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| ***REPLACE WITH YOUR MASTHEAD*** |
| **VFIS logo black JPG** | **SOG Title:** |
| **SOG Number:** |
| **Original Date:** | **Revision Date:** |
| **ABC Fire Department General Operating Guideline** |

**Workplace Violence/Threats of Violence**

***This is a sample of a standard operating guideline (SOG) on this topic. You should review the content, modify as appropriate for your organization, have it reviewed by your leadership team and if appropriate your legal counsel. Once adopted, make sure the SOG is communicated to members, implemented and performance monitored for effective implementation.***

**Policy:**

XYZ is committed to preventing workplace violence and providing a safe work environment. XYZ prohibits and does not tolerate violent acts or threats of violence against employees, volunteers, patients, visitors, guests, community members, or other individuals within its facilities or during any XYZ-related activity (including off duty periods).

**Definition**

Violence may be described as verbal or physical threats, intimidation, and/or aggressive physical contact. Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to the following:

* Intimidation, harassment, assault, stalking, or other conduct that causes a person to reasonably believe that he or she is under a threat of bodily injury or death
* Threatening, attempting, or inflicting injury or damage to another person or property
* Possessing a dangerous weapon, such as a firearm, explosive, or hazardous device, or using an object as a weapon on XYZ property or during any XYZ-related activity
* Using obscene or abusive language or gestures in a threatening manner

Because of the potential for misunderstanding, joking about any of the above conduct is prohibited. Employees and volunteers are also expected to refrain from fighting, "horseplay," or other conduct that may be considered dangerous to others.

**Restraining Orders**

Any employee or volunteer who obtains a restraining order against any person should immediately notify XYZ management. XYZ has made a commitment to provide a safe workplace and can only do so if it receives information concerning individuals who have been ordered to maintain a distance from its facilities and I or personnel.

**Warning Signs of Potential Violence**

There are often signs serving as a warning that violence in the workplace may occur. Please review the following list of early warning signs that an individual may act out violently, keeping in mind that demonstration of one or many of the actions on the below list do not automatically point to certain violence. However, activities should be noted and XYZ will assist in detecting and defusing a potential workplace incident. Early warning signs may include:

* Increase in use of alcohol or using drugs
* History of violent or aggressive behavior or frequent physical fighting on- or off- duty
* Displaying a loss of control,(i.e., loss of temper on a frequent basis, frequently for unsubstantiated reasons, or over minor issues)
* Either joking or making serious, direct, or veiled threats
* Physically, verbally, or emotionally intimidating others or instilling fear, for example, harassing phone calls, emails and/or stalking
* Being obsessed with one's job and having no known outside interests
* Being a loner and/or expressing a strong desire for a personal or romantic relationship with a co-worker (Under these circumstances, the co-worker may feel threatened and report the unwanted attention)
* Obsession with weapons or militia, particularly if this is new behavior for an employee or volunteer
* Feeling constantly disrespected, demonstrating a "me versus the world" attitude, having trouble with authority, for example, feeling discriminated against, harassed, or intentionally targeted, not accepting criticism well, and commonly harboring resentment
* Expressing desperation, significant frustration, or depression over recent professional, personal, or financial problems
* Fascination with other recent incidents of violence and approval of the use of violence
* Disregard for safety, thus presenting a risk to self and others
* Demonstrating a lack of conscience and/or abuse towards other persons or animals
* Vandalism or property damage;
* Failing to acknowledge the feelings or rights of others
* Having been a victim of violence or bullying

**What to do**

If you witness a potentially violent situation or are dealing with a threatening or violent person, do not place yourself in danger or try to intercede. You should not attempt to challenge or disarm the individual. If possible, escape the scene and immediately contact local law enforcement authorities.

Consider the following safety tips in the event of a violent or potentially violent situation.

* Remain calm.
* Keep a distance of 4-6 feet.
* Do not touch the threatening or violent individual.
* Make constant eye contact, but do not try to "stare down" the threatening or violent person.
* Actively listen and respond to the individual.
* Ask the person making the threats or acting violently for solutions.
* If a supervisor or other appropriate authority can be safely notified of the need for assistance without endangering your safety or that of others, do so. Otherwise, cooperate and follow the instructions given.
* Unsafe Environment – Implement “Run, Hide, Fight” procedures to ensure your personal safety.

**Preventing and Detecting Violence and Threats of Violence**

Consider the following tips to help detect and prevent workplace violence and threats of violence:

* Conduct background checks.
* Create and disseminate a clear no tolerance policy for workplace violence (results in immediate termination for any act or threat).
* Encourage employees and volunteers to promptly report incidents and threats.
* Develop an emergency response plan as it pertains to workplace violence.
* Complete a worksite risk analysis/assessment to identify where the organization may be vulnerable and determine what steps can be taken to reduce risk.
* Consider using an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which can assist organizations concerned with potential violence and function as a resource in dealing with threats or acts of violence.
* Provide supervisory and non-supervisory training on conflict resolution, anger management, team building, and identifying early warning signs of violence.
* Monitor email and phone calls for threats.
* Advertise the EAP or other resources for victims of domestic violence.
* Consider providing assistance to employees and volunteers attempting to obtain restraining orders.
* Obtain restraining orders for the organization when appropriate.
* Develop a post-incident response plan.
* Require badge access to areas beyond visitor areas or lobbies.
* Give only first names over the phone or to strangers.
* Escort terminated employees or volunteers off the premises.
* Install more lighting in parking lots if necessary.
* Consider video surveillance.

***This is a sample guideline furnished to you by VFIS. Your organization should review this guideline and make the necessary modifications to meet your organization’s needs. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing exposure to the risk of injury, harm or damage to personnel, property and the general public. For additional information on this topic, contact your VFIS Risk Control representative.***

**References:**

Workplace Violence/Threats of Violence, vfis.com