

Section: K-02 Workplace Violence Prevention and Response

The purpose of this document is to provide a policy and procedure for the prevention of and response to violence in the workplace and to provide a safe workplace for employees and the public. This policy and procedure applies to classified, exempt, temporary, seasonal and contractual employees of Anne Arundel County government and all volunteer services, and supersedes any previously issued handbook, or other direction or document.

I. Policy

Anne Arundel County prohibits workplace violence in any form. No threatening or violent behavior is acceptable and no violent incident will be ignored. Therefore, except as may be required as a condition of employment:

1) No employee shall bring into any County worksite any weapon or dangerous instrument as defined herein; 2) No employee shall use, attempt to use, or threaten to use any such weapon or dangerous instrument on or in a County worksite; and 3) No employee shall cause or threaten to cause death or physical injury to any individual on a County worksite. Violation of the directives issued herein shall subject the employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination from employment or immediate termination of a contractual agreement or volunteer status. Action will be taken on all reports of violence, without exception, and may include disciplinary action up to and including termination.

The County will not tolerate acts of violence or threats of violence committed by or against County employees or members of the public on County property or while engaging in Anne Arundel County business at other locations (non-County facilities). The County will provide support mechanisms for and enforce its commitment to a workplace free from violence, and will work with law enforcement agencies to aid in the prosecution of anyone inside or outside of the organization who commits violent acts against employees.

It is the shared obligation of all employees, law enforcement agencies, and employee organizations to individually and jointly act to prevent or defuse actual or implied violent behavior at work. No employee acting in good faith, who reports real or implied violent behavior will be subject to retaliation or harassment based upon his or her report.

The objectives of this policy are as follows:

To reduce the potential for violence in and around the workplace;

To encourage and foster a work environment that is characterized by respect and healthy conflict resolution;

To mitigate the negative consequences for employees who experience or encounter violence while at work;

To protect employees who are working and who may be experiencing threats of violence from anyone, either an employee or a non-employee; and

To protect employees who are working off County property or in non-County facilities.

To ensure that any complaint of violence or the threat of violence is taken seriously and is thoroughly and promptly investigated.

II. Definitions

Workplace Violence: Actions or words that endanger or harm an employee or result in an employee having a reasonable belief that he or she is in danger. Workplace violence includes, but is not limited to verbal or physical harassment, verbal or physical threats, intimidating or threatening behaviors, assaults or other violence, vandalism, domestic violence (abusive behavior used by one person in a relationship to control the other), robberies, commercial crimes, sexual assaults or threats, terrorism, hate crimes, work place confrontations, and any other behavior that causes others to feel threatened or unsafe. Workplace violence incidents can be perpetrated by a domestic partner, customers, co-workers, members of the public, or unknown individuals.

Weapon: Includes any firearm (including a BB or pellet gun) whether loaded or unloaded, any knife (excluding a small pen or pocket knife), including a switchblade or other knife having an automatic spring release device, a stiletto, a bow and arrow, any baton, bat, club, stick, any martial arts weapon, any electronic defense weapon or other items with the potential to inflict harm.

Dangerous Instrument: Any instrument, article, or substance that, under the circumstances, is capable of causing death or physical injury.

Worksite: Any location, either permanent or temporary, where an employee performs any work related duty. This includes but is not limited to the buildings and the surrounding perimeters, including the parking lots. It includes all County-owned and leased space, including vehicles and any location where County business is conducted.

Threat Assessment Team: A team of County managers whose primary responsibility is to address threats as well as all incidents of workplace violence. The Threat Assessment Team initially will consist of:

Chair: Personnel Officer (or designee)

Vice-Chair Central Services Officer or Anne Arundel County Risk Manager

Representatives from:

Department of Public Works

Department of Planning and Zoning

Department of Recreation and Parks

Office of Facilities Management

Office of Law

Office of Emergency Management

Police Department

Fire Department

Upon completion of a general assessment of resources and potential incidents and the corresponding training to first line supervisors and communication to all employees, the Threat Assessment Team will be reduced to the following Department Heads or their designees:

Personnel Officer

Central Services Officer

Police Chief

Fire Chief

County Attorney

Safety Committee (Inspection Team): A team of employees whose primary responsibility is to determine the presence of hazards, conditions, operations and other situations that may place County workers at risk of occupation-related violent incidents.

III. Procedure

All reports of workplace violence, without exception will follow the procedures set forth herein.

A. Responsibilities

1. Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors are generally responsible for assessing potentially violent situations, responding appropriately, and then communicating information regarding the situation to the appropriate authority. Managers and supervisors are specifically responsible for:

- a. clearly communicating all safety and health policies and procedures involving workplace security to all employees;
- b. evaluating and possibly investigating any report of violence immediately and confidentially, and taking immediate action to defuse a hostile situation. (Refer to Section F-1 for guidance on conducting an investigation.) The incident should be reported as soon as possible to the Appointing Authority and the Threat Assessment Team to evaluate and coordinate a response to an incident of violence;
- c. eliminating the potential for workplace violence; and
- d. making a reasonable effort to review work schedules and enable employees who are victims of domestic violence to obtain medical treatment, counseling, legal assistance, to relocate, or to make other arrangements to create a safer situation for themselves and their children, if applicable.

2. Employees

All employees are responsible for:

- a. reporting all acts of violence or threats of violence witnessed in the workplace;
- b. seeking assistance to resolve personal issues that may lead to acts of violence in the workplace, including utilizing the Employee Assistance Program, when necessary;
- c. cooperating in any investigation regarding violence in the workplace; and
- d. reporting to managers and supervisors any dangerous or threatening situations that occur outside of the workplace which may affect workplace safety, such as instances where a protection order has been issued, and there is a reasonable concern that an individual may seek to violate an order by threatening or engaging in acts of violence in the workplace.

3. Threat Assessment Team

The Threat Assessment Team is responsible for:

- a. serving as the primary contact for the reporting of all incidents of workplace violence;
- b. assessing the vulnerability in any or all County facilities of the potential for workplace violence and making recommendations on preventive actions to be taken;
- c. reviewing all reports, to the extent permitted by law, concerning acts of violence within the workplace that have been reported or are suspected including, but are not limited to: Workers' Compensation claim forms, police reports, internal investigations, incident reports, training records, and grievances;
- d. making recommendations concerning the reported incidents to diffuse the current problem and to avoid the problem in the future;
- e. reporting incidents of workplace violence to the Chief Administrative Officer;
- f. developing a training program for all employees that encompasses the key elements of this workplace violence policy including the assessment of and appropriate response to potentially violent situations; and
- g. auditing the County's overall workplace violence policy.

4. Safety Committee (Inspection Team)

In addition to responsibilities regarding workplace safety, Anne Arundel County's Safety Committee will serve as the County's Inspection Team and in the performance of their duties as Safety Committee members will also inspect workplaces and evaluate the work tasks of employees to determine the presence of hazards and other situations that may place County workers at risk of occupation-related violent incidents.

5. Personnel Officer

The Personnel Officer is responsible for:

- a. ensuring that a written record of the violent act is placed in the employee's or County official's personnel file (to remain indefinitely) if it is determined the violent act was perpetrated by a County official or employee;
- b. maintaining an accurate record of all workplace violence incidents for a minimum period of 5 years or for a time specified in the Statute of Limitations for Anne Arundel County;
- c. maintaining records of training program contents, and the sign-in sheets of all attendees for 5 years in addition to maintaining records on the qualifications of the trainers; and
- d. overseeing the implementation of this Policy and Chairing the Threat Assessment Team.

B. Procedure For Incident Response And Evaluation

1. When a violent incident occurs:

- a. If the act or altercation constitutes an emergency, immediately call 911 and follow their instructions. Report the emergency to the Personnel Officer, Appointing Authority, and the Chief Administrative Officer.
- b. In instances that are not emergency situations, report the act immediately to your supervisor or manager, department head, or member of the Threat Assessment Team.
- c. Complete a Workplace Violence Incident Documentation Sheet and return it to your supervisor or manager, department head, or member of the Threat Assessment Team.
- d. The supervisor or manager, department head, or member of the Threat Assessment Team will record a list of witnesses and provide them with the Workplace Violence Incident Documentation Sheet and Incident Witness Report Forms to complete immediately.
- e. The original form, along with any associated documentation, will be forwarded to the Inspection Team for investigation and appropriate action. A copy shall be provided for the chair of the Threat Assessment Team.

Note: The Office of Emergency Management will be provided the names, mobile phone numbers and home phone numbers of the members of the Threat Assessment Team. In the event a work-related incident occurs involving violence or threats directed at the County, or involving County elected officials or employees, after hours or on weekends, notification will be made to the Chair or any subsequent member of the Team. The member initially contacted will determine an appropriate course of action and notify the other members.

f. The Safety Committee (Inspection Team) will respond immediately to investigate, assess, and take appropriate remedial action relative to:

- 1) condition of the workplace site;
- 2) cause of the incident;
- 3) contributing factors;
- 4) risk precaution measures in effect, if any;
- 5) employee training; and
- 6) employee debriefing and counseling

g. The Safety Committee (Inspection Team) will submit their preliminary findings to the Threat Assessment Team within twenty-four hours. These findings shall include, but are not limited to:

- 1) a list of deficiencies, if applicable, found at the workplace in question;
- 2) recommendations to correct the workplace deficiencies;
- 3) recommendations for training or retraining of employees; and
- 4) recommendations for changes to those portions of the Workplace Violence policy applicable to the incident.

h. The final written report of the Inspection Team will be submitted to the Personnel Officer (or his designee) for review and action.

IV. Confidentiality of Information

Employees involved in handling a workplace violence incident are directed to observe to the extent possible confidentiality with respect to the events and persons involved. Information should be handled on a "need to know" basis.