

# VIOLENCE FREE WORKPLACE POLICY

## **INTRODUCTION**

The employees of the University of Louisiana at Monroe (ULM) are an important and essential part of the university community and their safety and security are essential to carrying out their responsibilities. Every employee has a reasonable expectation to perform his/her assigned duties in an atmosphere free of threats and assaults.

Recognizing the increasing incidence of violence in the workplace, the Governor of the State of Louisiana issued Executive Order MJF 97-15 effective March 5, 1997, committing the Governor and the State of Louisiana to work toward a violence free workplace for state employees.

The University of Louisiana at Monroe is likewise committed to providing a violence free workplace.

## **PURPOSE**

An employee expects to perform his/her assigned duties in an atmosphere completely free of threats and assaults. It is the purpose of this policy to ensure the highest standard of safety for all faculty, staff, students and visitors on this campus. The University will take all reasonably available steps to protect all such persons from violence.

## **DEFINITIONS**

Assault is an attempt to commit a battery, or the intentional placing of another in reasonable apprehension of receiving a battery. (Example: I may have a stick raised and know that I have no intention of striking you, but, based on the circumstances, you have a reasonable apprehension that I plan to strike you.)

Battery is the intentional use of force or violence upon another; or the intentional administration of a poison or other noxious liquid or substance to another.

Credible threat is a statement or action that would cause a reasonable person to fear for the safety of him/herself or that of another person and does, in fact, cause such fear.

Intentional refers to conduct when the circumstances indicate that the offender, in the ordinary course of human experience, must have considered the criminal consequences as reasonably certain to result from his act or failure to act.

Violence is the commission of an assault or battery or the making of a credible threat.

Workplace is any site where an employee is placed for the purpose of completing job assignments.

Workplace violence is violence that takes place in the workplace.

## **MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

The University of Louisiana at Monroe shall comply with federal and state statutes, rules, and regulations and/or guidelines in making reasonable efforts to:

- hire, train, supervise and discipline employees;
- intervene in situations of harassment in the workplace where the employer or person of responsibility is aware of harassment;
- ensure employees and/or independent contractors are fit for duty, and do not pose unnecessary risks to others;
- provide security precautions and other measures to minimize the risk of foreseeable criminal intrusion based upon prior experience or location in a dangerous area;
- maintain an adequate level of security;
- establish and implement a written policy and plan dealing with violence in the workplace;
- provide employee training on the agency policy, warning signs of potential for violent behavior, and precautions which may enhance the personal safety of the employee at work;
- warn an employee of a credible threat made by another to do harm to that employee;
- support the application of sanctions and/or prosecution of offenders, as appropriate;
- accommodate, after appropriate evaluation, employees who require special assistance following incident(s) of workplace violence;
- cooperate with law enforcement agencies in the conduct of an investigation;
- establish a uniform violence reporting system with regular review of submitted reports;
- initiate procedures to protect from retaliation employees who report credible threats;
- keep up-to-date records to evaluate the effectiveness of administrative and work practice changes initiated to prevent workplace violence.

## **MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT**

At the University of Louisiana at Monroe, management commitment, including the endorsement and visible involvement of top levels of administration, provides the motivation and resources to deal effectively with workplace violence, and includes:

- organizational concern for employee's emotional and physical safety and health;
- commitment to the safety and security of all persons at the workplace;
- assigned responsibility for the various aspects of the workplace violence prevention program to ensure that all supervisors and employees understand their roles and responsibilities;

- allocation of authority and resources to all responsible parties;
- referral of employees for debriefing/counseling who have experienced or witnessed assaults and other violent incidents; and
- serious treatment of workplace violence, incidents, complaints and concerns, keeping confidential all reports and the identification of parties, except to those who have a legitimate need to know and to the extent required by law.

## **EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

At The University of Louisiana at Monroe, employees are to report to the Departmental Supervisor or the ULM Police Department, or both where applicable, all threats or incidents of violent behavior in the workplace that they observe or of which they are informed. See Appendix A “Recognizing Inappropriate Behavior,” for examples of behavior, which shall be reported.

Employee involvement and feedback enable workers to develop and express their own commitment to safety and security and provide useful information to design, implement, and evaluate the program. At ULM, employee involvement includes, but is not limited to:

- understanding and complying with the workplace violence prevention program and other safety and security measures;
- participating in employee complaint or suggestion procedures covering safety and security concerns;
- providing prompt and accurate reporting of violent incidents;
- cooperating with the ULM Police Department and the Workplace Violence Committee that reviews violent incidents and security problems and makes security inspections; and
- participating in continuing education covering techniques to recognize and abate escalating agitation, assaultive behavior or criminal intent.

## **WORKPLACE ANALYSIS**

The process of workplace analysis involves a step-by-step, common sense look at the workplace to find existing or potential hazards for the occurrence of workplace violence. The workplace analysis entails reviewing specific procedures or operations that contribute to hazards and specific locales where hazards may develop. The workplace analysis program includes, but is not limited to analyzing and tracking records, monitoring trends, analyzing incidents, and analyzing workplace security. At The University of Louisiana at Monroe, the responsibility for conducting and maintaining workplace analyses is assigned to the Environmental Health and Safety Office.

After the completed workplace analysis is reviewed and approved, workplace adaptations, engineering controls, administrative controls, and work practice controls shall be implemented by The University of Louisiana at Monroe, to prevent or control, to the extent possible, any discovered hazards. If workplace violence does occur, the post-incident response and evaluation section of this policy shall be implemented.

## **INCIDENT RESPONSE AND EVALUATION**

Assistance for victimized employees and employees who may be affected by witnessing a workplace violence incident will be provided. Whenever an incident occurs, injured employees will receive appropriate medical treatment and mental health evaluation, as necessary.

An employee who has been threatened or assaulted by another at the workplace will immediately report the situation to the ULM Police Department.

Written statements shall be obtained by the ULM Police. The statements should answer the who, what, when, where, how and why of the incident and should include names of all parties of the incident, including victims, subjects, and witnesses. As soon as possible the University Police shall prepare written summaries of the interviews. The summaries shall be the bases on which to determine the facts of the event.

The following actions should be taken in accordance with the severity of the incident:

The situation is **not dangerous**:

- separate employees involved and isolate them until they are interviewed and their statements are taken;
- separate witnesses until they are interviewed and their statements are taken; and
- document all actions and statements.

The situation is **dangerous**:

- contact the University Police Department at 5350;
- order all those presenting the danger to leave the facility immediately (unless this action must be taken by the police);
- do not attempt to physically remove an individual (leave it to the police); and
- document all actions and statements.

Refer to Appendix B, "Personal Conduct to Minimize Violence," for suggestions on how to defuse potentially violent situations.

## **RECORDS**

Records associated with violence in the workplace need to be kept in a permanent and secure location, in a confidential manner. It shall be the responsibility of the Office of Human Resources, the University Police Department, and the Office of Environmental Health and Safety to help evaluate security, methods of hazard control, and identify training needs. The following records are important and shall be maintained in accordance with pertinent statues as part of the violence prevention program:

- reports of work injury, including workers' compensation injuries, if necessary;

- report for each reported assault, incidents of abuse, verbal attack, or aggressive behavior occurring between persons in the workplace;
- police reports of incidents occurring in the workplace;
- minutes of safety meetings, records of hazards' analysis, and corrective actions recommended;
- reports of violence in the workplace training, including subjects covered, attendees, and qualifications of trainers; and
- other appropriate reports.

### **COMMUNICATION**

The University recognizes that in order to maintain a safe, healthy and secure workplace, there must be open communication on these issues among employees, including all levels of supervision. The open communication process includes, but is not limited to:

- periodic review of this policy with all employees;
- discussions of violence in the workplace during scheduled safety meetings;
- posting or distributing information on violence in the workplace; and
- procedures to inform supervisors about violence in the workplace, hazards, or threats of violence.

### **TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

At ULM, training shall begin with orientation of new employees within three (3) months of employment and regularly thereafter. Workplace violence training shall be the responsibility of the Department Heads and the Workplace Violence Committee. General violence-in-the-workplace training and instruction address, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- explanation of the violence in the workplace policy as established by ULM;
- measures for reporting any violent acts or threats of violence;
- recognition of hazards including associated risk factors;
- measures to prevent workplace violence, including procedures for reporting workplace hazards or threats to appropriate supervision;
- ways to defuse hostile or threatening situations;
- measures to summon others for assistance;
- routes of escapes available to employees;

- procedures for notification of law enforcement authorities when a criminal act may have occurred;
- procedures for obtaining emergency medical care in the event of a violent act upon an employee; and
- information on securing post-event trauma counseling for those employees desiring or needing such assistance.

### **WORKPLACE VIOLENCE COMMITTEE CONTACTS**

Director, University Police Department  
Phone: 5350  
Fax: 5358

Environmental Health and Safety Officer  
Phone: 5177  
Fax: 3465

Director, Department of Human Resources  
Phone: 5140  
Fax: 5144

## **APPENDIX A**

### **RECOGNIZING INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR**

Inappropriate behavior is often a warning sign of potential hostility or violence. When left unchecked it can escalate to higher levels. Employees who exhibit the following behaviors should be reported and disciplined in accordance with the organization's policies:

Unwelcome name-calling, obscene language and other abusive behavior.

Threats of verbal abuse directed at co-workers and supervisors.

Throwing objects in the workplace regardless of the size or type of object being thrown or whether a person is the target of a thrown object.

Physically touching another employee in an intimidating, malicious, or sexually harassing manner. That includes such acts as hitting, slapping, poking, kicking, pinching, grabbing, and pushing.

Physically intimidating others including such acts as obscene gestures, "getting in your face," and fist-shaking.

Unexplained increase in absenteeism.

Depression or withdrawal.

Explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation.

Repeated comments that indicate suicidal tendencies.

Noticeably unstable emotional responses.

Behavior which is suspected of paranoia.

Preoccupation with previous incidents of violence.

Resistance and overreaction to changes in procedures.

Repeated violations of University Policies.

## APPENDIX B

### PERSONAL CONDUCT TO MINIMIZE VIOLENCE

Follow these suggestions in your daily interactions with people to defuse potentially violent situations. If at any time a person's behavior starts to escalate beyond your comfort zone, withdraw from the situation.

#### **Do**

Project calmness: move and speak slowly, quietly, and confidently.

Be a good listener: encourage the person to talk, and listen patiently.

Focus your attention on the other person to demonstrate your interest in what he/she has to say.

Maintain a relaxed yet attentive posture and position yourself at an angle rather than directly in front of the other person.

Acknowledge the person's feelings by gestures such as nodding your head.

Ask the person to move to less public, quiet area, if appropriate.

Establish ground rules if unreasonable behavior persists. Calmly describe the consequences of any violent behavior.

Use delaying tactics which will give the person time to calm down. For example, offer a drink of water (in a disposable cup).

Be reassuring and point out choices. Identify and deal with specific issues.

Accept criticism in a professional manner.

Ask for his/her recommendations. Repeat back to him/her what you feel he/she is requesting of you.

Position yourself so that a visitor cannot block your access to an exit.

#### **Do Not**

Make false statements or promises you cannot keep.

Try to impart a lot of technical or complicated information when emotions are high.

Take sides or agree with distortions.

Invade the individual's personal space. Make sure there is a space of 3' to 6' between you and the person.

Use styles of communication which generate hostility such as apathy, brush off, coldness, condescension, robotism, going strictly by the rules, or giving the run-around.

Reject all of an individual's demands from the start.

Pose in challenging stances such as standing directly opposite someone, hands on hips or crossing your arms. Avoid any physical contact, finger-pointing, or long periods of fixed eye contact.

Make sudden movements which can be seen as threatening. Notice the tone, volume, and rate of your speech.

Challenge, threaten, or dare the individual. Never belittle the person or make him/her feel foolish.

Criticize or act impatiently toward the agitated individual.

Attempt to bargain with a threatening individual.

Try to make the situation seem less serious than it is.