use or possession of weapons.

*WARNING SIGNS OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE:*

Incidents of workplace violence have increased in recent years and are frequently caused by anger and/or frustrations, obsessive love affairs and domestic disputes that spill over into the workplace.

A threat is the clearest indicator of potential violence (includes direct threats, veiled threats and threats conditioned upon other actions). For example, employee receives repeated phone calls of a volatile nature--should be reported to supervisor.

Other signs or behaviors which may be identified along with threats may include an individual who...

- *is unusually argumentative*
- *doesn't cooperate well with others*
- *has a problem with authority figures*
- *frequently blames others for his or her problems*
- *displays marked changes in work patterns such as tardiness or absenteeism*
- *demonstrates extreme or bizarre behavior*
- *frequently appears depressed*
- *is involved in alcohol or drug abuse*
- *has a history of violence*
- *exhibits a preoccupation with weapons and their use to harm self or others*

It is certainly possible that a potentially violent individual may not exhibit all of the signs listed above. At the same time, caution must be exercised to avoid over reacting. For example just because an employee is argumentative does not necessarily mean that the employee will also become violent.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF REPORTING INCIDENTS OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE:

Even though workplace violence is increasing across the nation, County employees can decrease the odds of such occurrences if angry outbursts are not ignored and any violence or threats of violence which occur in the workplace are reported in accordance with the following provisions of this Workplace Violence Prevention Policy:

It is critical that any incident of violence or threat of violence is reported and not ignored. For this reason, the County requires employees to report such incidents.

- *Any employee while in the workplace or while on County business who observes or hears a person (e.g., employee, visitor, contractor, vendor, client patient, etc.) who threatens, attempts, or commits a prohibited behavior or act of violence shall immediately notify his/her immediate supervisor or the department's designee for this purpose.*
- *Any employee who observes or becomes aware of any unauthorized possession, use, transferring, or selling of a weapon at a County work site or any other location while a County employee is on County business shall immediately report this to his/her immediate supervisor or to the department's manager designated for this purpose.*
- *Because of the nature of an incident may preclude an employee from reporting an incident to their immediate supervisor, as a pilot program, a dedicated Workplace Violence Prevention telephone hot line, 208-1018 or 21018 on the tieline, is available in the Sheriff's Office.*

The County will make every reasonable effort to maintain the confidentiality of individual(s) reporting incidents of Workplace Violence. No guarantees can be made in all situations as the identity of the reporter may be critical to the investigation and/or incident.

### OPERATING DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

#### **Each department shall be responsible for the following:**

- *Advising all employees of the Workplace Violence Prevention Policy;*
- *Providing a copy of the policy to each employee and placing a signed copy of the policy statement in each employee's personnel file;*
- *Posting copies of the policy on Agency/Department official bulletin boards;*
- *Insuring that all employees attend County-wide training on Workplace Violence Prevention;*
- *Developing a department-specific Workplace Violence Contingency Response Plan;*
- *Insuring that all employees are familiar with the response plan;*
- *Identifying the managers who will serve as the primary contact(s) for responding to an incident involving workplace violence or prohibited behaviors; and,*
- *Insuring that all employees understand their duty and obligation to consider any and all prohibited conduct or incidents of workplace violence as serious and are advised to seek assistance as soon as early warning signs are identified.*

CRISIS RESOURCE TEAM:

The Crisis Resource Team (CRT) is a multi-disciplinary resource team which will help an operating department determine an appropriate course of action to prevent the escalation of a situation, or assist the department with the investigation of an incident of violence. The CRT will also assist departments in developing strategies and identifying resources for prevention of such incidents in the workplace. The CRT members are skilled in and/or have direct access to mental health, law enforcement, legal, risk management (safety, workers compensation, employee health) and Personnel Administration disciplines which are needed to assist in the development of an appropriate response.

Responding to and assisting with such workplace violence prevention situations is a top priority for crisis resource members who, depending upon the situation, will interrupt other meetings or priorities in order to immediately convene to address actual or potential crises. Managers may contact Crisis Resource Members at the following numbers during normal business hours:

CRISIS RESOURCE TEAM MEMBERS

**Risk Management**

<i>Director, Risk Management</i>	208-9848 or 272-6920
<i>Assistant Risk Manager</i>	272-6924 or 272-6920
<i>Safety Program Manager</i>	272-6698 or 272-6920
<i>Workers' Compensation Program Manager</i>	272-3646 or 272-6920

**Human Resource Services**

<i>Director of Operations</i>	271-5182
<i>Deputy Director</i>	272-6435
<i>Personnel Services Manager</i>	208-9853

**County Counsel**

<i>Assistant County Counsel</i>	272-6717
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**Sheriff - Civil and Bailiff Section**

<i>Lieutenant</i>	272-6913
<i>Sergeant in Charge of Bailiffs</i>	272-6906

**HOW TO RESPOND TO INCIDENTS OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE/RELATED BEHAVIOR:**

- *The first obligation of County employees is to assist in maintaining a secure and safe workplace by adhering to the Workplace Violence Prevention Policy and their department's workplace violence prevention response plan.*
- *In the event of an incident or violation of the Workplace Violence Prevention Policy, employees are advised to adhere to the following priorities, if possible.*

<b>RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
EMPLOYEES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Get help in securing the environment and obtain medical aid for any victims.</i></li> <li>• <i>Dial 911 (or on County tie-line, dial 9-911) for local police and/or the Sheriff's Department; or call private security, if on site. Request paramedics or ambulance services, if needed.</i></li> <li>• <i>Follow police/sheriff/security instructions and directions for personal safety and for securing the work environment.</i></li> <li>• <i>Notify the immediate supervisor or the manager designated for this purpose.</i></li> </ul>
DESIGNATED MANAGER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>At the time you are notified of an incident, quickly determine the status of the situation.</i></li> <li>• <i>Have the appropriate steps been taken by employees to secure the environment, obtain medical aid, and to obtain security/law enforcement assistance?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are the steps in the department's Workplace Violence Contingency Response Plan being implemented?</i></li> <li>• <i>Quickly gather as much factual information as possible (what, where, when, how, who, why) in preparation for the next step.</i></li> <li>• <i>Immediately contact one of the CRISIS RESOURCE TEAM members (see Section on Crisis Resource Team).</i></li> </ul>
CRISIS RESOURCE TEAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Evaluate the situation and determine appropriate course of action.</i></li> </ul>

DEFINITIONS:

**Intimidation:** *Inspiring fear in a person by a show of force or a promise of force.*

**Physical Fighting:** *The act of aggression or initial force in physically contending with another with the intent to overpower and/or to cause harm.*

**Threat:** *An expression of a direct (intent to take an action) or indirect (what could happen or that something could happen) intention to inflict pain, injury or punishment upon another person or property.*

**Violence:** *Aggressive acts or initiation of physical force exerted for the purpose of violating, damaging or abusing others.*

**Weapons:** *An instrument, article or substance, 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 of causing physical injury or death.*

8/9/95  
Rev. 10/24/95  
Rev. 12/28/95  
Rev. 2/15/96  
Rev. 5/24/01  
Rev. 6/11/07  
Rev. 3/30/15