



**POLICY TITLE:**                   **Violence in the Workplace**

**POLICY NO.:**                   **PR-21**

---

**I.     GENERAL POLICY**

All employees have the right to work in an environment free from threats, intimidation, and violence. Such behavior, in any form, will not be tolerated in the County Workplace.

**II.    PURPOSE**

This Policy describes unacceptable behavior and establishes guidelines for reporting, investigating, and addressing situations in the Workplace which involve threatening acts, intimidation, or violence.

**III.   SCOPE**

This Policy applies to all Employees as defined herein.

**IV.   DEFINITIONS**

The following terms as used in this Policy are defined as follows:

- A.    “Employee” or “Employees” means elected and appointed officials, department heads, division directors, all full- and part-time employees, board and commission members, and unpaid volunteers.
- B.    “Law Enforcement Personnel” are as defined in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 27, Section 36F, as from time to time amended.
- C.    “Person” and “Persons” include one or more individuals, associations, corporations, partnerships, or unincorporated associations.
- D.    “Threat” means the implication or expression of intent to inflict physical harm or actions that a reasonable person would interpret as a threat to physical safety or property.
- E.    “Threaten” means to menace or to express, through oral, written, or any other means, an intention to inflict pain, injury, or harm upon a person or thing.
- F.    “Violence” and “Violent Act” mean physical force or verbal abuse exerted for the purpose of intimidation or for the purpose of harming, damaging, or causing injury to persons or property.

- G. “Weapon” means guns, knives, or any other instruments which can be used to cause injury in an unlawful manner.
- H. “Workplace” means any location, either permanent or temporary, where an employee performs any work-related duty. This includes, but is not limited to, the buildings and the surrounding perimeters, including the parking lots, field locations, alternate work locations, and travel to and from work assignments.

#### **IV. PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES**

- A. Employees are prohibited from engaging in the following activities during the course of employment with the County:
  - 1. Threatening or committing any Violent Act against another Person or Employee in the Workplace;
  - 2. Intentionally and/or maliciously damaging or destroying the property of another person or Employee;
  - 3. Bringing Weapons of any kind onto County property without written permission from both the County Administrator and the County Attorney, except that Law Enforcement Personnel may possess legally authorized Weapons.

#### **V. PROCEDURE**

- A. Managing the Violent Situation
  - 1. Contacting Law Enforcement Personnel
    - a. Employees are encouraged to seek the immediate assistance of Law Enforcement Personnel when confronted with situations which are Violent, or which have the potential of becoming Violent. If a telephone can be safely accessed, an employee should dial “9-1-1,” should describe the situation and location where the incident is occurring, and, if possible, should maintain telephone contact with the “9-1-1” dispatcher until the police arrive, or until the “9-1-1” dispatcher indicates the call may be ended.
  - 2. Other Actions
    - a. When confronted by a verbally abusive Person or Persons, an Employee should undertake the following actions if able to do so safely:

- i. Attempt to restore calm by courteously asking the Person or Persons to cease their verbally abusive actions;
  - ii. Notify a supervisory Employee of the situation as soon as possible; and
  - iii. Request the assistance and aid of fellow Employees.
- b. When confronted by a Person or Persons Threatening bodily harm, an Employee should undertake the following actions if able to do so safely:
  - i. Leave the presence of the Threatening Person;
  - ii. Notify a supervisory Employee of the situation as soon as possible; or
  - iii. Contact law enforcement personnel if necessary.
- c. When an Employee observes a Person, other than Law Enforcement Personnel, possessing a Weapon while on County property, an Employee should immediately call Law Enforcement Personnel.

C. Reporting the Violent or Threatening Act or Situation

1. An Employee who has witnessed a Violent Act or Threat of Violence in a County Workplace, or who has knowledge of facts causing the Employee to reasonably believe a Violent situation is present or is Threatened in the County Workplace, shall immediately report the act or situation to:
  - a. His or her immediate supervisor;
  - b. His or her department head or division director; or
  - c. The County Attorney.
2. A supervisor who has witnessed a Violent Act or Threat of Violence in a County Workplace, who has knowledge of facts reasonably causing him or her to believe a Violent situation is present or is Threatened in a County Workplace, or who has received a report from an Employee that a Violent Act or Threat occurred or exists in a County Workplace, shall immediately report the act or situation to:

- a. The department head or division director; or
  - b. The County Attorney.
3. After receiving a report that a Violent Act or Threat of Violence has occurred, or that a Violent situation or Threat occurred or exists in a County Workplace, the department head or division director and the County Attorney shall immediately report the matter to the County Administrator and the Director of Health and Human Services, orally and in writing.
  4. In making reports under this policy, an employee shall provide as much factual information and detail as possible and shall reduce their report to writing.
- D. Investigation of Violent or Threatening Acts of Situations
1. To the extent practicable, appropriate, and required by applicable law, confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigatory process.
  2. The Director of Health and Human Services, with the assistance of the County Attorney or other legal counsel or other appropriate management employees, will conduct any investigations under this Policy unless the County Administrator determines otherwise.
  3. All Employees have a duty to cooperate in any investigation conducted under this Policy.

## **VI. DISCIPLINE**

### **A. Discipline for Employees Engaging in Prohibited Conduct**

An employee who has engaged in prohibited conduct under this Policy will be disciplined. Appropriate discipline will be determined by the County Administrator after consultation with the Employee's department head or division director, the Director of Health and Human Services, and the County Attorney, and may include reprimand, demotion, suspension without pay, and/or recommendation for termination.

### **B. Discipline for Other Violations of this Policy**

An Employee who fails to report Violent or Threatening Acts or situations as required by this Policy, or who fails to cooperate with investigations

conducted under this Policy, will be disciplined. Appropriate discipline will be determined by the County Administrator after consultation with the Employee's department head or division director, the Director of Health and Human Services, and the County Attorney, and may include reprimand, demotion, suspension without pay, and/or recommendation for termination.

## **VII. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

- A. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to all County Employees and includes counseling and referral services. Employees should use the services of the EAP to prevent and deal with Violent Acts and situations and Threats of Violence occurring in the Workplace.<sup>1</sup>
- B. Recommendations and suggestions from Employees for improving security and reducing the risk of Violence and Threats in the Workplace are encouraged and should be made in writing to the Employee's department head or division director, the Director of Health and Human Services, the County's Safety Administrator, or the County's Safety Committee.
- C. Because the County does not tolerate Threats, intimidation or Violence in its Workplaces, the County will, to the extent practicable, appropriate, and permitted by law, investigate any incident involving a non-employee and will take any action necessary to remove Threats posed by non-employees. The County encourages the reporting of all incidents covered by the terms of this Policy, regardless of the offender's identity, in accordance with the procedures established in this Policy.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Policy No. EB-14 Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for information on available services.

