

## WORKPLACE AND ON CAMPUS VIOLENCE GUIDE

Version	Date	Comments
1	April, 2009	Initial <i>Workplace and On Campus Violence Response Guide</i>
2	July, 2012	Routine review
3	August 2013	Updated guidance to be consistent with national response procedures
4	February, 2015	Routine review

### A. INTRODUCTION

George Mason University is committed to providing a safe work and educational environment for the employees, students, and visitors. The following guidance and procedures applies to all George Mason University, faculty, staff, students, and visitors and is provided to assist in identifying potentially violent persons and recommends actions that should be taken if a person is threatening or becomes violent.

### B. SCOPE

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines workplace violence as "violent acts (including physical assaults and threats of assaults) directed toward persons at work or on duty." This definition includes acts of terrorism. University Policy 2208: *Workplace Violence* defines workplace violence as:

- Any direct or indirect threat, behavior or action which suggests personal violation or endangers a person's safety, including but not limited to sexual assault, stalking, and verbal and non-verbal threats or intimidation or harassment of any nature, in person, through electronic media, or by phone; or
- Behavior, such as a display of escalating anger, likely to result in an act of aggression; or
- Any act that is a physical assault including, but not limited to, beating, stabbing, shoving, kicking, throwing of objects, shooting, or rape; or
- Acts that destroy or damage property.

### C. PREVENTION

While workplace violence cannot be prevented entirely, there are steps that can be taken in the workplace to minimize the likelihood of violence occurring in a particular setting. Such steps include:

- Ensuring all employees are educated on workplace violence prevention and procedures.
- Encouraging the reporting of suspicious or threatening behaviors with protection against retaliation.

- Developing emergency procedures within each work area (including quick notification channels, exit awareness, and use of code words).
- Arranging work shifts that preclude individuals from working alone.
- Reducing the visibility of office items that could be used as weapons.
- Creating visitor sign-in/screening procedures within units.
- Encouraging use of University Police escort services between buildings after dark.
- Standardizing periodic security checks in various work settings.

#### **D. AWARENESS**

Persons who commit acts of violence tend to demonstrate or follow a pattern of behavior. If you observe the following behavior(s) and feel or observe others becoming intimidated, uncomfortable, or apprehensive, notify your supervisor or appropriate faculty member and relay your concern. The following behaviors, as outlined in University Policy 2208: *Workplace Violence*, are not definitive indicators of violent individuals but rather characteristics that have been demonstrated by persons known to commit violent acts.

- Difficulty accepting authority or criticism
- Holding grudges
- Sabotage of university property or equipment
- Expressing a desire, in jest or sincerity, to harm others
- Physical or verbal intimidation
- Argumentative or uncooperative behavior
- History of interpersonal conflict
- Extremist opinions and attitudes
- Sense of entitlement
- Preoccupation with violent behavior or weapons
- Substance abuse
- Unstable/problematic domestic situation
- Obsessive behavior, particularly towards one or more individual

Supervisors and faculty must remain alert to dramatic changes in an employee and student work performance, behavior, or disposition. Contact the Department of Police and Public Safety (703) 993-2810 if you feel that a person is capable of violence.

For additional information on how to recognize and respond to on campus and work place violence, visit <http://police.gmu.edu/on-campus-and-workplace-violence/>.

#### **E. AGGRESSIVE OR VIOLENT BEHAVIOR**

If you are confronted by or observe an aggressive or potentially violent person attempt to remove yourself from the situation if you are able to do so without provoking the aggressor. Report the situation to your supervisor or faculty. If you are the victim of an act of violence or observe a person committing an act of violence, immediately report the situation to the Department of Police and Public Safety (703) 993-2810. Do not attempt to confront a person who is violent or aggressive.

The following actions should be taken when confronted by an aggressive or potentially violent person and you are unable to safely remove yourself from the situation:

- Remain calm and make eye contact.
- Stop what you are doing and give the person your full attention.
- Ask others to remove themselves from the area if possible.
- Speak in a calm voice and create a relaxed sympathetic environment.
- Attempt to build trust, be open and honest.
- Let the person speak and listen attentively.
- Ask for specific examples of what the person is saying.
- Continue to ask questions that will provide the person with an opportunity to share their grievances.
- Avoid challenging body language such as placing your hands on your hips, moving toward the person, or staring directly at them. If seated, remain in your chair and do not turn your back on the individual.
- Describe the consequences of any violent behavior.
- Do not physically touch an outraged person, or try to force them to leave.
- Move away from any object that could be used as a weapon.
- Calmly ask the person to place any weapons in a neutral location while you continue to talk to them.
- Never attempt to disarm or accept a weapon from a violent person.

## **F. ACTIVE SHOOTER**

**Get Out:** If a person appears willing to use a firearm on campus, adjacent to campus, or enters a university building with a firearm:

1. Exit the building immediately, if possible.
2. Mobility impaired individuals should relocate to a secure or hidden location if unable to exit the building.
3. Notify others to exit the building and find shelter elsewhere
4. Call **9-1-1** and relay the following information:
  - Your name and location
  - Location of the incident and number of shooters
  - Identity and description of the shooter(s)
  - Type of firearm(s) used
  - Number and location of victims and their injuries

**Hide Out:** If you can't safely exit the building or if the shooter is nearby:

1. Proceed to the nearest room, and close and lock the door, if possible.
2. If you cannot lock the door:
  - Block the door with furniture or equipment.
  - Take cover behind equipment or furnishings.
3. Turn off the lights.

4. Cover door windows.
5. Remain quiet and act as if the room is empty, play dead if necessary. Make sure that cell phones are put on silent.
6. Follow instructions of law enforcement personnel. Keep your hands visible and raised. Avoid pointing and gestures which may be mistaken for holding or firing a weapon

**Take Out:** In the event that you are confronted by an individual with a weapon, and as a last resort, defend yourself and others by whatever means necessary and do not relent until the aggressor is incapacitated or law enforcement arrives.

## **G. VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE**

Post-incident response and evaluation are essential to an effective workplace violence prevention program. George Mason University provides comprehensive treatment for employees who are victimized personally or may be traumatized by witnessing a workplace violence incident. Victims of workplace violence may suffer a variety of consequences in addition to their physical injuries. These may include:

- Short- and long-term psychological trauma;
- Fear of returning to work;
- Changes in relationships with coworkers and family;
- Feelings of incompetence, guilt, powerlessness; and
- Fear of criticism by supervisors or managers.

If you are a victim of workplace violence, seek prompt medical treatment and consider counseling whenever an assault takes place, regardless of its severity. George Mason University provides internal and external services that can help you recover from, understand, or manage your experience. The following offices can provide additional information or services upon request:

- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): (703) 993-2380
- Human Resources Office: (703) 993-2600
- University Life: (703) 993-2884
- Department of Police and Public Safety: (703) 993-2810

## **H. SUPERVISORS AND FACULTY**

Supervisors and academic faculty are directed to contact the Department of Police and Public Safety (703) 993-2810 when aggressive or violent behavior is observed or if immediate assistance is required to prevent or interrupt aggressive behavior. If a criminal act (i.e., physical assault, sexual assault, or property damage) occurs, supervisors must contact the Department of Police and Public Safety. The following steps must be taken upon notification of a workplace violence incident:

- Contact the Department of Police and Public Safety if an employee or student's behavior is violent, criminal, or results in injury or property damage.

- If the incident is not violent and did not result in injuries, take steps to isolate the employee or student from other persons involved in the incident until further information is gathered or actions are taken.
- Record the incident date, time, location, name(s) of involved employees/students, and provide a brief narrative.
- Contact Human Resources (703) 993-2600 and request assistance.
- Inform the victim(s) of the support services available to them.
- When necessary, review and revise your office security procedures.