DOL Workplace Violence Program

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Background

Workplace violence is a frustrating problem facing federal agencies today. While more and more information on the causes of violence and how to identify it is becoming known, there is often no clear-cut solution to the problem. Each case is unique, and each person is different. Each situation is unique. No employer is immune from workplace violence and no employer can totally prevent it.

The cost to organizations is staggering. It is impossible to remember the costs of workplace violence in dollars because it is not even measuring apples to oranges. Costs can be the immediate and profound loss of life or physical or psychological injuries felt by the victim as well as the victim's family, friends, and co-workers. Costs can be the loss of productivity, the loss of morale, or an organization's other incident reports, or the loss of confidence and or an increase in the rate of or rumors of violence. Costs can be the loss of a job.

Workplace violence affects other areas as well. The adverse impact on organizations and individuals can be long-lasting and far-reaching.

Policy, Purpose, and Scope

Every year, approximately two million people throughout the country are victims of non-fatal violence at the workplace. Difficult as the management of workplace violence is, it is even more challenging since of fatal injuries at work which about 1,000 workplace homicides each year. Workplace violence is a problem that affects all types of organizations, regardless of size, location, or mission. Many crimes, actions, or behaviors that are considered criminal in nature, are prohibited or discouraged by organized or extreme behavior or actions, and domestic incidents that spill over into the workplace.

The Department of Labor (DOL) policy and position on workplace violence is to provide a safe workplace for our employees and the visiting public, and to work with our employees to minimize the impact of violence to the workplace, the workforce, and the public, and other affected parties. Workplace violence is a problem that affects all types of organizations or threats of violence – is a threat – is unacceptable behavior. It will not be tolerated and will be dealt with appropriately.

The primary purpose of this document is to provide employees of the Department with a zero-tolerance policy and to provide guidance to managers and supervisors on workplace violence. It is also intended to make employees, managers, and supervisors aware of the potential for violence in the workplace, to increase their abilities to recognize early warning signs and behaviors, and to provide a safe, secure, and healthy workplace free from the threat of violence. It identifies functional and specific responsibilities, and provides a framework for managers and supervisors, which they can use to deal with the problem. This document also provides some guidance to employees on what they can do if they are the victim of, or witness to, workplace violence.

All employees and all facilities of the Department are covered by the policies and program requirements contained in this document. Contractor employees are covered by the provisions of applicable Federal and State laws and regulations.

This document appears in the Department's Lexeller under "Reference Library" and portions of the document are being combined into a Department Manual (DM). All employees should read the document and become familiar with its contents.

Roles and Responsibilities

The goal of the DOL Workplace Violence Program is to support a work environment which is based on a positively valued culture, an effective and efficient workforce, and which promotes by increasing employee understanding of the nature of workplace violence, how to respond to it, and how to prevent it. Workplace violence is a problem that affects all types of organizations, public and or remaining – appropriate action.

IT IS UP TO EACH EMPLOYEE TO HELP MAKE THE DEPARTMENT A SAFE WORKPLACE FOR ALL. Each employee is responsible for being aware of potential workplace violence, and for reporting it to appropriate authorities.

Depending on the presentation of the incident and the resources available, one or more of the organizations the Functional areas listed below may be involved in the response and management of this particular field to keep assets, investigate, and or respond in a timely or potentially crisis manner.

Employees, Including Managers and Supervisors are responsible for:

- their own behaviors by interacting responsibly with fellow employees, supervisors, and others;
- being familiar with Department policy regarding workplace violence;
- promptly reporting actual and or potential acts of workplace violence to appropriate authorities;
- cooperating fully in investigations/assessments of allegations of workplace violence;
- being familiar with the services provided by the Employee Assistance Programs (EAP);
- informing appropriate personnel about potential or protective concerns related to domestic situations so that assistance can be offered at the work site.

Managers and Supervisors are additionally responsible for:

- informing employees of the Department's workplace violence policy and procedures;
- taking all reasonable actions to maintain a safe workplace;
- investigating all acts of violence, threat, and similar disruptive behavior in timely fashion and taking the necessary actions;
- providing feedback to employees regarding the outcome of their reports of violence, threat, and similar disruptive behavior;
- requesting, where appropriate, assistance from the Employee Assistance Program;
- being cognizant of situations that have the potential to produce violent behavior and taking appropriate actions to prevent violence from occurring;
- being cognizant of the potential for violence from employees who have recently or have a long history of disciplinary problems;
- being cognizant of the potential for violence from employees who have recently experienced a traumatic event or have a long history of such events;
- providing, where feasible, that employees have the opportunity to attend training, e.g., conflict resolution, stress management, etc.

Security Office and Other Functional Areas are responsible for:

- providing security and helping to defuse violent situations;
- providing security support upon request to other functional areas;
- maintaining an ongoing security awareness program;
- providing security support to investigations of incidents of violence;
- responding, when appropriate, to incidents of violence, threat, and similar behavior;
- acting as liaison with local authorities and outside law enforcement agencies;
- making sure that the security office is informed of all incidents of violence, threat, and similar behavior;
- providing, where feasible, that security personnel have the opportunity to attend training, e.g., conflict resolution, stress management, etc.

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Human Resources is responsible for:

- assisting managers and supervisors in the management of workplace violence and disruptive behavior;
- providing technical support and consultation to help supervisors determine what course of intervention action is most appropriate in specific situations;
- providing information to employees and supervisors regarding the EAP program;
- providing advice and counsel regarding permanent rules and regulations, and assisting managers and supervisors in the application of these rules and regulations;
- providing assistance in the preparation of reports, statistical summaries, and other reports;
- helping potential victims, e.g., with relocation, stress management, negotiation skills, etc.

Preventing Workplace Violence

Preventing workplace violence is an effective workplace violence program is strategy regarding the management of workplace violence. Preventing workplace violence is a multi-faceted approach that deal with threatening, intimidating, and/or potentially violent behavior.

Employees with the Department's policy against threatening and causing workplace violence is an important step in preventing workplace violence. It is important that all employees, including managers and supervisors, understand the policy and its implications.

All managers and supervisors are expected to discuss the policy and program with their staff at regular staff meetings. Managers and supervisors are also expected to be cognizant of the potential for violence the consequences of such behavior, and to take appropriate actions to prevent violence from occurring. Managers and supervisors are also expected to be cognizant of the potential for violence from employees who have recently experienced a traumatic event or have a long history of such events.

Security

Maintaining a secure and physically safe workplace is part of any good strategy for preventing workplace violence. Security measures should be based on the results of a facility security and safety. The security measures described in the resource available in the www. Thomas.loc.govlib.

- the Federal Protective Service or designated security personnel to respond to workplace violence;
- employee photo identification badges and coded card keys for access to work areas;
- on-site guard services;
- guard force assistance in regarding, badging, and directing visitors in larger facilities;
- other appropriate security measures and or technologies.

Additional law enforcement assistance is available through local police departments for assistance in dealing with violent or potentially violent behavior. Employees who have concerns about violence or threatened individuals in Department property.

Education

Education and communication are also an important part of preventing workplace violence. The following types of education and communication are effective in preventing violence and other disruptive behaviors:

- communicating an awareness among employees, supervisors, and managers of the potential for violence in the workplace, and the Department's policy against it, what to do when faced with possible violence, and employee and supervisor responsibilities, early intervention techniques, who to call for assistance, etc.;
- training managers and supervisors in how to deal with disruptive behaviors in effectively dealt with conflict resolution, stress, and negotiation skills.

Performance/Conduct Indicators

Being aware of performance and conduct problems which may be warning signs of potential violence is important. Managers and supervisors, and co-workers should be cognizant of the fact that most incidents of workplace violence are preceded by disruptive behavior. Although it is possible that not every that indicates will occur, it is more likely than not that a problem will occur or that other inappropriate behavior will occur if the initial behavior is not addressed. **Managers and supervisors should be cognizant of and not necessarily react a violent or potentially violent behavior. They may be indicators of another "type" problem such as being ill, depressed, bereaved, etc.** Some examples of performance and conduct problems which may be indicators of a potential problem are:

- **performance problems** – including excessive absenteeism, poor work quality, work, inappropriate conversations, etc.;
- **conduct problems** – easily distracted and often has trouble handling interruptions, assignments, and deadlines; frequent;
- **safety issues** – short-tempered, quick-tempered, disregard for personal safety as well as that of others, and ignoring safety rules;
- **poor health and hygiene** – noticeable changes in personal grooming habits;
- **unusual/changed behavior** – withdrawal, depression, mood swings, frequent injuries, etc.;
- **evidence of problems drug or alcohol abuse**;
- **other** – excessive use of sick leave, excessive use of AWOP – Crying, excessive phone calls, instant appearance;
- **continual excuses/blame** – Inability to accept responsibility for over that mistakes, blaming others;
- **unrealistic depiction** – Having unrealistic expectations of others.

Employee Support Services

Examples of Department resources are available to assist employees in dealing with problems originating in or being brought to the workplace. Employees should begin by contacting their immediate supervisor, their Human Resources Office, the Employee Assistance Program, the Employee Relations Specialist, the Employee Relations Representatives, within the Workplace Violence Program, and the Resource and Referral Program.

Early Intervention

Intervening early in a disagreement or potentially violent situation is a key to preventing its escalation into a crisis. Managers and supervisors are in a key position to intervene in such situations. Early intervention may defuse the initial situation and give the parties involved an opportunity to thoroughly review options for resolution. Intervention with the hope for the resolution of the problem is preferable to ignoring it.

Non-Appropriate Actions

Supervisors and managers must be willing to take action when necessary. All employees must know that violence in the workplace will not be tolerated and that appropriate action will be taken if threats of violence or violence occur.

Workplace Violence Reporting Requirements

One of the common types of workplace violence is that among co-workers. In addition, a high percentage of violent incidents are perpetrated by individuals who are not employees. Such incidents include such as domestic violence, bomb threats, and robberies by customers.

Employees who are victims, or witnesses to, or who suspect whether or not any particular workplace violence is potentially serious. This is an emotional and complicated, and delicate issue. Employees who are victims of, witnesses to, or who suspect workplace violence should report it immediately. In most cases, employees ignore warning signs because they believe they are not important. That just the way, or it is bad it is even of the business. In other situations, employees do not report because they fear that they will be ridiculed, or that the information will be not seriously observed as a threat to the workplace. Employees who are victims of, witnesses to, or who suspect workplace violence should report it immediately.

Actual threats should always be taken seriously and responded to immediately. When there is not an actual threat, engagement and review should be made. Employees who are victims of, witnesses to, or who suspect workplace violence should report it immediately. Employees who are victims of, witnesses to, or who suspect workplace violence should report it immediately.

Recognizing the Levels of Violence and Response

Recognition of a potential problem among employees usually escalates if not dealt with. Violence and the warning signs that typically occur can usually be identified at three levels. It should be noted that not every incident will follow the exact pattern, but the majority of incidents will follow a generally related situation. The following are generally identified as the three levels of the appropriate response. There is no hard-and-fast way of presenting the information in workplace violence, but the following is a guide to the appropriate actions to take by supervisors and managers, and co-workers.

Level One (Early Warning Signs)

The symptoms

- intimidating, bullying;
- inappropriate conversations;
- inconsiderate behavior;
- verbally abusive.

Response Where Early Warning Signs Occur at Level One

- Observe the behavior in question.
- **Report** concerns to your supervisor to seek help in assessing/responding to the situation. If the offending employee is the reporting employee's immediate supervisor, report the concern to the next level of management.
- offending employee, such as employee, the supervisor of the employee reporting the incident is still the appropriate individual to receive and provide initial assessment.
- **Document** the observed behavior in question.
- Supervisor should **talk** with the offending employee to discuss concerns.
  - Discuss the observed behavior.
  - Schedule a follow-up meeting.
  - Coordinate any necessary action participation.
  - Get assigns to the point.
  - Ask the employee for his or her input.
  - Ask the employee if he/she knows about the behavior.
  - Tell him/her you will help.
  - Identify the performance and/or conduct problems that are of concern.
  - Identify the steps you intend to take to correct problems.
  - Tell limits on when is acceptable behavior and performance.
  - Tell the employee that you will be monitoring his/her performance.
  - Inform employee of available assistance programs.
  - Department's policies.

Level Two (Escalation of the Behavior)

The symptoms

- argument with co-workers, vendors, co-workers, and management;
- refusal to obey agency policies and procedures;
- inappropriate behavior, such as, yelling, cursing, and/or;
- verbalizes actions that co-workers and/or management;
- sends threatening notes(s) to co-workers(s) and/or management; and/or
- uses will or commitment to management and co-workers.

Response When Situation Has Escalated to Level Two

- If concerned **Call** the employee assistance program contacts such as Federal Protective Service for that particular facility, participants if the employee assistance program is not available, or the Department's Security Office.
- Immediately **Contact** the supervisor of the employee in question or a supervisor of other appropriate officials such as functional area experts to seek help in assessing/responding to the situation.
- If necessary, **Report** your safety and that of others, including, where appropriate, the employee in question, to the appropriate authorities.
- **Document** the observed behavior in question.
- Supervisor should **talk** with the employee to discuss concerns and, if appropriate, the employee's inappropriate disruptive. The supervisor should follow these actions:
  - Call for assistance in assessing/responding, if needed.
  - Insist on action and behavior dealing with the situation.
  - Remain calm, speaking slowly, softly, and clearly.
  - Acknowledge the person's feelings, but do not allow to follow directions.
  - Ask questions relevant to the employee's situation.
  - What can you do to try to regain control of yourself?
  - What can do to help you regain control?
  - What do you hope to gain by committing violence?
  - Tell the person that violence will not be tolerated.
  - Tell the person that violence is inappropriate and unacceptable behavior.
  - Tell the employee what can he/she choose about how to react.

Level Three (Further Escalation – Visually Revolting in an Emergency)

The symptoms include but not limited to:

- suicidal threats;
- homicidal threats;
- destruction of property;
- display of extreme rage; and/or
- activation of weapons by hand/others.

Response When Situation is Level Three Emergency

- Immediately **Call** the Emergency Response Contacts such as Federal Protective Service for that particular facility, participants if the employee assistance program is not available, or the Department's Security Office.
- Immediately **Contact** the supervisor of the employee in question or a supervisor of other appropriate officials such as functional area experts to seek help in assessing/responding to the situation.
- If necessary, **Report** your safety and that of others, including, where appropriate, the employee in question, to the appropriate authorities.
- **Document** the observed behavior in question.
- **Remain** safe and calm.
- **Leave** the area if your safety is at risk.
- **Cooperate** with law enforcement personnel when they have responded to the situation.

Once the immediate personal are on the scene, they will assume the situation. Minimum should be prepared to provide a description of the incident and threatening individual, details of what was observed, and the exact location of the incident.

- Document the observed behavior in question.
- Supervisors, where needed, will contact Functional area experts and will follow procedures identified in the Appendices.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a form of workplace violence since as a workers, most employees are in the workplace most of the time. It is therefore, and inevitable that domestic violence will be brought about within bit of violence. That will, however, be only warning sign that the type of violence is occurring in the workplace. Domestic violence is a form of workplace violence. Domestic violence, stalkers, and/or signs of potential violence, such as, such as such as such as

- **Event Involves Strangers/Clients/Customers:**
  - Notify **Supervisor**.
  - Report incident to the **Security Guard/Local Law Enforcement**.
  - Notify **FBI** when violence is directed at the job function, normally contacted through/by Security, Solicitor, Inspector General, or OASAM Office.
- **Event Involves Co-Workers/Supervisors:**
  - Notify **Supervisor** (higher level if immediate Supervisor involved).
  - Report incident to the **Security Guard/Local Law Enforcement**.
- **Event Involves Suspicious Letter/Package, a Bomb, or a Personal Threat:**
  - Suspicious Letter/Package
    - Do **NOT** handle or open suspicious item.
    - **Evacuate** the area if safety at risk.
    - Notify **Supervisor**.
    - Immediately report the item to the **Security Guard/Local Law Enforcement**.

Threat Including Bomb Threat

- Whenever possible, if telephone threat, note the following:
  - Telephone number where the call was received;
  - Exact **time** call was received;
  - Caller's **sex, name**, **telephone number**, and **where calling from;**
  - Details regarding **caller's voice** (calm, excited, disguised, accent, etc.);
  - Caller's estimated **age** (as determined by voice);
  - **Background noise**, if any; and
  - If call involves a bomb threat, also ask the following:
  - **When will the bomb explode?**
  - **Where is the bomb?**
  - **What does it look like?**
  - **What kind of bomb is it?**
  - **Why did you place the bomb?**
- (Sometimes the caller will respond unwittingly and provide valuable information.)
  - Notify **Supervisor**;
  - Immediately report the incident to the **Security Guard/Local Law Enforcement**;
  - Notify **FBI** when violence is directed at the job function, normally contacted through/by Security, Solicitor, Inspector General, or OASAM Office; and
  - **Evacuate** the area if safety at risk.

Bottom Line: If you reasonably believe that you have an imminent dangerous situation, call 911 or local emergency response facility immediately!

In the Event of a Medical Emergency

Contact the following, applicable to the event:

- Call the **Department of Labor's Health Unit**.
- Call **Rescue Squad**.
- Call **Fire Department**.
- Stay with and comfort the injured/ill person.
- If you are trained and willing, apply first aid.