WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

The Workplace Violence Research Institute of Palm Springs, California, defines workplace violence as "Any act against an employee that creates a hostile work environment and negatively affects the employee, either physically or psychologically. These acts include all types of physical or verbal assaults, threats, coercion, intimidation, and all forms of harassment."

Whether it is an irate student, co-worker, or visitor on campus, your actions may help calm a potentially violent situation, or they may escalate the problem. Try to behave in a manner that helps calm a situation.

TIP #1 Stay calm and in control. Don’t be in a hurry.

TIP #2 Be empathetic. Show you are concerned. Be professional.

TIP #3 Try to have the other person and yourself sit down. Sitting is a less aggressive position.

TIP #4 Try to be helpful. For example, schedule an appointment for a later time.

TIP #5 Give positive outcome statements such as “We can get this straightened out.” Acknowledge your limitation to help; offer to get the person to someone who can help.

TIP #6 Give positive feedback for continued talking, such as “I’m glad you’re telling me how you feel.”

TIP #7 Stay out of arms’ reach.

TIP #8 Have limited eye contact.

TIP #9 Take notes.

TIP #10 Avoid exacerbating behavior
- Do not patronize or preach
- Do not yell or argue
- Do not joke or be sarcastic
- Do not touch the person

TIP #11 Don’t lie or try to bluff or make threats.

If someone becomes agitated:

TIP #1 Leave the scene immediately if possible, Call 911 and campus security (4357) from a safe place.

TIP #2 Try to alert a co-worker that there is a problem – come up with an agreed-upon code word that indicates a problem.
Preventive measures

TIP #1 Avoid scheduling appointments for times when no one else will be in the area.

TIP #2 Alert colleagues in advance about a difficult meeting, and keep door open, or meet in a public area.

TIP #3 Avoid working alone after hours. If you have to work late, advise security and a colleague or family member.

TIP #4 When working after office hours, keep doors locked and do not open door unless you are expecting someone.

TIP #5 Report any strange or unusual activities in and around your workplace immediately to your supervisor and to the law enforcement personnel.

TIP #6 Do not leave money or valuable belongings out in the open. Purses should be locked in a desk or cabinet.

TIP #7 Lock your office and/or lab doors when these areas are not in use, even when you are leaving for just a moment.

TIP #8 Always walk in well-lit areas and know your surroundings. If you think you are being followed, go where there are other people. Call 911 as soon as you are in a safe place.

Documentation

See next section for a form for documenting a workplace act of violence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of event:</th>
<th>Time of Event:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location of event:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define behaviors, acts or actions (who, what when where, how)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Who was involved? (names, positions, job titles)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who witnessed the action?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What were the consequences of the action to you? To others?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What action did you take?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who did you notify? When?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What efforts did you make to document the incident and is the documentation located?</td>
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<tr>
<td>If you confronted the person taking the action, what occurred during the interaction?</td>
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