


POLICY NUMBER: HR2024-003	POLICY TITLE: Workplace Violence Prevention Plan (WVPP)	
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RELATED DOCUMENTS: Merit System Rules	RELATED POLICIES: Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP) Harassment Policy Abusive Conduct Policy	

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SECTION I – PURPOSE

The purpose of the Workplace Violence Prevention Plan (WVPP) is to have a clearly understood, accessible, and actionable policy to respond quickly to episodes of workplace violence. The WVPP complements the existing County of Humboldt Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP), Abusive Conduct Policy, and Harassment Policy by laying out more specifically the steps to identify, report, track, and analyze violent incidents to reduce the likelihood of re-occurrence.

BACKGROUND-CALIFORNIA SENATE BILL 553

California Senate Bill 553 (SB 553) requires California workplaces to have a policy in place to address the rising episodes of violence occurring in the workplace. SB 553 has multiple requirements of an employer which can be broadly grouped into two categories: pre-violent incident activities and post-violent incident activities. The details of both categories are presented in greater detail in the following WVPP.

SECTION II – RESPONSIBILITY AND APPLICABILITY

This WVPP is intended to reduce violent incidents at all County of Humboldt work sites. Ultimately, this will be achieved through improved employee awareness, violent incident identification and reporting, tracking of violent incidents, and corrective actions when hazards are recognized. The Director of Human Resources and Risk Manager have the authority and responsibility for implementing the provisions of the WVPP for the County of Humboldt.

SECTION III – DEFINITIONS

Although there are different definitions and/or interpretations of "violence," for purposes of reporting and analyzing events, the Workplace Violence definitions as set forth in SB 553 are included below and are used consistently throughout training and reporting materials.

Credible Threat: A knowing and willful statement or course of conduct that would place a reasonable person in fear for their safety, or the safety of their immediate family.

Direct Threat: A significant risk of substantial harm to the health or safety of self or others that cannot be eliminated or reduced through reasonable accommodation.

Emergency: Unanticipated circumstances that can be life threatening or pose a risk of significant injuries to employees or other persons.

Employee: Any person employed at the County, whether probationary, permanent, at-will or by employment contract, including temporary agency staff or contractors working under the County's control or supervision. Unless otherwise indicated specifically or by context, Employee shall include any person who has been offered a position at the County but has not begun employment at the County.

Engineering Controls: An aspect of the built space or a device that removes a hazard from the workplace or creates a barrier between the employee and the hazard.

Log: The violent incident log required by LC section 6401.9.

Safety Coordinator: Designated employee responsible for assessing workplace safety, ensuring that the worksite complies with, and adheres to, Cal OSHA guidelines to reduce work-related injuries.

Serious Injury or Illness: Any injury or illness occurring in a place of employment or in connection with any employment that requires inpatient hospitalization for other than medical observation or diagnostic testing, or in which an employee suffers an amputation, the loss of an eye, or any serious degree of permanent disfigurement, but does not include any injury or illness or death caused by an accident on a public street or highway, unless the accident occurs in a construction zone.

Threat of Violence: Any verbal, written statement, or physical display, including, but not limited to, texts, electronic messages, social media messages, or other online posts, or any behavioral or physical conduct, that conveys an intent, or that is reasonably perceived to convey an intent, to cause physical harm or to place someone in fear of physical harm.

Workplace Violence: Any act of violence or threat of violence that occurs in a place of employment.

Workplace Violence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- The threat or use of physical force against an employee that results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in, injury, psychological trauma, or physical or emotional stress, regardless of whether the employee sustains an injury.
- An incident involving a threat or use of a firearm or other dangerous weapon, including the use of common objects as weapons, regardless of whether the employee sustains an injury.
- The following four workplace violence types:
 - **Type 1 violence:** Workplace violence committed by a person who has no legitimate business at the worksite and includes violent acts by anyone who

enters the workplace or approaches employees with the intent to commit a crime.

- **Type 2 violence:** Workplace violence directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, students, inmates, or visitors.
- **Type 3 violence:** Workplace violence against an employee by a present or former employee, supervisor, or manager.
- **Type 4 violence:** Workplace violence committed in the workplace by a person who does not work there but has or is known to have had a personal relationship with an employee.

Workplace violence does not include lawful acts of self-defense or defense of others.

Work practice controls: Procedures and rules which are used to effectively reduce workplace violence hazards.

SECTION IV – POLICY

As a part of the County's continuing commitment to workplace safety, the Board of Supervisors, department heads, elected officials, volunteers, and all other employees of the County of Humboldt, are committed to making every effort to ensure that an atmosphere free from actual or threatened violence against any employee or citizen served is established and maintained.

Any acts of violence or threatening conduct, whether directed against another employee of the county or an outside party will not be tolerated.

This conduct includes but is not limited to:

- Striking, punching, slapping or otherwise physically assaulting another person;
- Fighting or challenging another person to a fight, grabbing, pinching or touching another person in an unwanted fashion (whether sexually or otherwise);
- Bringing any firearm, knife or other weapon into/onto County owned or leased of property (not including law-enforcement personnel acting in their official capacity);
- Threatening or harming another person in any way, whether verbal, written or physical;
- Any intimidating behavior reasonably perceived as a threat, including, but not limited to, yelling, shouting, swearing in anger, throwing objects, or slamming doors.

Any employee found to have engaged in such unacceptable behavior will be appropriately disciplined pursuant to Merit System Rule X, up to and including termination from employment. In appropriate cases, the County will seek criminal prosecution or cooperation with law enforcement authorities.

No person shall be expected to tolerate violence or the threat of violence on the job. Any person who is the victim of any violent, threatening, or harassing conduct, or who observes such conduct, shall report the conduct to his or her immediate supervisor. That supervisor shall report this information to their department head and the Director of Human Resources as soon as reasonably possible.

Appropriate actions will be taken to prevent any further violent conduct or threat of violent conduct from occurring or being repeated.

SECTION V –WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PLAN

A. EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND COMMUNICATION

Education and Training

SB 553 requires all employees to complete an annual mandatory workplace violence training and instruction that is clear, understandable, and effective. A virtual training is available through the County of Humboldt’s Learning Management System for all county employees that includes an understanding of what a violent incident is, how to elevate for attention and help, and what the role of the supervisor is in completing a violent incident report. The county-wide training is meant to be a general overview and is not site-specific. Departments are expected to supplement the virtual training for all county employees with site and/or role specific training and education.

Communication

Beyond the initial and annual training for all employees on WVPP, departments are expected to have ongoing effective communication with employees related to the topic of workplace violence. This can include reinforcing a culture that encourages reporting of violence incidents without fear of retaliation, addressing employee concerns around violence, and any post-event investigations yielding corrective actions that could reduce violent incidents. The vehicle of communication can be in-person, or virtual, and can include staff meetings, newsletters, or staff bulletins. These communications also serve to bring timely updates to employees when changes in processes have been identified after a violent incident investigation to prevent future episodes.

B. WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PLAN

Employee Obligations

Each employee on County of Humboldt property is required to report incidents of threats or acts of physical violence.

In cases where the reporting individual is not a county employee, the report should be made to the appropriate law enforcement agency who has jurisdiction over the offense alleged to have been committed.

In cases where the reporting individual is a county employee, the report shall be made to the reporting individual's department head and Human Resources either in writing or verbally.

Reports of violence may be made anonymously.

Employees are responsible for:

- Their own behavior by interacting responsibly with fellow employees, supervisors, and clients;
- Being familiar with County of Humboldt policies and procedures regarding workplace violence;
- Promptly reporting actual and/or potential acts of violence to appropriate authorities;
- Cooperating fully in investigations/assessments of allegations of workplace violence;
- Being familiar with the service provided by the Employee Assistance Program;
- Informing appropriate personnel about restraining or protective court orders related to domestic situations so that assistance can be offered at the work site.

Managers and Supervisors are additionally responsible for:

- Informing employees of the County of Humboldt's workplace violence policies and procedures;
- Taking all reported incidents of workplace violence seriously;
- Informing the Human Resources Department of all acts of violence, threat, and similar disruptive behavior in a timely fashion and taking the necessary action(s);
- Providing feedback to employees regarding the outcome of their reports regarding violent or potentially violent incidents;
- Requesting, where appropriate, assistance from functional area expert(s);
- Being aware of situations that have the potential to produce violent behavior and promptly addressing them with all concerned parties;
- Assuring, where needed, that employees have time and opportunity to attend training. (e.g., conflict resolution, stress management, etc.).

Safety Coordinators are responsible for:

- Assisting, when appropriate, Department officials with threat assessment and

response activities;

- Assisting, when appropriate, in assessing the physical and social environment for potential negative and positive stressors (e.g., space, lighting, temperature, and noise level);
- Providing incident report data and communicate health and safety issues to Human Resources;
- Assisting in emergency preparedness activities.

Unions and their representatives are responsible for:

- Supporting the County of Humboldt Workplace Violence policies and procedures;
- Encouraging employees who show signs of stress to obtain assistance, such as that offered by the Employee Assistance Program;
- Advising employees of the procedures for reporting violent behavior as necessary.

C. COMPLIANCE

The County of Humboldt will ensure that all workplace violence policies and procedures are clearly communicated and understood by all employees and will enforce the rules fairly and uniformly.

All employees will follow all workplace violence directives, policies, and procedures, and assist in maintaining a safe work environment.

Our system to ensure that employees comply with the rules and maintain a secure work environment will include at a minimum:

- Inform employees of the provisions of our WVPP;
- Evaluate the security performance of all employees;
- Recognize employees who perform secure work practices;
- Provide training to employees whose security performance is deficient;
- Discipline employees for failure to comply with secure workplace practices.

The County of Humboldt ensures the following:

- Employees will not be threatened with adverse action or retaliated against in any way if they refuse to report to or leave a workplace or worksite because they have a reasonable belief that the workplace or worksite is unsafe;
- Employees will not be prevented from accessing their mobile or other communication devices to seek emergency assistance, assess the safety of a situation, or communicate with a person to verify their safety.

D. COMMUNICATION

We recognize that open, two-way communication between management and staff about

workplace security issues is essential to a safe and productive workplace. The following system of communication is designed to facilitate a continuous flow of workplace security information between management and staff in a form that is readily understandable by all employees, and consists of one or more of the following:

- New employee orientation including workplace security policies and procedures;
- Review of our WVPP;
- Workplace safety training programs;
- Regularly scheduled departmental workplace safety meetings;
- Effective communication between employees and supervisors about security and violence concerns, including translation where appropriate;
- Posted or distributed workplace safety information;
- A system for employees to anonymously inform management about workplace safety and violence concerns utilizing a suggestion box, interoffice mail, and website submissions;
- A system for employees to inform management about workplace security hazards or threats of violence without fear of reprisal or adverse action;
- Address safety issues at departmental safety meetings.

Annual or periodic inspections and reviews to identify and evaluate workplace security, safety, and violence hazards will be performed at all County locations.

Each location shall maintain and update an Emergency Action Plan that includes the following reporting, evacuating, or sheltering in place procedures:

- For emergencies call 9-1-1
- Reporting emergencies
- Reporting a crime (non-emergency)
- Elevator entrapment
- Civil disturbances and demonstrations
- Evacuation procedures
- Medical events
- Violent individual(s)
- Earthquake
- Assisting disabled persons
- Lost child
- Fire
- Hazardous materials
- Utility failure
- Active shooter
- Reporting a phone/bomb threat
- Receiving a phone/bomb threat
- Emergency phone list

E. INSPECTIONS

Annual or periodic inspections of safety and security hazards consist of identifying and evaluating workplace violence hazards and changes in employees' work practices. This may require assessment for more than one type of workplace violence. The following lists are options for assessments related to the building site being inspected and the business conducted in that location.

Inspections for Type I (Violence by Strangers) workplace security hazards include assessing:

- The exterior and interior of the workplace for its attractiveness to robbers;
- The need for security surveillance measures, such as mirrors and cameras;
- Adequate lighting outside of and within facilities;
- Signage notifying the public that limited cash is kept on the premises and that cameras are recording all activities;
- Procedures for employee response during a robbery or other criminal act, including policies prohibiting employees who are not security guards from confronting violent persons or persons committing a criminal act;
- Procedures for reporting suspicious persons or activities;
- Effective location and functioning of emergency buttons and alarms;
- Posting of emergency telephone numbers for law enforcement, fire, and medical services;
- Whether employees have access to a telephone with an outside line;
- The amount of cash on hand and use of time access safes for large bills;
- Whether employees have effective escape routes from the workplace;
- Whether doors to offices and rooms can be locked;
- Whether employees have a designated safe area where they can go to in an emergency.

Inspections for Type II (Violence by Customers/Clients) workplace security hazards include assessing:

- Access to and freedom of movement within the workplace;
- Adequacy of workplace security systems, such as door locks, entry codes, badge readers, security windows, physical barriers, and restraint systems;
- Frequency and severity of threatening or hostile situations that may lead to violent acts by persons who are service recipients of our establishment;
- Effectiveness of systems and procedures that warn others of a security danger or that summon assistance, e.g., alarms or panic buttons;
- The use of work practices such as the "buddy" system for specified emergency events;
- The availability of employee escape routes.

Inspections for Types III (Violence by Current or Past Co-employees) workplace security hazards include assessing:

- How well our establishment's anti-violence policy has been communicated to employees, supervisors, and managers;
- How well our establishment's management and employees communicate with each other;
- Our employees', supervisors', and managers' knowledge of the warning signs of potential workplace violence;
- Access to and freedom of movement within the workplace by non-employees, including recently discharged employees or persons with whom one of our employees is having a dispute;
- Frequency and severity of employees' reports of threats of physical or verbal abuse by managers, supervisors, or other employees;
- Any prior violent acts, threats of physical violence, verbal abuse, property damage, or other signs of strain or pressure in the workplace;
- Employee disciplinary and discharge procedures.

Periodic inspections and reviews are performed according to the following schedule:

1. When we initially established our WVPP
2. When new workplace security hazards are introduced into our workplace
3. When new, previously unidentified workplace security hazards are recognized
4. When workplace security incidents occur
5. When we hire and/or reassign permanent or intermittent employees to processes, operations, or tasks for which a workplace security evaluation has not yet been conducted
6. Whenever workplace security conditions warrant an inspection

F. WORKPLACE SECURITY INCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

Procedures for investigating workplace security incidents include the following:

1. Visit the incident scene as soon as possible
2. Interview threatened and injured employees and witnesses
3. Examine the workplace for factors associated with workplace security, including any previous reports of inappropriate behavior by the perpetrator
4. Determine the cause of the incident
5. Take corrective action to prevent the incident from reoccurring
6. Record the findings and corrective actions taken

The written incident report will include the date, time, location, description of the type of the event and circumstances leading up to it, as well as the identity of the persons involved.

G. WORKPLACE SECURITY HAZARD CORRECTIONS

Hazards that pose a higher risk for violence in our workplace will be corrected in a timely manner, based on the severity of the hazards (with the higher risk situations having higher priority).

Hazards will be corrected according to the following procedures:

1. When first observed or discovered;
2. If an imminent hazard exists that cannot be immediately abated without endangering employee(s) and/or property, all exposed employees will be removed from the situation except those necessary to correct the existing condition;
3. Necessary protections will be provided to employees who are correcting the hazardous conditions;
4. All corrective actions taken and the dates they are completed will be documented on the appropriate forms (Violent Incident Report, Violent Incident Analysis, and Incident Report Log).

The following lists are options that may be utilized to ensure employee and employee representatives participate in identifying, evaluating, and determining corrective measures to prevent workplace violence.

Corrective measures for Type I (Violence by Strangers) workplace security hazards include the following:

- Improve lighting around and at the workplace;
- Provide emergency buttons to employees and install emergency alarms at the workplace;
- Establish a safe room with a lockable door;
- Utilize surveillance measures, such as cameras and mirrors, to provide information as to what is going on outside and inside the workplace and to dissuade criminal activity;
- Procedures for reporting suspicious persons, activities, and packages;
- Post emergency telephone numbers for law enforcement, fire, and medical services
- Ensure employees have access to a telephone with an outside line;
- Post of signs notifying the public that limited cash is kept on the premises and that cameras are monitoring the facility;
- Limit the amount of cash on hand and use time access safes for large bills;
- Employee, supervisor, and management training on emergency action procedures.

Corrective measures for Type II (Violence by Customers/Clients) workplace security hazards include the following:

- Control access to the workplace and freedom of movement within it that is consistent with business necessity;
- Ensure the adequacy of workplace security systems, such as door locks, security windows, physical barriers, and restraint systems;
- Provide employee training on recognizing and handling threatening or hostile situations that may lead to violent acts by persons who are service recipients of our establishment;

- Install effective systems to warn others of a security danger or to summon assistance, e.g., alarms or panic buttons;
- Provide procedures for a "buddy" system for specified emergency events;
- Ensure adequate employee escape routes.

Corrective measures for Types III (Violence by Current or Past Co-employees) workplace security hazards include the following:

- Effectively communicate our establishment's anti-violence policy to all employees, supervisors, and managers;
- Improve county's employee-supervisor-management relations and communication channels;
- Increase awareness by employees, supervisors, and managers of the warning signs of potential workplace violence;
- Control access to and freedom of movement within the workplace by non-employees, including recently discharged employees or persons with whom one of the employees is having a dispute;
- Provide counseling to employees, supervisors, and managers who exhibit behavior that represents strain or pressure which may lead to physical or verbal abuse of co-employees;
- Ensure that all reports of violent acts, threats of physical violence, verbal abuse, property damage, or other signs of strain or pressure in the workplace are handled effectively by management and that the person making the report is not subject to retaliation by the person making the threat;
- Ensure that employee disciplinary and discharge procedures address the potential for workplace violence.

H. TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

The County of Humboldt provides the following workplace safety and security policies and training topics to our employees:

- Injury and Illness Prevention Program
- Covid-19 Prevention Plan
- Emergency Action Plan
- Injury Reporting
- Active Shooter
- Types of Violence at the Workplace
- Earthquake Preparedness
- Abusive Conduct Policy
- Harassment Policy
- Cyber Security Training
- Information Systems Acceptable Use Policy
- Telework Policy

All employees will receive training and instruction on general and job-specific safe workplace security practices. Training on risk factors associated with workplace violence and proper handling of emergency situations will be provided to employees to minimize the risks of violent incidents occurring in the workplace.

Training and instruction will be provided to all employees upon hiring and annually thereafter. Additional training will be provided when new or unrecognized workplace safety and/or security hazards are identified.

Workplace Violence Prevention training and instruction shall at a minimum include:

- The four types of workplace violence as defined in SSB 553;
- Explanation of the WVPP for Workplace Safety and Security, including how to report any violent acts or threats of violence;
- How to obtain a copy of the WVPP at no cost;
- How to participate in development and implementation of the WVPP;
- Violent Incident Log recordkeeping, including how to obtain copies pertaining to hazard identification, evaluation, correction, and training records;
- Opportunities available to County of Humboldt employees for interactive questions and answers with a person knowledgeable about the WVPP;
- Workplace safety and security hazards, including the risk factors associated with the types of workplace violence;
- Strategies to prevent workplace violence, including procedures for reporting workplace safety and security hazards or threats;
- Methods for defusing hostile or threatening situations;
- How to recognize alerts, alarms, or other warnings about emergency conditions, how to use identified evacuation routes or locations for sheltering, and measures to summon others for assistance;
- How to properly notify security and law enforcement authorities when a criminal act may have occurred without fear of reprisal;
- Emergency medical care provided in the event of any violent act upon an employee;
- Post-event trauma counseling for employees desiring such assistance.

In addition, employees will be provided specific instructions regarding workplace safety and security hazards unique to their job assignment, to the extent that such information was not already covered in other training.

Employee Access to the WVPP

County of Humboldt employees, or their designated representatives, have the right to examine and receive a copy of the WVPP. This will be accomplished by the County of Humboldt providing unobstructed access through the public and employee facing County

of Humboldt Internet Sites, which allows an employee to review and print the current version of the WVPP.

I. RECORDKEEPING

The following steps have been taken to implement and maintain the WVPP:

1. Records of workplace security hazard assessment inspections, including the person(s) conducting the inspection, the workplace security concerns that have been identified and the action taken to correct the identified concerns, are recorded on the Humboldt County Safety Inspection Report;
2. Documentation of Workplace Violence Prevention training for each employee, including the employee's name or other identifier, training dates, type(s) of training, and training providers are recorded on the County of Humboldt Electronic Learning Management System;
3. Inspection records and training documentation will be maintained as required by law.

Annual Review of the WVPP

The County of Humboldt has established and implemented a system to review the effectiveness of the WVPP at least annually in conjunction with employees regarding the employees' respective work areas, services, and operations. The review includes:

- Sufficiency of security systems, including alarms, emergency response, and security personnel availability (if applicable);
- Job design, equipment, and facilities to ensure they are optimized to prevent workplace violence incidents;
- Security risks are being properly identified, evaluated, and corrected.

The WVPP is to be updated whenever deficiencies are found during the review and employees will be trained on any changes.

J. EMPLOYER REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

As required by [California Code of Regulations \(CCR\), Title 8, Section 342\(a\). Reporting Work-Connected Fatalities and Serious Injuries](#), County of Humboldt will immediately report to Cal/OSHA any serious injury or illness (as defined by [CCR, Title 8, Section 330\(h\)](#)), or death (including any due to Workplace Violence) of an employee occurring in a place of employment or in connection with any employment.

Board Approved:

Pursuant to Board Order D-11 Dated July 2, 2024