

# Workplace Violence Prevention Policy

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**Subject:**Governance and Organization

**Policy:**Workplace Violence Prevention Policy

**Revised:**New

**Effective Date:**March 24, 2010

**Review Date:**March 2013

**Responsible Party:**University Police

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## **Introduction and Purpose:**

Montana State University supports a campus environment and workplace free of violence, and acts of violence against any member of the MSU community are strictly prohibited.

The University is committed to working with its employees to maintain an environment free from violence, threats of violence, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior. While this kind of conduct is rare, incidents of workplace violence cannot be ignored. Established policies and procedures can help employees who wish to report such incident and can help the university in responding to the reports.

## **Reporting violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior**

All reports of violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior will be taken seriously and will be dealt with appropriately. Individuals who commit such acts may be removed from the premises and may be subject to disciplinary action, criminal penalties, or both.

All employees are responsible for maintaining a workplace free of violence. The University has a variety of services and procedures in place to respond to and help prevent acts of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior. Those services and procedures include:

1. Services provided by the MSU Police
2. Services available through the Employee Assistance Program
3. Grievance procedures for employees

Employees who are concerned about workplace situations that may involve violence should take prompt and appropriate action without fear of retaliation by:

1. Calling the University Police at 406-994-2121
2. Speaking to a supervisor
3. Contacting a union official
4. Calling Human Resources at 406-994-3651 or the Office of Institutional Equity at 406-994-2042

Record keeping and documentation will be maintained by Human Resources and the university police if appropriate, both to protect the employee as well as the University. Every effort will be used to maintain the reporting employee's right to privacy.

The University will evaluate the situation and take appropriate action to reduce the threat of violence in the workplace. This action may involve consultation among the police, human resources, legal counsel, mental health providers, and others as necessary.

Follow-up actions will be crafted to respond to individual situations. The range of actions may include removal of potentially dangerous persons from the premises, discipline of employees or students, provision of added security measures, disciplinary referrals, employee assistance referrals, and other actions that may be appropriate.

## **Information for Employees:**

### **Recognizing Early Warning Signals**

While there is no reliable way to predict who might commit an act of violence, there might be a pattern of behavior that could give rise to concerns. Examples of these types of behaviors are:

Direct or veiled verbal threats of harm.

Intimidation of others by words or actions.

Carrying a concealed weapon or flashing a weapon to test reactions.

Hypersensitivity or extreme suspiciousness.

Extreme moral righteousness.

Unable to take criticism of job performance.

Holds a grudge, especially against a supervisor.

Often verbalizes hope for something to happen to the person against whom the employee has the grudge.

Expression of extreme desperation over recent problems.

History of violent behavior.

Extreme interest in weapons and their destructive power to people.

Fascination with incidents of workplace violence and approval of the use of violence under similar circumstances.

Intentional disregard for the safety of others.

Destruction of property.

No one signal alone should cause concern but a combination of these items should be a cause for concern and action.

Employees wishing to report incidents and those to whom incidents are reported should provide and record the following types of information:

**Who** - Who was the perpetrator of the incident and who else was present as a witness to the incident?

**What** - Exactly what happened? The "what" of a report includes all of the facts and may also include your assessment of those facts.

**When** - When did the incident occur? If there were smaller events leading up to the main incident you are describing, when did those events occur?

**Where** - Where did this incident happen?

### **Suggested Guidelines-Do's and Don'ts**

If confronted with a situation in which you fear that there may be a threat of violence, the following guidelines may be of assistance in dealing with the person:

**DO** project calmness: move and speak slowly, quietly and confidently.

**DO** focus your attention on the other person to let them know you are interested in what they have to say.

**DO** maintain a relaxed yet attentive posture and position yourself at a right angle rather than directly in front of the other person.

**DO** accept criticism in a positive way. When a complaint might be true, use statements like "You are probably right" or "Maybe I made an error." If the criticism seems unwarranted, ask clarifying questions.

**DO** acknowledge the feelings of the other person. Indicate that you can see he or she is upset.

**DO NOT** use styles of communication which generate hostility such as apathy, brush off, coldness, going strictly by the rules, or giving the run-around.

**DO NOT** reject all of the person's demands from the start.

**DO NOT** make sudden movements which can be seen as threatening. Notice the tone, volume and rate of your speech.

**DO NOT** challenge, threaten, or dare the person. Never belittle the person or make him or her feel foolish.

**DO NOT** try to make the situation seem less serious than it is.

**DO NOT** invade the person's personal space. Make sure there is a space of 3' to 6' between you and the other person.