

**Law Center Policy Statement Number:** PS-102LC  
**Title/Topic:** Violence Free Workplace  
**Effective Date:** March 2, 2009

## **INTRODUCTION**

Employees are the State's most valuable resource and their safety and security are essential to carrying out their responsibilities. Every employee has a reasonable expectation to perform his/her assigned duties in an atmosphere free of threats and assaults.

Recognizing the increasing incidence of violence in the workplace, the Governor of the State of Louisiana has issued Executive Order MJF 97-15 effective March 5, 1997 committing the Governor and the State of Louisiana to work toward a violence free workplace for state employees.

## **PURPOSE**

An employee expects to perform his/her assigned duties in an atmosphere completely free of threats and assaults. It is the purpose of this policy to ensure the highest standard of safety for all faculty, staff, students and visitors on this campus. The LSU Law Center (hereafter referred to as the "Law Center") will take all reasonably available steps to protect all such persons from violence.

## **DEFINITIONS**

Assault is an attempt to commit a battery or the intentional placing of another in reasonable apprehension of receiving a battery. (Example: I may have a stick raised and know that I have no intention of striking you, but, based on the circumstances, you have a reasonable apprehension that I plan to strike you.)

Battery is the intentional use of force or violence upon another or the intentional administration of a poison or other noxious liquid or substance to another.

Credible Threat is a statement (verbal or written) or action that would cause a reasonable person to fear for the safety of him/herself or that of another person and does, in fact, cause such fear.

Prohibited Items are firearms and other dangerous weapons as described in PS-96 (and adopted by the Law Center). The University's Policy Statement on the Possession Of Firearms and Other Dangerous Weapons By LSU's Employees within Its Facilities and Premises.

Intentional refers to conduct in which the circumstances indicate that the offender, in the ordinary course of human experience, must have considered the criminal consequences as reasonably certain to result from his act or failure to act.

Violence is the commission of an assault or battery or the making of a credible threat.

Workplace is any site where an employee is placed for the purpose of completing job assignments.

Workplace Violence is violence that takes place in the workplace.

## **MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Law Center shall comply with federal and state statutes, rules, regulations and/or guidelines in making reasonable efforts to:

- hire, train, supervise and discipline employees;

- intervene in situations of harassment in the workplace where the employer is aware of the harassment;

- ensure employees and/or independent contractors are fit for duty, and do not pose unnecessary risks to others;

- provide security precautions and other measures in order to minimize the risk of foreseeable criminal intrusion based upon prior experience or location in a dangerous area;

- maintain an adequate level of security;

- establish and implement a written policy and plan dealing with violence in the workplace;

- provide employee training on the Law Center's plan, warning signs of potential of violent behavior, and precautions which may enhance the personal safety of the employee at work;

- the Law Center's Office of Human Resources (hereafter referred to as the "Office of Human Resources" will warn an employee of a credible threat made by another to do harm to that employee;

- support the application of sanctions and/or prosecution of offenders, as appropriate;

- accommodate, after appropriate evaluation, employees who require special assistance following incident(s) of workplace violence;

cooperate with law enforcement agencies;

establish a uniform violence-reporting system with regular review of submitted reports;

initiate procedures to protect employees, who report credible threats, from retaliation; and

keep up-to-date records in order to evaluate the effectiveness of administrative and work-practice changes initiated to prevent workplace violence.

## **MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT**

At the Law Center, management commitment, including the endorsement and visible involvement of top levels of administration, provides the motivation and resources to deal effectively with workplace violence, and includes:

organizational concern for the employee's emotional and physical safety and health;

commitment to the safety and security of all persons at the workplace;  
assigned responsibility for the various aspects of the workplace violence prevention program

to ensure that all supervisors and employees understand their roles and responsibilities;

allocation of authority and resources to all responsible parties;

accountability for involved supervisors and employees;

referral of employees for debriefing/counseling who have experienced or witnessed assaults and other violent incidents; and

serious treatment of workplace violence, incidents, complaints and concerns, keeping confidential all reports and identification of parties, except to those who have a legitimate need to know and to the extent required by law.

## **EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

At the Law Center, employees are to report to the Office of Human Resources or the LSU Police Department, or both where applicable, all threats or incidents of violent behavior in the workplace which they observe or of which they are informed. Please refer to Exhibit I, "Violent Employee - Symptom Recognition," which may be helpful in identifying potentially violent individuals.

Examples of inappropriate behavior which shall be reported include:

an employee or visitor who may be in possession of a firearm or other dangerous weapon in the workplace as described in PS- 96, intimidation through verbal threats;

physically touching another employee in an intimidating, malicious, or sexually harassing manner, including such acts as hitting, slapping, poking, kicking, pinching, grabbing, and pushing; and

physically intimidating others including such acts as obscene gestures, "getting in your face," fist-shaking, and throwing any object.

Employees' involvement and feedback enable faculty and staff to develop and express their own commitment to safety and security and provide useful information to design, implement, and evaluate the program. At the Law Center, employee involvement includes, but is not limited to:

understanding and complying with the workplace violence prevention program and other safety and security measures;

participating in employee complaint or suggestion procedures covering safety and security concerns;

providing prompt and accurate reporting of violent incidents; cooperating with the LSU Police Department and the Office of Human Resources, who reviews violent incidents and security problems and makes security inspections; and

participating in continuing education covering techniques to recognize and abate escalating agitation, assaultive behavior or criminal intent.

## **INCIDENT RESPONSE AND EVALUATION**

Assistance for victimized employees and employees who may be affected by witnessing a workplace-violence incident will be provided. Whenever an incident takes place, injured employees will receive appropriate medical treatment and psychological evaluation, as necessary, in accordance with existing policies.

An employee who has been threatened or assaulted by another at the workplace will immediately report the situation to his/her supervisor. The supervisor to whom the incident is reported will immediately notify the Office of Human Resources and/or the LSU Police Department. In an emergency situation, reporting shall be made immediately to the LSU Police Department.

Written statements shall be obtained by the Office of Human Resources or LSU Police from all involved, including those who witnessed the incident. The statement should answer the “who, what, when, where, how, and why” of the incident while the event is still mentally fresh. The written statements should include names of all parties of the incident, including victims, subjects and witnesses.

The following actions should be taken in accordance with the severity of the incident:

The situation is not dangerous:

separate employees and witnesses involved and isolate them until they are interviewed and their statements are taken; and

document all actions and statements.

The situation is dangerous:

contact the LSU Police Department at 578-3231 or 911;

order all those presenting the danger to leave the facility immediately (unless this action must be taken by police);

do not attempt to physically remove an individual (leave it to the police); and

document all actions and statements.

Please refer to Exhibit III, "Personal Conduct to Minimize Violence," for suggestions on how to defuse potentially violent situations.

## **BOMB THREATS**

When a bomb threat is received, notify the LSU Police Department immediately. If the bomb threat is received through a telephone call, the person who receives the call should complete the "Bomb Threat By Phone" checklist after notifying the Police Department (See Exhibit II). Under no circumstances shall anyone other than trained bomb technicians handle a suspicious package. **Do not touch it, handle it or disturb it in any manner.**

## **RECORDS**

Records associated with violence in the workplace need to be kept in a permanent, secure location and in a confidential manner. LSU Police will evaluate security and methods of hazard control. The following records are important and shall be maintained by the Office of Human Resources, in accordance with pertinent statutes as part of the violence prevention program:

reports of work injury, including worker's compensation injuries, if necessary;

report for each reported assault, incidents of abuse, verbal attack, or aggressive behavior occurring between persons in the workplace;

police reports of incidents occurring in the workplace;

minutes of safety meetings, records of hazards' analysis, and corrective actions recommended;

reports on violence in the workplace training, including subjects covered, attendees, and qualifications of trainers; and

other appropriate reports.

## **COMMUNICATION**

The Law Center recognizes that in order to maintain a safe, healthy and secure workplace, there must be open communication on these issues among employees, including all levels of supervision. The open communication process includes, but is not limited to:

periodic review of this policy with all employees;

discussions of violence in the workplace during scheduled safety meetings;

posting or distributing information on violence in the workplace; and

procedures to inform supervisors about violence in the workplace, hazards, or threats of violence.

## **TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

At the LSU Law Center, all employees, including all levels of supervision, shall have training and instruction on general, job-specific, and work site-specific safety and security practices. Training and instruction shall be provided within one year of policy implementation and regularly, thereafter. Training shall begin with orientation of new employees within three months of employment and regularly, thereafter. At the Law Center, workplace-violence training shall be the responsibility of the Office of Human Resources. General violence-in-the-workplace training and instruction address, but are not limited to, the following areas:

explanation of the violence in the workplace policy as established by the Law Center;

measures for reporting any violent acts or threats of violence;

recognition of hazards including associated risk factors;

measures to prevent workplace violence, including procedures for reporting workplace hazards or threats to appropriate supervision;

ways to defuse hostile or threatening situations;

measures to summon others for assistance;

routes of escape available to employees;

procedures for notification of law enforcement authorities when a criminal act may have occurred;

procedures for obtaining emergency medical care in the event of a violent act upon an employee; and

information on securing post-event trauma counseling for those employees desiring or needing such assistance.

## **EXHIBIT I**

### **VIOLENT EMPLOYEE - SYMPTOM RECOGNITION**

Inappropriate behavior is often a warning sign of potential hostility or violence. When left unchecked it can escalate to higher levels. Employees who exhibit the following behaviors should be reported and may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination:

Unwelcome name-calling, obscene language and abusive behavior;

Threats of verbal abuse directed at co-workers and supervisors;

Throwing objects in the workplace regardless of the size or type of object being thrown or whether a person is the target of a thrown object;

Physically touching another employee in an intimidating, malicious or sexually harassing manner; that includes such acts as hitting, slapping, poking, kicking, pinching, grabbing and pushing;

Physically intimidating others, including such acts as obscene gestures, “getting in your face” and fist-shaking;

Unexplained increase in absenteeism;

Depression or withdrawal;

Explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation;

Repeated comments that indicate suicidal tendencies;

Noticeably unstable emotional responses;

Behavior which is suspect of paranoia;

Preoccupation with previous incidents of violence;

Resistance and overreaction to changes in procedures; and

Repeated violations of university policies.

**IMPORTANT: TAKE ALL THREATS SERIOUSLY.**

**EXHIBIT II**

**BOMB THREATS BY PHONE**

If you receive a bomb threat by telephone, please document the following and immediately contact LSU Police at 225-578-3231 or 911:

1. Telephone number on which the threat was received \_\_\_\_\_

2. Was it an on or off campus call?

3. Exact time of call: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Exact words of caller:

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5. Ask the following:

- When will the bomb explode?
- Where is the bomb?
- What does it look like?
- What kind of bomb is it?
- What is your name?
- What is your address?
- Where are you calling from?
- Why did you place the bomb?

6. Make special note of the following:

- Caller's voice (calm, excited, disguised, accent, etc...)
- Caller's sex
- Caller's age (determined by voice)
- Was the voice familiar to you?
- Was there any background noise?

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **EXHIBIT III**

### **PERSONAL CONDUCT TO MINIMIZE VIOLENCE**

Follow these suggestions in your daily interactions with people to defuse potentially violent situations. If at any time a person's behavior starts to escalate beyond your comfort zone, withdraw from the situation.

#### **Do**

Project calmness: move and speak slowly, quietly and confidently.

Be a good listener: encourage the person to talk and listen patiently.

Focus your attention on the other person in order to demonstrate your interest in what he/she has to say.

Maintain a relaxed yet attentive posture. Position yourself at an angle rather than directly in front of the other person.

Acknowledge the person's feelings by gestures such as nodding your head.

Ask the person to move to a less public, quiet area, if appropriate.

Establish ground rules if unreasonable behavior persists. Calmly describe the consequences of any violent behavior.

Use delaying tactics which will give the person time to calm down. For example, offer a drink of water in a disposable cup.

Be reassuring and point out choices. Identify and deal with specific issues.

Accept criticism in a professional manner.

Ask for recommendations. Repeat to the person what you believe they are requesting of you.

Position yourself so that a visitor cannot block your access to an exit.

#### **Do Not**

Use styles of communication which generate hostility such as apathy, brush off, coldness, condescension, going strictly by the rules or giving the run-around.

Reject all demands from the start.

Pose in challenging stances such as standing directly opposite someone, hands on hips or crossing arms. Avoid physical contact, finger pointing or long periods of fixed eye contact.

Make sudden movements which can be seen as threatening. ( Be sure to notice the tone, volume and rate of your speech.)

Challenge, threaten or dare the individual. Belittle the person or make them feel foolish.

Criticize or act impatiently toward the agitated individual.

Attempt to bargain with a threatening individual.

Try to make the situation seem less serious than it is.

Make false statements or promises you cannot keep.

Take sides or agree with distortions.

Invade the individual's personal space. (Make sure there is a space of 3 to 6 feet between you and the person.)