



POLICY MANUAL

GENERAL

Number 342

Subject: Violence in the Workplace

Covered Employees: University Employees

Date of Origin: April 11, 2003

342.1 POLICY

Utah State University is committed to maintaining an environment that is free from all acts or threats of violence perpetrated by or against employees.

While on USU property, while traveling on behalf of the University, or while conducting University business at other locations, each employee is prohibited from subjecting any other employee, student, or individual to any violence or threat of violence. Additionally, when functioning in the capacity of their employment responsibilities, USU employees have a right to be protected from violence or threats of violence perpetrated by other employees, students, and/or individuals.

Violent action on University property or facilities, or while on University business, will not be tolerated or ignored. Individuals who engage in violent or threatening behavior may be:

- a. Removed from the premises;
- b. Subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal or expulsion; and/or
- c. Subject to arrest and criminal prosecution.

342.2 DEFINITION

2.1 Defining Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is any physical assault, threatening, or intimidating behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting.

Workplace violence may involve, but is not limited to:

- a. A violent, threatening, or intimidating act by an individual who has no legitimate relationship to the workplace and enters it to commit a criminal act.
- b. A violent, threatening, or intimidating act by an individual who is the recipient (or object) of a University service provided by the affected workplace or the victim. This could include, but is not limited to, a current or former client, student, patient, or customer.
- c. A violent, threatening or intimidating act by an individual who works in a professional capacity with the university, on or off campus.

2.2 Examples of Workplace Violence

Some examples of workplace violence include:

- a. Physical violence against an employee or by an employee against another employee, a student, or an outside person participating in a University-sponsored activity.
- b. Verbal threats to inflict bodily harm, including vague or concealed threats.
- c. Verbal harassment, abusive or offensive language, or threatening gestures directed towards supervisors, fellow employees, or the public.
- d. Disorderly behaviors conducted in a threatening and/or intimidating manner, such as shouting, throwing or pushing objects, punching walls, and slamming doors.
- e. Malicious statements made against coworkers, supervisors, or subordinates which could damage their reputations or undermine their authority.
- f. Intentional damage to University and/or personal equipment such as computers, research equipment, etc.
- g. Assisting, aiding, or soliciting another person to threaten, intimidate, harass, or haze any USU employee.

342.3 PROCEDURES

3.1 Resources Available

- a. The USU Police Department is the primary point of contact for reporting incidences and/or concerns relating to workplace violence occurring on the USU campus. USU Police will then evaluate the seriousness of the threat and will choose to respond themselves or refer the issue to other resources on or off campus. University-related facilities and activities located outside of the campus should work directly with their local law enforcement agency and/or campus police.
- b. Workplace Violence Advisory Committee (WVAC): A committee, coordinated by the Office of Human Resources (HR), representing appropriate offices, which will: (1) Provide advice and make recommendations on the overall workplace violence programs and policies; and (2) convene quickly to provide direction in response to acts, or communications constituting threats of violence. This committee will be chaired by the HR Director and include: a representative from the USU Police; a representative from each of the Faculty Senate, Professional Employees Association (PEA), and Classified

Employees Association (CEA); a representative from the Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity (AA/EO) Office; the General Counsel; the Campus Judicial Officer (VP Student Services); and others as the need arises.

c. The Office of Human Resources provides advice and assistance to employees. The HR Office will maintain a list of people and services available to assist supervisors and employees with issues relating to workplace violence. These services will include (but are not limited to): (1) professional counseling services; (2) medical assistance; and (3) insurance advice.

3.2 Responding to Real and Potential Acts of Violence

a. Immediate Threat and/or Violent Incident. Any employee who perceives an immediate threat of bodily harm should:

- (1) Contact the USU Police immediately (911 for emergency contact and 797-1939 for others). When in doubt about the urgency of the threat of violence, USU Police should be contacted. If the facility or activity is not located in the vicinity of the USU campus, local law enforcement agencies should be contacted.
- (2) Disengage and evacuate the area.
- (3) Isolate the threatening individual if it is safe to do so.
- (4) Notify the supervisor.
- (5) Do whatever is reasonable to keep other employees, students or individuals in the area from potential harm.

b. Hostile Intruders. The following guidelines are for extreme situations, i.e., when hostile intruders cause death or serious bodily injury, or when there is a real threat of death or serious bodily injury. These instructions are couched in general terms. Specific instructions will be developed for each campus facility and posted in conspicuous locations.

(1) General guidelines when inside a room:

- (a) Remain in the room and immediately lock doors to the hallway. If possible cover any windows or openings that have a direct line of sight into the hallway.
- (b) If communication is available, telephone USU Police at 911.
- (c) Do not sound the fire alarm. A fire alarm would place occupants in potential harm as they attempt to leave the building.
- (d) Lock the windows and close blinds or curtains.
- (e) Stay away from the windows.
- (f) Turn off lights and all audio equipment.
- (g) Try to remain as calm as possible.
- (h) If others are with you, keep them together.
- (i) Keep the room secure until police arrive and give directions.
- (j) Stay out of open areas and be as quiet as possible.

(2) If caught in an open area inside a building (i.e., hallway or lounge), try to get into a classroom or an office. If that is not possible or you are in an outside area, you must decide on a course of action. Some options include:

- (a) Hiding. Make sure any hiding place is secure and not obvious.
- (b) Running. If you think you can safely make it out of the building by running, then do so. If you decide to run, do not run in a straight line. Attempt to keep objects such as desks, cabinets, fixtures, etc., between you and the hostile person. Once outside, do not run in a straight line. Use trees, vehicles and other objects to block you from the view of the intruder. When away from the immediate area of danger, summon help in any way you can and warn others.
- (c) Playing dead. If the person is causing death or serious physical injury to others and you are unable to run or hide you may choose to play dead if other victims are in the immediate vicinity.
- (d) Fighting. Your last option if you are caught in an open area (outside or in a building) may be to fight back. This is dangerous, but depending on your situation, this could be your last option.

(3) If you are caught by the intruder and are not going to fight back, obey all commands and don't look the intruder in the eyes.

(4) Once the police arrive, obey all commands. This may involve being handcuffed or keeping your hands in the air. This is done for safety reasons and once circumstances are evaluated by the police, they will give you further directions.

c. Less immediate Threats: When a supervisor or employee is faced with or aware of a situation, in which a threat of violence may exist, the matter should be referred immediately to the USU Police. The Police will contact the appropriate officials and department personnel to address the threat of violence. The Police may also choose to bring together the Workplace Violence Advisory Committee (WVAC) to advise and assist them.

When an organization is faced with a potentially violent situation, the WVAC will analyze the case from their respective areas of expertise and develop an action plan to address the situation. Types of potentially violent situations might include: threats of violence between employees; concerns over disciplinary action involving the potential for violence, and threats of domestic violence brought into the workplace. For situations involving employees and students, appropriate policies, rules, and department personnel will be coordinated. The committee will consider all threats seriously and be guided by considerations such as responding in a timely manner, respecting confidentiality, and involving key resources. The committee determines:

- (1) The existence of a serious threat.
- (2) The scope of security required.
- (3) The need for counseling.
- (4) Recommendations concerning continued employment.

- (5) The need to involve other agencies/departments.
- (6) Recommendations for educational and training needs.

d. Other activities of concern

- (1) Criminal Activity: Incidents involving suspected criminal activity are to be referred to the University Police for assessment and/or investigation.
- (2) Protection or restraining order: An employee who obtains a protection or restraining order that lists a University location as a protected area must immediately provide a copy of the order to his/her supervisor, the Director of the Office of Human Resources, and the University Police.

3.3 Education and Training

a. The Office of Human Resources, in coordination with USU Police and other departments as required, will coordinate University-wide mandatory training programs. These programs will include:

- (1) Training for all new employees as part of a new employee orientation program.
- (2) Training for all current employees through a series of mandatory classes to cover employees already at the University.
- (3) Training for managers and supervisors at all levels.
- (4) This training will be updated and presented to all managers every five years.
- (5) A program will be developed to keep employees up-to-date of new issues and procedures through publications, flyers, classes, etc.

b. HR and the USU Police will provide specialized and focused training to departments as requested.

c. Training will include violence related subjects, prevention of and response to violence and threats of violence, stress management, conflict resolution, anger management, and dealing with difficult people.

3.4 Sanctions for Threats or Acts of Violence

a. Violation of this procedure may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment and/or criminal charges in accordance with the law. The following departments will coordinate the process of appropriate sanctions:

- (1) Faculty: Incidents involving faculty members shall be directed to the Provost's Office.
- (2) Staff: Incidents involving staff shall be directed to the Office of Human Resources.
- (3) Students: Incidents involving students shall be directed to the Campus Judicial Officer who is located in the Vice President for Student Services office.
- (4) Graduate Assistants: Those holding teaching appointments will be directed to the Provost's Office. Those holding non-teaching appointments will be directed to HR.

b. False reports of acts of violence or threats of violence made intentionally will result in University discipline action up to and including termination. The determination will be handled by the responsible office, with the appropriate involvement of the Provost's Office, the Office of Human Resources, Student Services, and USU Police as required.

342.4 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 USU Employees

All employees must:

- a. refrain from workplace violence;
- b. are encouraged to seek assistance to resolve personal issues that may lead to workplace violence; and
- c. must report incidents of workplace violence to an appropriate manager or supervisor or directly to the University Police.

4.2 Department Heads or Supervisors

Responsible for creating an atmosphere where employees feel safe and secure. If issues of workplace violence arise, administrators need to contact the USU Police immediately to discuss options as outlined in this policy.

4.3 Office of Human Resources

Responsible for review and updates of this policy with advice and assistance of the Workplace Violence Advisory Committee or other agencies/personnel as required. Also responsible for providing advice and/or assistance as outlined in this policy.

4.4 USU Police

Responsible for taking reports of workplace violence and responding in an appropriate manner. Additionally, USU Police will be the primary trainer relating to workplace violence. USU Police will carry out responsibilities as outlined in the above policy.