



Violence in the Workplace

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01. Introduction

The tragedy at Virginia Tech in 2007 heightened sensitivity regarding campus safety; especially since statistics indicate that college and university campuses are usually safe places to work, live and study. But just like accidents that occur during air travel (the safest form of travel), acts of violence that occur at schools are sensationalized and cause great concern.

Although school homicides are rare, the threat of homicide or violence of any kind cannot be dismissed. The FBI and Secret Service point out that in almost all of the incidents, the students communicated their intention to attack through threats and warnings to their peers.

Threats may be:

- Direct threats
- Veiled threats
- Conditional threats

02. Workplace Violence

A commonly accepted definition of workplace violence is any physical assault, threatening behavior or verbal abuse occurring in the work place.

Violent acts can include:

- Homicide
- Forcible sex offenses
- Kidnapping
- Assault
- Robbery
- Menacing
- Reckless endangerment
- Harassment
- Disorderly conduct
- Physical or verbal threats
- Vandalism of personal property

Since all of these acts are crimes we have the option to refer the matter to the Criminal Justice system provided the affected party is willing to make a formal police complaint.

03. Knowing the Warning Signs

Most cases of workplace violence don't just happen. The best way to identify potential violence is to recognize warning signs.

A potentially violent person:

- Is usually argumentative engaging in name calling, cursing, or abusive language
- Doesn't cooperate with others
- Has a problem with authority figures
- Frequently blames others for his or her problems
- Has few or no close friends
- Pays no attention to the feelings or rights of others
- Has been a victim of intimidation from others
- Dwells on perceived slights, rejections or mistreatment from others
- Displays marked changes in work patterns like tardiness or absenteeism
- Demonstrates extreme or bizarre behavior

- Frequently appears depressed (link between suicide and homicide)
- Has financial or relationship problems
- Is faced with academic failure and threat of expulsion (in the seven colleges and university shootings since 1966, six involved academic failure or academic issues)
- Has a history of violence
- Has brought a weapon or threatened to bring a weapon to school

***Note** - none of the above signs alone is sufficient for predicting aggression or violence nor do all the above signs need to be exhibited. The university has protocols in place to deal with potential or actual cases of workplace violence. These protocols are being reviewed and will be expanded to include a threat assessment policy.

04. Protocols

There are several protocols that help deal with Violence in the Work Place. These are:

- **How to Handle Emotional Distress** – which suggests the need for referral to the Counseling Services and how to make the referral
- **Psychological Emergencies** (nonresidential facilities) – how to report
- **Violence and Criminal Behavior on Campus** – advises on how to properly report threatening, violent or criminal behavior to the Safety and Security department and lists self-protective tips such as security escorts.

It is crucial that any act of violence, verbal, written or physical be immediately reported to the Safety and Security Department. Additionally, employees are encouraged to report behavior that they reasonably believe poses a potential for workplace violence as defined above.

With regard to the **Family Information Right to Privacy Act (FIRPA) and the Health Information Right to Privacy Act (HIRPA)** those acts contain exceptions that essentially state that safety trumps confidentiality

Threats of violent acts should be taken seriously. **Keep in mind that most attacks are planned rather than impulsive; reporting behavioral problems can trigger intervention thus preventing the attack.**

05. Ways to Minimize the Threat of Violence

There are several ways to minimize the threat of violence, such as:

- Adopt a “Zero Tolerance” policy toward threats of violence and applicable to everyone on campus. This means that no threat of violent behavior will be ignored
- Screen and hire carefully (background checks, references etc.)
- Train managers and faculty on how to minimize emotions when threatening situations arise in the workplace and classrooms
- Teach staff and faculty how to identify potential signs of violence
- Maintain fair and caring termination procedures including counseling opportunities
- And again, the key is to be proactive, recognize and report early warning signs



06. Emergency Response at Pace University

If an Emergency occurs On Campus the existing Emergency Response Plan will be followed.

The initial response will include:

- The Emergency Response leader (senior member of the security staff) will respond to the scene to evaluate and stabilize, make critical decisions such as lockdown or evacuation
- Notifications will be made to 911 and the Crisis Management Team
- The Emergency Response leader will coordinate with responding emergency service personnel
- Emergency Communication Center will be activated on the affected campus or on alternate campuses

07. Contact Information

Please contact security anytime you anticipate an uncomfortable situation, we will provide a presence. Again if an incident occurs, it is imperative that a report be made with security, the key is to be proactive before the situation reaches a point of violence.

You can dial **777** from any Pace phone in the event of an emergency or press the security button on your Pace phone.

Safety & Security

- New York Campus: (212) 346-1800
- Pleasantville Campus: (914)773-3400
- Briarcliff Campus: (914) 923-2700
- White Plains Campus: (914) 422-411

University Health Care Unit

- Westchester – (914) 773-3760
- New York – (212) 346-1600

Counseling Center

- Westchester – (914) 773-3710
- New York – (212) 346-1526

08. Additional Resources

Also see the policy and procedure for "[Violence or Criminal Behavior on Campus](#)" and "[Community Response Guidelines for an Active Shooter Incident](#)".