

**NC DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Section: W
Title: Workplace Violence
Current Effective Date: 04/11
Revision History: Revised 09/08

North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) & Independent Living (IL), Division of Services for Deaf & Hard of Hearing (DSDHH), Division of Services for the Blind (DSB), Assistive Technology (AT) and Disability Determination Services (DDS)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all employees that is free of violence and wherein the service provision of each agency can take place in an efficient manner. This will be carried out by implementing preventative measures, holding perpetrators of violence accountable and by providing assistance and support to victims. This policy covers unacceptable behavior or conduct of non-employees who commit violent acts against employees. Management recognizes the seriousness of workplace violence and is committed to taking measures to prevent and manage occurrences.

Non-employees are defined herein as consumers of services, vendors, strangers, customers and their friends, relatives, or acquaintances and the friends, relatives or acquaintances of employees who may also commit violent acts toward employees.

DEFINITIONS

Workplace Violence entails violence that may be carried out by the aforementioned parties either in an office setting or field location. It includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. **Intimidation** – engaging in actions that include but are not limited to stalking or behavior intended to frighten, coerce, or induce duress.
2. **Threat** – the expression of an intent to cause physical or mental harm. An expression constitutes a threat without regard to whether the party communicating the threat has the present ability to carry it out and without regard to whether the expression is contingent, conditional, or future.
3. **Physical Attack** – unwanted or hostile physical contact such as hitting, fighting, pushing, shoving, throwing objects, use of firearms or any weapons, or devices which would cause bodily harm.
4. **Domestic Violence** – the use of violent behavior, including threats and intimidation, between people who have an ongoing or prior intimate relationship. This could include people who are married, live together or date or who have been married, lived together or dated.
5. **Property Damage** – intentional damage to property and includes property owned by the State employees, their consumers of services, visitors or vendors.
6. **Improper use of Internet/Telephone** – the use of various communication mediums to relay harassing statements or threats.

PROHIBITED ACTIONS AND SANCTIONS

It is a violation of this policy to:

- Engage in workplace violence as defined herein.
- Use, possess or threaten to use a weapon to harm employees on the premises or within the field, either on or off duty, in such a way that violates this policy.

A violation of this policy shall be considered unacceptable conduct and may be grounds for:

- Suspension of services or business relationships;
- Termination of services or business relationships; and/or,
- Banning future interactions with the agency;
- Legal action to obtain a no contact order

All agencies have adopted a ZERO TOLERANCE for violence.

Any verbal comment or physical action perceived by any employee to be dangerous or unsafe may be immediately reported to Local Law Enforcement. This may include but is not limited to cursing, implied or direct threats against employees, customers, friends or family, physical violence against property, physical violence against another person, or possession of any concealed weapon.

SUPPORT AND PROTECTION

The State is guided by the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) of 1970 that requires employers to provide their employees with a safe work environment. It is intended that all available management tools be employed to accomplish the dual purpose of reducing the effects of violence on victims and providing consequences to those who perpetrate violence. Management is required to utilize available resources such as Law Enforcement, Legal Council, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) providers and Resource Directory and applicable personnel policies and procedures to bring about resolution. The agencies shall make every effort to protect employees from workplace violence by offering available security measures to ensure office premises are safe. Agencies shall accommodate requests and needs whenever possible and appropriate for employees who need adjustments to their work schedule, location and working conditions in order to enhance their safety. Agencies shall work closely with employees to ensure that both their needs and those of the agency are addressed.

REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of each employee to be alert to the possibility of violence. An employee shall inform management if there is a domestic violence situation or any other situation in an employee's personal life that has the potential to cause violence in the workplace. Employees shall report all acts

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of violence, threats of violence and situations that may pose a threat to the safety of themselves and/or others.

RETALIATION

This policy prohibits retaliation against any employee who reports a violation of this policy. Every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality, safety and employment of an employee who reports a threat and/or act of violence.

DHHS RESPONSIBILITY

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) shall provide agencies with technical assistance and consultation services to implement their internal workplace violence prevention and management program and carry out the intent of this policy. DHHS' responsibility will cover the following workplace violence program areas:

- Assist agencies with developing a proactive, comprehensive on-site and field/off-site workplace violence prevention program.
- Collect and analyze incident information for trends in workplace violence specific to DVRS/IL, DSDHH, DSB, AT and DDS.
- Provide case consultation to agencies.

AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

Each agency will establish a Crisis Management Team, consisting of the Division Director, Human Resources, Division Safety Director, Employee Relations Specialist, Chief of Operations, and Chief Financial Officer. This team will evaluate reports of potential for violence and determine planned interventions, provide post-incident analysis and recommendation of preventive measures, establish internal communication needs of the agency, establish external communication processes, oversee the development of internal procedures and training, and establish direction for on-going agency operations. Agencies shall have emergency protocols for dealing with potentially dangerous or violent situations. The Training Department shall develop, deliver, and maintain a comprehensive training module and provide awareness material to benefit existing and new employees.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Agencies shall inform the public of its policy regarding conduct on agency premises and field/off-site work locations.

PHYSICAL SITE SECURITY

Agencies shall have a physical site security plan for each office. The plan should include:

- A single point of customer access to the office;
- An emergency alert procedure notification, and,
- A means of differentiating between agency employees, interns, and visitors (e.g. ID badges, name tags)

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