



Columbia County Workplace Violence Prevention Policy & Incident Reporting

Res. 116-2013
Attachment

The County of Columbia is committed to the safety and security of our employees. Workplace violence presents a serious occupational safety hazard to our agency, staff, and clients. Threats, threatening behavior, or acts of violence against employees, visitors, guests, or other individuals by anyone on the County of Columbia property will be thoroughly investigated and appropriate action will be taken, including summoning criminal justice authorities when warranted. All employees are responsible for helping to create an environment of mutual respect for each other as well as clients, following all policies, procedures and program requirements, and for assisting in maintaining a safe and secure work environment.

This policy is designed to meet the requirements of NYS Labor Law 27b and highlights some of the elements that are found within our Workplace Violence Prevention Program. The process involved in complying with this law included a workplace evaluation that was designed to identify the workplace violence hazards our employees could be exposed to. Other tools that were utilized during this process included accident reports/DOSH 900 logs/assessments/surveys. Management and Authorized Employee Representatives will have an ongoing role in the evaluation process, recommending methods to reduce or eliminate the hazards identified during the process and investigating workplace violence incidents or allegations. All employees will participate in the annual Workplace Violence Prevention Training Program.

The goal of this policy is to promote the safety and well-being of all people in our workplace. All incidents of violence or threatening behavior will be responded to immediately upon notification. The County of Columbia has identified response personnel that include a member of management and an employee representative. If appropriate, the county will provide counseling services or referrals for employees.

All County personnel are responsible for notifying the contact person designated below of any violent incidents, threatening behavior, including threats they have witnessed, received, or have been told that another person has witnessed or received.

Designated Contact Person:

Name:	_____
Title:	Human Resources Director
Department:	Columbia County Dept. of Human Resources
Phone:	(518) 828-4086
Location:	401 State Street, Hudson, New York 12534



COLUMBIA COUNTY

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Purpose

It is the intent of the COUNTY OF COLUMBIA that threats, threatening behavior, and acts of violence against employees, by employees or by other individuals on COUNTY property, will not be tolerated. COLUMBIA COUNTY will take all threats seriously. It is the COUNTY's goal to eliminate violent behavior and the threat of such behavior from all work sites.

Policy

Violence or threat of violence, by or against any employee of COLUMBIA COUNTY, or any other person while on COUNTY property, is strictly prohibited. The prohibited action will subject the perpetrator, if an employee, to serious disciplinary action, up to and including termination of the employee, and, in all cases, possible criminal prosecution.

The possession of firearms or dangerous weapons (as defined below) while on COUNTY property, or in a COUNTY facility or vehicle, is strictly prohibited. Employees violating this policy may be terminated. The weapons portion of this policy does not apply to law enforcement personnel or other employees that are operating within the normal scope of their duties, and using weapons as tools of their profession. Any other employee of Columbia County must provide proof of a valid weapons permit and must have written approval of the Columbia County Board of Supervisors in order to carry a weapon on the worksite. County Departments may receive training on methods on defusing hostile situations.

Definitions

- A. Dangerous Weapons: includes, but is not limited to, any offensive weapon, pistol, revolver, or other firearm, dagger, razor, stiletto, switchblade knife, or knife having a blade exceeding five (5) inches in length.
- B. Work Site: Includes all property owned or occupied by COLUMBIA COUNTY, as well as COUNTY vehicles.
- C. Possession: Includes, but not limited to, the presence of a weapon on the employee, lunch box, tool kit, bag, purse, cabinets, office, etc. Weapons transported in vehicles must be legally stored in compliance with the laws of the State of New York.

- D. Violence in the workplace may include:
- The use of physical force with the intent to cause harm.
 - Acts or threats in any form or manner, which are intended to intimidate, cause fear, or cause harm.
- E. The act of creating a hostile or intimidating work environment by means of words, actions, or physical contact, which would have the purpose or effect of alarming, insulting, or provoking another person.
- F. The intentional damage of county-owned or personal property, or acts intended to cause such property to fail to operate, or to operate improperly.

Guidelines for Managing Workplace Altercations

- A. The guidelines are intended to aid Department Heads and supervisors in dealing with a violent or potentially violent situation at work where the Department Head or supervisor is in a position to intervene and control the situation.
- B. In circumstances deemed by the Department Head or supervisor to be an emergency, call 911, and then contact the Department Head and Board of Supervisors at (518) 828-1527 and/or appropriate governing body. It is understood that the actions of a supervisor or other employee will depend on the seriousness and nature of the incident. However, consistent with personal safety, supervisors are to make a good faith effort to diffuse violent or potentially violent behavior as quickly as possible in order to prevent escalation. The term "altercation," used in these guidelines, includes actual or threatened violence including verbal or physical confrontation, or assault, or attempts at such assault.

General Comments

- A. Separate the individuals involved. Do not allow a minor altercation to escalate into a more serious situation. If the individuals cannot be separated, dial 911, contact the Department Head and the Board of Supervisors and/or appropriate governing body.
- B. All COUNTY employees are responsible for notifying management of any threats that they have witnessed or received. If it is not practical to notify management, the employee should contact the Board of Supervisors at (518) 828-1527. COUNTY employees who obtain a restraining order against individuals are strongly encouraged to report the presence of a restraining order to their Department Head and the Board of Supervisors and/or appropriate governing body.

- C. Once the situation is under control, the Board of Supervisors and/or appropriate governing body or committee, along with the Department Head, shall interview all persons involved, including any witnesses, in order to obtain an accurate account of the incident. The incident will be documented in writing and reviewed by management.
- D. The Department Head consulting with the Board of Supervisors and/or appropriate governing body or committee will decide on the appropriate disciplinary action, if necessary.

Discipline

Workplace altercations, including those involving only verbal exchanges, justify appropriate corrective action. The Board of Supervisors and/or appropriate governing body should be contacted for guidance.

Guidelines for Violence Incidental Response

In an emergency situation involving actual or potential violence, the first priority is to protect the safety and well-being of persons involved. Because each situation involves unique factors, the following guidelines are intended to provide general guidance. The key elements are safety, reporting, coordination, and control. The following procedures should be followed when dealing with an angry customer (citizen):

- A. Attempt to de-escalate the situation as soon as the customer (citizen) shows signs of anxiety. Through verbal and non-verbal skills, attempt to be supportive and helpful.
- B. If the situation does not de-escalate, then firm but respectful direction must be given.
 1. Take away the customer's (citizen) audience by removing the individual to an area where there is less public involvement in the situation.
 2. Allow the person to vent some anger. Be helpful and supportive. Do not presume the customer (citizen) is at fault.
 3. Set limits for the customer(citizen). Provide the customer(citizen) with direction by giving clear choices and consequences.

C. If the situation continues to escalate and violence or threats of violence occur, immediately call the emergency number (911) and report as many details as possible.

D. An employee who is involved in, or who witnesses a violent incident, shall immediately notify a supervisor or Department Head.

E. The Department Head or another department management representative shall contact the Board of Supervisors and/or appropriate governing body who shall perform the investigation of the incident, and assist the Department Head in disciplinary action (if necessary).

F. If a person enters your place of work using a weapon to carry out a physical attack, remove yourself from the area immediately.

Implementation

Columbia County will implement its Workplace Violence Prevention Program by taking the following steps:

1. Internal discussion by key management personnel to develop a policy statement and plan for implementation.
2. Adoption of a written policy by the Board of Supervisors and/or appropriate governing body.
3. The Public Safety Committee will undertake a building by building assessment of the potential hazards and possible prevention methods.
4. Employees will be trained on a building by building basis.

Program Review and Update

The Workplace Violence Prevention Program will be reviewed and updated as required, and modifications will be made and communicated to employees as required.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the County of Columbia's Workplace Violence Prevention Policy and Incident Reporting System. I agree that I have read the policy thoroughly and agree to abide by such policy. Further, I agree that if there is any provision that I do not understand, I will seek clarification from the Department Head or Human Resources Department.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____