

CDC POLICY GUIDE 94-1

REFERENCE POINTS:

Employee Assistance Programs

Office of Program Support, Physical Security Activity

August 1, 1994

**CDC/ATSDR POLICY
ON
PREVENTING VIOLENCE AND THREATENING BEHAVIOR IN THE FEDERAL WORKPLACE**

SECTIONS

Policy

Background

Preventive Measures

Implementation: Procedures for Reporting and Assessing Violence and Threatening Behavior in the Workplace

POLICY

Violence and threatening behavior* in the Federal workplace are prohibited. Such conduct at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will not be tolerated.**

BACKGROUND

Increasingly, violence in the workplace is recognized as a problem that must be dealt with by employers. According to "Fear and Violence in the Workplace," published in 1993 by Northwestern National Life Insurance Company, 15 percent of workers surveyed said they had been physically attacked at some time in their working life. While CDC is not a high-risk environment, this agency is not immune. In addition, many of our employees work in field assignments and situations where the risks may be higher than in office settings. As the nation's health prevention agency responsible for developing measures to prevent violence, CDC has developed a policy for its own employees to prevent violent incidents from occurring at CDC.

** Threatening behavior includes any behavior that is harassing, provoking, or unsafe which by its very nature could be interpreted by a reasonable person as an **intent** to cause physical harm to another individual.*

*** All references to CDC also apply to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).*

REFERENCE POINTS:

Employee Assistance Programs
Office of Program Support, Physical Security Activity
August 1, 1994

PREVENTIVE MEASURES**I. WEAPONS**

CDC is a Federal facility; therefore, possession or use of firearms and other dangerous weapons on the property (owned or leased, including grounds and buildings) of the facility is illegal. Federal law states in part:

"Whoever knowingly possesses or causes to be present a firearm or other dangerous weapon in a Federal facility, or attempts to do so, shall be imprisoned not more than 1 year or fined in accordance with Title 18, or both." (*Certain exceptions apply 18 U.S.C. Section 930(c).*)

"Whoever, with intent that a firearm or other dangerous weapon be used in the commission of a crime, knowingly possesses or causes to be present such firearm or dangerous weapon, in a Federal facility, or attempts to do so, shall be imprisoned not more than five years, or fined in accordance with Title 18, or both."

See individual employee responsibilities (Pages 4-5).

II. SECURITY

CDC uses a variety of security measures to restrict access to agency facilities. These include:

- o identification badges and personal recognition;
- o individually coded card keys (and PIN numbers) for access to buildings and areas within the buildings according to individual needs;
- o lock and key system (Grand Master, Submaster, individual keys);
- o guard force and receptionist assistance in registering and directing visitors; and
- o guard force questioning unbadged or suspicious individuals, patrolling grounds and facilities, and responding to emergencies.

REFERENCE POINTS:

Employee Assistance Programs
Office of Program Support, Physical Security Activity
August 1, 1994

Employees should notify the local facility security staff or their administrative officer of unbadged, suspicious, or unauthorized individuals on CDC property (leased or owned).

Law enforcement assistance is available through local police departments and through the Federal Protective Service (FPS). The FPS includes a General Services Administration (GSA) Police Force with federal arrest authority. Additionally, FPS personnel may be posted on site if the situation dictates.

See Attachment A for local emergency numbers and facility contacts and numbers.

III. WORKPLACE EDUCATION, COUNSELING, AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Education is an important component of the CDC/ATSDR program to prevent violence and threats in the workplace. The Training and Career Development Branch offers to each member of the work force courses in conflict resolution and stress management and physical safety at work. (Information on all courses is available electronically through CDC IS.) Supervisors are expected to develop and improve their skills in these areas as well as employee relations, alternative dispute resolution, influencing/negotiating, oral and written communication, problem solving and interpersonal skills. In Atlanta, the Employee Assistance and Lifestyle Programs offer a series of special seminars which expand on stress management courses and are designed to meet special needs. Field employees receive specific training in dealing with threatening situations.

Supervisors should be sensitive to stress generated by the workplace, and consider changes that could alleviate work-related stress. They should also encourage employees showing signs of stress to attend appropriate courses or to contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (available through all sites). If employees see signs of stress in their supervisors, they are encouraged to contact EAP where all information is treated confidentially or to discuss this directly with the supervisor or talk to others in the supervisory chain. Any employee may report any situation anonymously by leaving a message on the Employee Assistance Program/Atlanta recording device at (404) 639-2830.

REFERENCE POINTS:

Employee Assistance Programs
Office of Program Support, Physical Security Activity
August 1, 1994

IMPLEMENTATION: PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND
ASSESSING VIOLENCE AND THREATENING BEHAVIOR IN THE WORKPLACE

I. Purpose. This procedure outlines an orderly process for handling violence and threatening behavior in the workplace. Threatening behavior includes any behavior that is harassing, provoking, or unsafe which by its very nature could be interpreted by a reasonable person as an **intent** to cause physical harm to another individual. Threatening behavior may or may not include the actual act of physical force, with or without a weapon, toward another individual. Any behavior or comment that creates a threatening work environment is a violation of CDC/ATSDR's Policy on Preventing Violence and Threatening Behavior in the Federal Workplace.

Ignoring an employee who exhibits threatening behavior is the worst possible action to take. Ignoring such behavior only reinforces the behavior and sends a message to the employee that such behavior is acceptable. Addressing problems early is the best way to prevent threatening situations and create a safe work environment for all employees.

II. Roles and Responsibilities

A. Employees. Each member of the work force:

1. is accountable for his/her own behavior;
2. is expected to interact responsibly with fellow employees and supervisors; and
3. should report any threatening situation, unauthorized individuals in the workplace, or threats from nonemployees.

B. Immediate (First-line) Supervisor. The immediate supervisor of the threatening employee is responsible for:

1. arranging for the safety of subordinates and for the care of those affected, and maintaining the continuity of the agency's mission;
2. communicating information regarding the incident or behavior to his/her immediate supervisor and upper management; and

REFERENCE POINTS:

Employee Assistance Programs
Office of Program Support, Physical Security Activity
August 1, 1994

3. contacting the appropriate specialists: employee assistance counselors or employee relations specialists.

C. Second-line and Upper Management.

1. During a threatening situation, the most important role of management above the first-line supervisor is to provide support to the supervisor dealing directly with the threatening employee. Support may include: meeting with the first-line supervisor while he/she obtains statements from witnesses and the threatening employee; arranging for and/or participating in counseling and/or disciplinary sessions of employees; temporarily relieving supervisor of regular duties while dealing with threatening situation, etc. This list is not all-inclusive.

2. At all times, management has the responsibility to identify and address underlying workplace situations which may give rise to stress and/or violence.

D. Employee Relations Specialists. The Employee Relations Specialist consults and advises management throughout the process. Additional responsibilities include: assessing and analyzing evidence, advising management on appropriate action, preparing disciplinary/adverse action letters, ensuring that evidence exists to support action taken, and informing the generalist or relevant personnel servicing team of pending action.

E. Employee Assistance Program. The EAP Counselors, whether on site or available for field employees under the CDC contract, are available to assess the threatening employee and make appropriate referrals when necessary, provide support and consultation to victims and supervisors, and participate in debriefing sessions regarding the incident.

REFERENCE POINTS:

Employee Assistance Programs
Office of Program Support, Physical Security Activity
August 1, 1994

F. Crisis Response Team (CRT). The CRT includes representatives from Security, EAP, Employee Relations, Office of General Counsel, Office of Program Support, and the Union (when bargaining unit employees are involved or affected). Additional expertise will be solicited as needed. The CRT will review application of this policy. In all proceedings the CRT will comply with laws protecting the confidentiality of individuals.

III. Immediate Action When Incident Occurs

A. Any member of the work force observing violent or threatening behavior is expected to first secure his/her own safety and then:

1. Emergency

a. **Call 911 or the local emergency number** if the situation requires the immediate assistance of medical personnel and/or law enforcement. Be prepared to provide a description of the violent or threatening individual and the exact location of the person who will meet the emergency team.

b. Follow the steps under 2.a. below.

2. Non-emergency

a. Notify their supervisor. If the threatening employee is their supervisor, the employee should notify someone else in the supervisory chain or call EAP. Reporting of incidents will not be the basis for adverse action.

b. Contact the security office or the health unit of the facility in nonemergency situations.

3. Employees who are threatened, assaulted, or attacked while on official duty in the field (not at a federal installation) should report such incidents to local law enforcement authorities and to the CDC Physical Security Activity, so that the proper federal authorities can investigate such incidents.

REFERENCE POINTS:

Employee Assistance Programs
Office of Program Support, Physical Security Activity
August 1, 1994

B. The supervisor who received the report will notify the supervisor of the threatening employee, if he/she is a CDC employee. If the threatening individual is not a CDC employee, the supervisor of the threatened employee will:

1. notify his/her chain of command;
2. notify the Employee Assistance Program/Atlanta at (404) 639-2830.

C. Supervisor of a threatening employee will:

1. notify his/her chain of command;
2. notify the Employee Assistance Program (see Attachment A);
3. notify the Employee Relations Specialist.

D. Crisis Response Team (CRT).

1. The CRT will be convened by the EAP counselor and/or ER Specialist when they receive a report of threatening behavior. The purpose of this initial meeting is to ensure compliance with this policy and procedure by evaluating the incident and if necessary, making recommendations to management regarding compliance.

2. The CRT may convene on an ad hoc basis for a specifically identified purpose.

IV. Post-Incident Procedures

A. After the incident has been investigated and resolved, the CRT will meet to review the incident to determine whether preventive measures should be changed or added for responding to future incidents.

B. EAP counselors will be available to provide post-trauma/critical incident stress debriefings for employees affected by the incident.

CDC POLICY GUIDE 94-1

REFERENCE POINTS:

Employee Assistance Programs
Office of Program Support, Physical Security Activity
August 1, 1994

ATTACHMENT A
(Updated 10/25/96)

	EAP	Facility Security or Administration	Local Emergency
Atlanta Area	404-639-2830 770-488-7825	404-639-3173	911
Anchorage	800-222-0364	907-562-4227	911
Cincinnati	800-222-0364	513-841-4254 (Hamilton) 513-533-8406 (Taft)	911 911
Fort Collins	800-222-0364	303-221-6426	911
Hyattsville	301-443-HELP	301-436-8842 301-436-7003	911 911
Morgantown	304-293-4000	304-291-4950	911
Pittsburgh	412-344-4327 412-224-4025 800-825-5327	412-892-6816	11
RTP	800-336-3853	919-541-4440	911
San Juan	800-222-0364	911	911
Spokane	800-523-5668	509-326-2400	911
Other field locations	800-222-0364	---	911 (or local emergency number)

Employee Relations	770-488-1765
Alternative Dispute Resolution	404-639-1260
Domestic Violence National Tollfree Hotline	1-800-799-SAFE (7233)