



Department of Human Resources

Workplace Violence Prevention Guide

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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Workplace Violence Prevention Guide is a resource guide for managers, supervisors, human resources (HR) professionals and employees. It provides guidance on preventing, intervening, and responding to threats, assaults, or other forms of violence in the workplace. Used in conjunction with the King County [Workplace Violence Prevention](#) and [Domestic Violence in the Workplace](#) policies, this guide contains detailed information and recommended steps that can be used in the management of threats, assaults, and other incidents of violence in the workplace.

Many county employees have roles that interact directly with the public. On occasion county employees may encounter individuals who behave in an intimidating, threatening or dangerous manner. When a threat, assault, or incident of workplace violence occurs, managers, supervisors, and human resource professionals will need to be prepared to respond quickly and appropriately.

APPLICABLE KING COUNTY POLICIES

[Workplace Violence Prevention Policy](#)

King County Policy Number: 2021-0008

Issue Date: 01/12/2021; Revision Date: 05/01/2024

[Domestic Violence in the Workplace Policy](#)

King County Policy Number: 2021-0016

Issue Date: 09/28/2020; Revision Date: 10/12/2021

Potential Warning Signs:

Learn to Identify the Potential for Violence

Employees and other individuals in the workplace may exhibit warning signs that can indicate the potential for violence. Warning signs may precede, predict, or contribute to an act of violence. Keep in mind that warning signs only indicate potential for violence, not certainty. Even though someone may exhibit some warning signs, they may never act out violently. In contrast, a person may act violently without any detectable warning signs.

The list of warning signs below is not intended to identify specific individuals. If any individual deviates from baseline behavior and begins to exhibit some of these warning signs, managers and supervisors should take notice and take steps to address concerns. Steps may include contacting law enforcement to conduct a welfare check, referrals to EAP, placing an employee on Paid Administrative Leave (PAL), or other routine corrective action measures.

Warning signs that a person may become violent include, but are not limited to:

- Displaying intimidating, belligerent, harassing, bullying or other inappropriate and aggressive behaviors.
- Numerous conflicts with supervisors and other employees.
- A history of violence and interpersonal conflict including having been victim to bullying or intimidation.
- Possessing a sense of persecution, personal injustice, or a belief the world is out to get them.
- Making direct or veiled threats of harm.
- Having a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse.
- Displaying extreme changes in behavior such as hitting, yelling, or crying.
- Making statements indicating a fascination with incidents of workplace or public violence.
- Making statements indicating approval of the use of violence to resolve a problem.
- Making statements indicating identification with perpetrators of workplace violence.
- Bringing a weapon to the workplace, brandishing a weapon in the workplace, making inappropriate references to guns, or a fascination with weapons.
- Possessing a sense of entitlement (“the world owes me”).
- Exhibiting a moral righteousness, extremist opinions and/or attitudes.
- Holding grudges and verbalizing hope that something bad will happen to the person against who they have a grudge.
- Being unable to take criticism of job performance.
- Being fascinated with incidents of workplace violence: glamorizing violent responses to challenges.
- Being interested in the power of weaponry.
- Having an obsessive involvement with the job, often with uneven job performance no apparent outside interest.
- Being a loner with decreased social interests.
- Disregard for the well-being and safety of self and coworkers.

- Facing discipline, termination or lay-off, or perceiving this may happen.
- Having known family, financial and/or health issues.

Preventing, Intervening & Responding to Workplace Violence:

Guidance for Managers, Supervisor and Leads

SETTING THE TONE IN YOUR WORKPLACE

You can demonstrate that violence will not be tolerated in the workplace by:

- Treating all employees fairly and equitably, with respect and dignity.
- Establishing a standard of acceptable behavior in the workplace and enforcing that standard by taking appropriate corrective action when warranted.
- Making employees aware of the [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\) and Making Life Easier \(MLE\)](#), if appropriate.
- Being thorough in hiring practices and performing reference checks on all prospective employees prior to hiring.
- Intervening and mitigating disputes in the workplace before they escalate.
- Utilizing the [Alternative Dispute Resolution Program](#) when appropriate.
- Encouraging your employees and customers to report threats or incidents of workplace violence to department HR and/or department managers.
- Take threats seriously and respond appropriately. Remember that threats of self-harm are equally concerning and require an appropriate response.

When Dealing with a Credible Threat:

Credible threat: explicit or implicit with the intent and ability to carry out and causes someone reasonable fear for their safety or the safety of others.

Non-credible threat: hypothetical or hyperbole, may or may not involve harmful intent, violates behavioral expectations or codes of conduct and that which does not cause someone reasonable fear for their safety or the safety of others. Non-credible threats may still be misconduct and ought to be addressed by routine corrective action processes.

CALL 911 AND SECURE THE WORKSITE:

- If imminent danger exists, get to safety if possible, then call 911, and notify King County FMD Security at:
 - 206-296-5000 (Downtown Seattle),
 - 206-205-8802 (Regional Justice Center), or
 - 206-205-8100 Metro Transit Control Center for Metro Transit employees.
- Secure the work area by locking doors and taking similar protective measures.
- If the affected employee(s) are in the field, recall them back to a King County facility building, if appropriate.
- Assist the victim or other persons, if needed.
- Account for all employees.
- Secure the area where the incident occurred to preserve any evidence by limiting or prohibiting access to non-law enforcement personnel.
- Notify division/department management and the department's Human Resources Manager. The department's Human Resources Manager should notify the Department of Human Resources Central Employee Services Division Director or designee.
- The Department of Human Resources Central Employee Services Division Director or designee will determine whether additional notifications including Risk Management, Prosecuting Attorney's Office (PAO), Office of Labor Relations (OLR) and/or Executive Office are warranted.
- Notify the assigned department safety officer and King County EAP program as appropriate.

AFTER YOU HAVE SECURED THE WORKSITE:

- Notify and consult with the Safety Manager within the Department of Human Resources for necessary follow-up.
- Document the threat by electronically reporting the incident at the [King County Incident Reporting website](#).

POST-INCIDENT ACTIONS:

- Paid administrative leave (PAL) should be considered for employees who make credible threats or who engage in workplace violence and a workplace investigation be conducted as soon as it is administratively possible and safe to do so.

- Take statements from all witnesses to the incident. Additionally, preserve any video evidence that may be available.
- Create and implement a workplace safety plan for the affected employee(s), as appropriate.
- If the threat is known to be related to domestic violence, the department's Human Resource Manager must consult EAP. EAP will coordinate the creation of a workplace safety plan, as well as provide referrals to the employee, as appropriate.
- Consider relieving the employee(s) with pay for the remainder of the workday, as appropriate.
- Consider temporarily adjusting or changing a threatened employee's work schedule or temporarily changing a threatened employee's work site.
- Coordinate FMD security escorts for employee(s) to and from their vehicle or transit stop, as appropriate.
- Consider approving the threatened employee's request to take accrued or unpaid leave, as appropriate.
- If provided with a current court order prohibiting the perpetrator from contacting the employee victim, take business-practical and reasonable measures to facilitate compliance with the order within the workplace. The department's human resources section should retain a copy of the court order and provide a copy to law enforcement, building management and building security personnel if, due to a violation of the order, police are summoned to the workplace.
- Contact Facilities Management Division Security 206-296-5000 or ID Access at 206-296-0143 to obtain a photograph of the perpetrator if the perpetrator is a current or former employee. In any event, for county buildings equipped with security cameras, the Facilities Management Division should be contacted to review footage to obtain an image of the perpetrator. Ensure that a copy of the photograph is provided to building management, building security and appropriate staff in a position to observe visitors to the working area.
- To the extent possible, treat information about a threatened employee, including the employee's whereabouts, as confidential. Where necessary, apply restrictions to internal telephones, electronics, standard information dissemination protocols, and departmental and county publications, to the extent allowed by law and consistent with business needs.
- Consult with the King County Department of Information Technology to identify potential tools and strategies to restrict access to the employee(s).
- Consider the use of [Alternative Dispute Resolution](#), if applicable.
- Consider referring employees to the county's EAP 206-684-2103 or MLE 888-874-7290.
- Determine whether an employment investigation should be conducted, and whether progressive discipline should be imposed.

SHOULD A PERSON WHO IS KNOWN TO BE A POTENTIAL THREAT ARRIVE AT THE WORKSITE:

- If imminent danger exists, call 911.
- Deny the person access.
- Notify King County Security at:
 - 206-296-5000 (Downtown Seattle),
 - 206-205-8802 (Regional Justice Center), or
 - 206-205-8100 Metro Transit Control Center for Metro Transit employees.
- If necessary, take reasonable and practical steps to provide for the safety of people present in the workplace, such as locking doors and windows.
- If appropriate, consider broadcasting a code word over the office's intercom which would alert employees to a possible threat. Train and drill employees on such a plan in advance.
- Consider contacting King County FMD Security 206-296-5000 or 206-296-0143 to coordinate security escorts for employee(s) to and from their vehicle or transit stop, as appropriate.