

ULSTER COUNTY PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

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ULSTER COUNTY WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION POLICY

The Public Employer Workplace Violence Prevention Act as set forth in Section 27-b of the New York Labor Law and Code Rule 800.6 (12 NYCRR § 800.6) requires public employers to develop and implement programs to prevent and minimize workplace violence. Ulster County is committed to providing a safe workplace for all employees. To ensure a safe workplace and to reduce the risk of violence, all employees should review and understand all provisions of this workplace violence prevention policy.

Prohibited Conduct

Ulster County does not tolerate any type of workplace violence committed by or against employees. Employees and non-employees are prohibited from making threats or engaging in violent activities. This list of behaviors, while not inclusive, provides examples of conduct that is prohibited.

- Causing physical injury to another person;
- Making threatening remarks;
- Aggressive or hostile behavior that creates a reasonable fear of injury to another person or subjects another individual to emotional distress;
- Intentionally damaging employer property or property of another employee;
- Committing acts motivated by, or related to, workplace harassment or domestic violence.

Employment Situations at Higher Risk of Violence

While workplace violence can occur in any workplace setting, some employment situations pose a greater risk than others, including:

- Duties that involve the exchange of money;
- Delivery of passengers, goods or services;
- Duties that involve mobile work assignments;
- Working with unstable or volatile persons in health care, social service, or criminal justice settings;
- Working alone or in small numbers;
- Working late at night or during early morning hours;
- Working in high crime areas;
- Duties that involve guarding valuable property or possessions; or
- Working in community-based settings.

Reporting Procedures

Any potentially dangerous situations must be reported immediately to a supervisor, department head, security officer or the Personnel Department. Reports can be made anonymously and all reported incidents will be investigated. Reports or incidents warranting confidentiality will be handled appropriately and information will be disclosed to others only on a need-to-know basis. All parties involved in a situation will be counseled and the results of investigations will be discussed with them. Ulster County will actively intervene at any indication of a possibly hostile or violent situation.

Risk Reduction Measures

Hiring: Individual hiring agencies will take reasonable measures to review candidates' backgrounds to reduce the risk of hiring individuals with a history of violent behavior.

Safety: The Ulster County Sheriff's Department, along with an employee representative designated by each of the County's bargaining units, will conduct regular inspections of the worksites to evaluate and determine any vulnerabilities to workplace violence or hazards. Corrective action will be taken to reduce all risks.

Training and Information: This policy statement will be distributed to all existing employees, will be included in new employee orientation, and will be publicized in internal employee publications. Training on the requirements of the NYS Workplace Violence Prevention Law, risk factors and prevention measures will take place at the time of job assignment and annually, thereafter.

Individual Situations: While Ulster County does not expect employees to be skilled at identifying potentially dangerous persons, employees are expected to exercise good judgment and to inform their supervisor, department head, security officer or the Personnel Department if any employee or non-employee exhibits behavior which could be a sign of a potentially dangerous situation. Such behavior includes:

- Displaying overt signs of extreme stress, resentment, hostility, or anger;
- Making threatening remarks;
- Sudden or significant deterioration of performance; or
- Displaying irrational or inappropriate behavior.

Employees at Risk: The Personnel Department, along with an employee representative designated by each of the County's bargaining units, will identify and maintain a list of employees who have been determined to be at risk for becoming victims of violence because they are subject to harassment, violence, or threats from a non-employee. The Personnel Department, in collaboration with the Sheriff's Department and an employee representative designated by each of the County's bargaining units, will design a plan with at-risk employees to prepare for any possible emergency situations.

Dangerous/Emergency Situations

Employees who confront or encounter an armed or dangerous person should not attempt to challenge or disarm the individual. Employees should remain calm, make constant eye contact and talk to the individual. If a supervisor can be safely notified of the need for assistance without endangering the safety of the employee or others, such notice should be given. Otherwise, cooperate and follow the instructions given.

Enforcement

Threats, threatening conduct, or any other acts of aggression or violence in the workplace will not be tolerated. Any employee determined to have committed such acts will be subject to disciplinary action pursuant to his or her respective collective bargaining agreement. Non-employees engaged in violent acts on the employer's premises will be reported to the proper authorities and fully prosecuted.

How to Obtain Post Incident Crisis Counseling

Ulster County Sheriff's Office Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is available upon request to assist any Ulster County employee experiencing stress as a result of their exposure to a threat or other traumatic workplace incident. The primary objective of the CISM team is to help ensure employee wellness. The team may be accessed by contacting the Sheriff's Office at (845) 340-3640.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is also available to Ulster County employees as a part of the Ulster County benefit package. EAP is a free, confidential service offering short-term assistance in dealing with problems that may become a part of many of our lives at one time or another such as: job pressures, stress, anxiety, grief, relationship/marital problems, depression, parenting issues and substance abuse. EAP may be accessed by calling (845) 338-5600.

Ulster County Crime Victims Assistance Program is specifically designed for recognizing the special needs, concerns and problems associated with being a victim of crime. Any Ulster resident who has been the innocent victim of a crime (past or present) can seek services. Assistance is available whether or not you choose to report the crime to the police. The program offers a 24 hour confidential crisis hotline for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Hotline # (845) 340-3442. Crime Victims is located at 1 Pearl Street, Kingston and the phone number is (845) 340-3443.

Plan Development and Review

This policy statement was developed by the Personnel Department in collaboration with an employee representative designated by each of the County's bargaining units. The plan will be reviewed by the parties at least annually, or immediately following the occurrence of a workplace violence incident and, if necessary, updated within a reasonable period of time after such review is completed.

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Ulster County Website: ulstercountyny.gov