

COUNTY OF TUOLUMNE
WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Effective Date: July, 1991

Revised: June, 2001

The County of Tuolumne is committed to preventing workplace violence, and to maintaining a safe work environment for its employees. Given the increasing violence in society in general, the County has adopted the following guidelines to deal with intimidation, harassment or any other threats of violence that may occur during business hours or on County premises.

Policy

It is the unequivocal policy of the County of Tuolumne that any act of violence by a County employee towards another employee or member of the public is prohibited and will not be tolerated. Any act or threat of violence by a County employee shall result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

The County shall take whatever reasonable measures possible to protect its employees and, in the event of an act or threat of violence to any of its employees, will provide appropriate security and counseling necessary for the employees' well-being.

Management Responsibilities

The County Board of Supervisors and Administration have committed to the safety and security of all County employees through the implementation of a County Injury and Illness Prevention Policy and related safety policies. Management has a serious commitment to this program in particular. The Safety Committee is charged with the administration of this program. Additionally:

1. The Human Resources (HR) Office, as the working arm of the Safety Committee will serve as the authority for workplace violence prevention issues developing training programs, maintaining related records, and providing consultation to supervisory staff.
2. The County will promptly and thoroughly investigate all reports of threats and acts of violence and of suspicious individuals or activities. Immediately upon learning of such incidents, the supervisor shall report the matter to the Human Resources Office. In the supervisor's absence, the employee is encouraged to report the incident directly to the Human Resources Office.
3. The Human Resources/Risk Manager, or designee, shall immediately notify the Threat Assessment Team (Team), which shall consist of the Human Resources/Risk Manager, County Counsel and the Undersheriff, or their designees. The Team shall examine the facts and take whatever measures are reasonable and prudent to safeguard the threatened employee(s). If no immediate danger exists, the Team shall proceed to evaluate the reported facts and decide on a specific course of action designed to eliminate or reduce the danger as much as possible.

4. If the County's investigation determines that an employee is responsible for threats of violence or any other conduct that is in violation of these guidelines, the County will take prompt disciplinary action against the responsible individual. This disciplinary action may include immediate termination.
5. The County will continue to emphasize employee emotional and physical safety and health by placing a high priority on eliminating safety and security hazards.
6. The Safety Committee will evaluate all reports and records of assaults and incidents of aggression and violence. When this committee makes recommendations for correction the County will, in a timely manner, take action on the recommendation.
7. The County will provide an effective workplace violence prevention training program.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees are asked to commit to being actively involved in the safety and security of all County workplaces, in the decisions that affect worker safety and health, as well as the well-being of the public served. Involvement should include the following:

1. Employees shall report all threats of violence, both direct and indirect, as soon as possible to their supervisor or to any other supervisor. This includes threats by employees, as well as threats by members of the public. Employees should report incidents or potential risks immediately to their supervisor.
2. Employees should treat other employees, including supervisors, temporary employees, contractors and members of the public with courtesy and respect at all times. Fighting, "horseplay" or any other conduct that may be dangerous to others is prohibited.
3. Employees must not engage in any conduct that threatens, intimidates, or coerces another employee, a customer or any member of the public at any time, including off duty periods.
4. Except for law enforcement personnel, employees are prohibited from bringing firearms, weapons, or other dangerous or hazardous devices or substances onto the County's premises.
5. The County encourages employees to bring their disputes or differences with other employees to the attention of their supervisor or the HR Office before the situation escalates into potential violence. The County is eager to assist in the resolution of employee disputes, and will not discipline any employee for raising any concern in good faith.

6. Employees should report all suspicious individuals or activities to a supervisor as soon as possible. Employees should not place themselves in peril. When an employee feels immediately threatened he/she should call law enforcement
7. Employees will participate in department training regarding the prevention of workplace violence.

Program Elements

The County's Prevention Program includes the following major program elements:

- Worksite Analysis
- Hazard Identification and Prevention
- Medical Management and Counseling
- Record Keeping
- Training
- Program Evaluation

Worksite Analysis

Worksite analysis is a process, which will identify existing hazards, conditions, operations and situations that create or contribute to hazards or areas where hazards may develop. This includes close scrutiny and tracking of injury/illness and incident records to identify patterns that may indicate causes of aggressive behavior and assaults.

The objectives of worksite analyses are to recognize, identify, and to correct security hazards. Analysis utilizes existing records and work site evaluations including:

1. *Record Review*
 - a. The analysis of medical, safety, and insurance records, including the Cal OSHA 200 log and information compiled from incidents of assaultive behavior from employees or the public.
 - b. The identification and analysis of any apparent trends in injuries relating to particular departments, units, job titles, unit activities or work stations, activity or time of day. This may include identification of sentinel events such as threatening of employees or identification of events that may lead to assaultive behavior.
2. *Identification and Correction of Security Hazards:* Worksite analysis will use a systematic method to identify those areas needing in depth scrutiny of security hazards. This analysis will seek to accomplish the following:

- a. Identify those work positions in which staff is at moderate to significant risk of assaultive behavior.
- b. Determine if risk factors have been reduced or eliminated to the extent feasible.
- c. Apply analysis to all newly planned and modified facilities, or any public services programs to ensure that hazards are reduced or eliminated.
- d. Conduct periodic surveys to identify new or previously unnoticed risks and deficiencies and to assess the effects of changes in the building designs, work processes, public services and security practices.

Evaluation and analysis of information gathered and incorporation of all this information into a plan of correction and on-going surveillance is the desired result of the work site analysis. Individual departments are responsible for conducting worksite analysis with the assistance of the HR Office.

Recordkeeping

Records shall be kept of the following:

1. OSHA regulations require entry on the Cal OSHA 200 for defined injuries and illnesses. Injuries resulting from assaults may also be entered on the log. Doctors' reports of work injury and supervisors' reports shall be kept of each recorded assault as well.
2. Incidents of abuse, verbal attacks or aggressive behavior which may be threatening to the worker but not resulting in injury, such as pushing, shouting, or an act of aggression toward other clients requiring action by staff shall be recorded by department management. This record may initially be a disciplinary document, employee hazard report or some other document pointing to an incident of potential or actual violence. All such documents shall be forwarded to the HR Office for inclusion as a violence-related record and reviewed by the Safety Committee.

Training

A major program element in any effective safety and security program is training. The purpose of training is to ensure that employees are sufficiently informed about the safety and security hazards to which they may be exposed and thus are able to participate actively in their protection. All employees will be periodically trained in the County's overall Injury and Illness Prevention Program and, specifically, in the prevention of workplace violence.

Training for affected employees shall consist of both general and specific job training. “Specific job training” refers to training to be provided within the unit or department to which the employee is assigned. General training refers to the parameters of this program.

General Training

The County will provide supervisory training related to workplace violence. That training will focus on supervisory awareness, intervention, and prevention, as well as their supervisory responsibilities under this program. One of those supervisory responsibilities is to provide specific job training for all assigned staff.

Job Specific Training

New employees and reassigned/transferred workers should receive an initial orientation and hands-on-training prior to being placed in a unit or job. Each new employee should receive a demonstration of alarm systems and protective devices, if appropriate. The training should also contain the use of work practice controls to reduce injury. This initial training should include:

- Specific measures at each location, such as protective equipment, location and use of alarm systems, determination of when to use evacuation systems and so on as needed for safety.
- Communication systems
- Policies and procedures for reporting incidents and obtaining medical care and counseling.
- Injury and Illness Prevention Program
- Employee Hazard Report Form

On-the-job training should emphasize employee development and use of safe and efficient techniques, methods of deescalating aggressive behavior, self-protection techniques, methods of communicating information, which will help other staff to protect themselves and discussions of rights of employees vs. customer service. Training co-workers from the same unit and shift may facilitate teamwork in the work setting.

Evaluation of the Program

Procedures and mechanisms to evaluate the implementation of this program and to monitor progress and accomplishments have been developed. Evaluation is the responsibility of the Safety Committee and includes some of the following:

- Analyses of trends and illness/injury rates or incident reports.
- Periodic survey of departments regarding workplace safety issues.
- Before and after surveys/evaluations of job or worksite changes or new systems

- Evaluation of employee experiences with hostile situations and results of medical treatment programs provided, with appropriate follow-up intervals.
- Evaluation of training program effectiveness.

Results from these reviews of the program will be summarized as a written progress report, which will be available to any department and employees. New or revised goals arising from the review will also be identified. Any deficiencies will be identified and corrective action taken.

Conclusion

The County recognizes its responsibility to provide employees with a safe working environment and, specifically recognizes that if it is unsafe for employees, the same problem will be the source of risk to other clients or the public – which is detrimental to the overall purpose of government – public service.