

New Hire Orientation Training
**Workplace Violence
Prevention**

Presented by:

Sarah Fasano-Fernicola, Labor Relations

Administrative Directive 2.22 – Workplace Violence Prevention Policy

- The Department of Correction shall provide its employees with a workplace free of intimidation, harassment, threats or violent acts. The Department shall investigate and provide appropriate resolution for each complaint relating to workplace violence. This policy shall cover all Department employees, contractors, subcontractors and vendors.

A.D. 2.22, Workplace Violence Prevention Policy, effective 9/15/08

Workplace Violence Defined:

- “any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting. It includes, but is not limited to beatings, stabbings, suicides, shootings, rapes, near suicides, psychological traumas such as threats, obscene phone calls, intimidating behavior, and harassment of any nature such as the following, swearing at or shouting at another employee(s).”

A.D. 2.22, Workplace Violence Prevention Policy, effective 9/15/08

What is a Worksite?

- The “worksite” is any location, either permanent or temporary, where an employee performs any work-related duty. This includes but is not limited to the buildings and the surrounding perimeters, including the parking lots. It includes all state-owned and leased space, including vehicles, and any location where state business is conducted.

What is a Threat?

- A **threat** is a communicated intent to inflict physical or other harm on another person. A threat can be communicated either verbally or by gesture, or a combination of the two. If sufficiently egregious, a threat can constitute a criminal act (see Section 53a-62 of the Connecticut General Statutes).

What is a Threatening Situation?

- A **threatening situation** is a situation where one person, through intimidating words or gestures has induced fear and apprehension of physical or other harm in another person but there is no immediate danger of such harm being inflicted.

Three Types of Threats

- 1. Direct Threat

i.e. “I am going to kill you.”

- 2. Conditional Threat

i.e. “If you don’t stop giving me warnings, I will get even with you.”

- 3. Veiled or Hidden Threat

i.e. “Something bad might happen to your family.”

Keep in mind that some persons:

- Threaten and actually carry out the threat(s);
- Threaten but do not carry out the threat(s);
- Commit violence but never make a threat.

Recognizing Threatening Behavior

Examples of **Verbal** and **Non Verbal** Threats:

- Throwing objects in anger, whether or not they are aimed at someone;
- Yelling or shouting in a threatening or intimidating manner;
- Constant swearing at others;
- References to other incidents of workplace violence in a threatening or intimidating manner;
- A preoccupation with violence and expressed ideas about acting in a similar fashion.

Recognizing Threatening Behavior

Examples of **Intimidating** Behavior:

- Acting belligerently toward clients, co-workers or supervisors;
- Sending threatening or intimidating E-Mail messages, letters or notes;
- Blaming others for everything that goes wrong, never having the sense of one's own responsibilities;
- Challenging authority;
- Crossing behavioral boundaries in an inappropriate and repeated fashion, i.e. following, stalking, etc.

Stress

- A condition within a person of tension and upheaval brought about by a person's reaction to an internal or external situation.
- A demand made on an organization to deal with change/adjustments.
- A product of our natural reaction to change, growth and progress.
- Puts our system on alert – the “Fight/Flight” response.
- Is a part of life but does not need to be a way of life – it depends on how we manage it.
- In itself, stress, like change, is neither “good” nor “bad.” How it affects us depends on how we look at and deal with it, along with other factors.

Possible Signs of Stress

- Low morale
- Lack of motivation and commitment
- No urgency/everything is urgent
- Accountability/absence of accountability
- Increase in interpersonal conflict
- Increase in “bullying” complaints
- Lack of civility and respect
- Increase in absenteeism, sick time, FMLA

Symptoms of Stress

A person may have physical and/or emotional symptoms of Stress

Physical Symptoms

- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Allergies
- Teeth grinding
- Muscle tension
- Diarrhea/constipation
- Racing heartbeat
- Rashes

Emotional Symptoms

- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Denial
- Depression
- Fear
- Uncertainty
- Easily upset
- Overwhelmed
- Angry and irritable

Signs of Stress

Cognitive

- Blaming others
- Confusion
- Limited attention span
- Memory problems
- Easily distracted
- Difficulty making decisions
- Obsessive thinking
- Poor problem solving

Behavioral

- Withdrawal
- Arguing
- Increased alcohol and/or other drug use
- Eating problems
- Difficulty sleeping
- Nightmares
- Increased spending

The Individual Within The System

- Stress is cumulative, active and interactive. On any given day, a person may be able to handle one or two sources of pressure, but when these stressful experiences multiply, they create increased pressure on all the systems of our lives, i.e. work, social and/or family system.
- In an ideal setting, the pressures created by the systems of our lives are manageable and do not place excessive stress on us.
- But in a more realistic setting, the pressures of each system impinge on the other, ultimately placing pressure on the individual operating within the systems.

Triggers:

Employee Issues

- Personal stress outside the workplace, such as family problems involving divorce, custody, financial problems, etc.
- Disciplinary actions such as a negative performance review or criticism of performance, reprimand, suspension or demotion
- Playing “practical jokes”

Employee Responsibility:

- “Any employee who feels subjected to or witnesses violent, threatening, harassing or intimidating behavior in the workplace shall promptly report the incident or statement to a manager, supervisor or human resources representative.”
- “Any employee who believes that there is a serious threat to his/her safety or the safety of others that requires immediate attention shall notify a manager, supervisor or human resources representative. Law enforcement authorities may be notified, as necessary.”

A.D. 2.22, Workplace Violence Prevention Policy, effective 9/15/08.

Key Elements that may prevent Workplace Violence

Three key elements that may prevent a potentially violent situation from occurring are:

- Recognizing the early warning signs (often there is a change in a persons behavior preceding an episode of violence);
- Recognizing issues or events that may trigger violence; and
- Intervening early to prevent a violent incident from occurring.

The Major Key to Workplace Violence Prevention

YOUR Eyes and Ears and
YOUR Willingness to
Communicate Concerns
Are Critical to Promoting a
Safe Working
Environment.