

Promoting a Safe Workplace

Workplaces prone to disruptive incidents have high levels of unresolved conflict and poor communication. Conflict at work is normal, but must be addressed promptly and effectively, not avoided or suppressed.

Disruptive behavior can be reduced or prevented by facilitating a workplace environment that promotes healthy, positive means of airing and resolving problems. It is also essential to improve the conflict management skills of managers and staff, to set and enforce clear standards of conduct, and to provide help to address conflicts early.

Dealing with Problems or Conflicts

- Intervene promptly; don't let the situation worsen. Be courteous in your approach and remain constructive under pressure.
- Be clear about the facts of the problem as you see them, making sure you talk calmly and try to build mutual respect.
- Ask individuals involved to describe their perceptions of the problem (if appropriate).
- Set clear, objective, and observable expectations for improvement in job performance or in the relationship.
- Assess additional needed resources and seek outside help as necessary.
- Follow up to be sure that your expectations are met and directed changes are made.

California State University, Fullerton
Office of the Vice President for Administration and Finance

Helpful Phone Numbers:

University Police 657-278-2515
Risk Management 657-278-7346
Human Resources 657-278-2425

EMERGENCY: 9-1-1

Dialing 9-1-1 from a campus phone or your cell phone will connect you to University Police.

Dialing 9-1-1 from off-campus will connect you with the police jurisdiction from which you are calling.

For more information on campus violence prevention, please go to <http://chs.fullerton.edu/OHS/OCCSafety/WorkplaceViolence.aspx>

The university policy regarding violence in the workplace can be found at www.fullerton.edu/policies/presdir/dir8.htm



Preventing and Responding to Campus Violence



What is disruptive, threatening, or violent behavior?

University policies prohibit disruption and obstruction of university functions and activities, verbal threats, and behavior endangering the health or safety of any individual.

Disruptive behavior disturbs, interferes with or prevents normal work functions or activities. Examples include yelling, using profanity, waving arms or fists, verbally abusing others, and refusing reasonable requests for identification.

Threatening behavior includes physical actions short of actual contact/injury (e.g., moving closer aggressively), general oral or written threats to people or property, (“You’d better watch your back” or “I’ll get you”) as well as implicit threats (“You’ll be sorry” or “This isn’t over”).

Violent behavior includes any physical assault, with or without weapons; behavior that a reasonable person would interpret as being potentially violent (e.g., throwing things, pounding on a desk or door, or destroying property); or specific threats to inflict physical harm (e.g., a threat to shoot a named individual).

What are the warning signs?

Below is a list of signs and attitudes that may be indicators of disruptive, threatening, or violent behavior. If you observe a pattern or change in behavior and attitude that causes you concern, please notify your supervisor.

- Challenging or resisting authority.
- Becoming unusually upset over recent event(s) (work or personal crisis).
- Withdrawing from normal activities, family, friends, and co-workers.
- Making a major change in lifestyle, demeanor, or appearance.
- Exhibiting signs of substance abuse.
- Blaming others for problems in life or work; being suspicious, holding grudges.
- Isolating from others.
- Expressing feelings of being morally superior, self-righteous.
- Feeling entitled to special rights; rules don’t apply to him/her.
- Exhibiting a recent fascination with weapons.
- Having a known history of violence.

What behaviors should I report immediately?

The following behaviors should be immediately reported to your supervisor or University Police.

- Engaging in persistent, obsessive attention to others.
- Intimidating, verbally abusing, harassing or mistreating others.
- Engaging in stalking behavior.
- Making threatening references to other incidents of violence.

- Making threats to harm self, others, or property.
- Detailing specific proposed act(s) of disruption or violence.
- Expressing feelings of revenge, or being wronged, humiliated, or degraded.

What should I do if confronted by disruptive, threatening or violent behavior?

1. Use a calm, non-confrontational approach to defuse the situation. Indicate your desire to listen and understand the problem. Allow the individual to describe the problem.
2. Do not take the behavior personally. Usually, the behavior has little to do with you, but you are used as a target in the situation.
3. Set limits to indicate the behavior needed to deal with the concern. “Please lower your voice.” “Please stop shouting (or using profanity) or I’ll have to ask you to leave.”
4. Ask questions. Respectful concern and interest may demonstrate that aggression is not necessary.
5. Consider offering an apology. Even if you’ve done nothing wrong, an apology may calm the individual and encourage cooperation. “I’m sorry that happened. What can we do now to solve the problem?”
6. Summarize what you hear the individual saying. Make sure you are communicating clearly. In crisis, a person feels humiliated and wants respect and attention. Your summary of the individual’s concerns reflects your attention. Focus on areas of agreement to help resolve the concern.

What should I do if I feel threatened or in danger?

1. Find a way to excuse yourself, leave the room/area and get help. “You’ve raised some tough questions. I’ll consult with my supervisor to see what we can do.”
2. Do not mention discipline or the police if you fear an angry or violent response.
3. Signal for assistance. The individual may be antagonized if you call for assistance, so use a prearranged “distress” signal with a co-worker to check on you to determine how you are. If you need help, the co-worker should alert your supervisor and/or the University Police.
4. Do not isolate yourself with an individual you believe may be dangerous. Maintain a safe distance, do not turn your back, and stay seated if possible. Leave the door open or open a closed door, and sit near the door. Be sure a co-worker is near to help if needed.
5. NEVER try to remove him/her from the area. Even a gentle push or grabbing an arm may be interpreted as an assault by an agitated individual who may respond with violence towards you or file a lawsuit later.

How do I report threats or acts of violence?

1. Report all acts or threats of violence to University Police at ext. 2515. A *Behavior Concern Report* also may be submitted. This report can be found at the following web site: <http://police.fullerton.edu/behaviorconcern/>
2. Be prepared to answer the following questions:
WHO - Name, description, address, phone number, faculty or staff member, student, or visitor.
WHAT - The circumstances and sequence of events leading up to the incident.
WHEN - Time of day.
WHERE - Location of the incident.
HOW - Describe how the offense was committed.
WHY - What was the cause of the incident?
3. The responding person will discuss the course of action. If necessary, a follow-up will be conducted at a later time.
4. All reports of campus violence will be reviewed by the University Chief of Police for possible follow-up by the campus Threat Assessment Team.

What should I do in an emergency?

For crimes in progress, violent incidents or specific threats of imminent violence, call University Police at 9-1-1 or have someone call for you if any individual:

- **makes threats of physical harm toward you, others, or him/herself;**
- **has a weapon; or**
- **behaves in a manner that causes you to fear for your own or another’s safety.**

Use a phone out of sight/hearing of the individual. The police will respond and take appropriate action.

1. **Do not attempt to intervene physically** or deal with the situation yourself. It is critical that the police take charge of any incident that can or does involve physical harm.
2. **Get yourself and others to safety** as quickly as possible.
3. **If possible, keep a line open to police until they arrive.** If you cannot stay on the line, call 9-1-1 and the dispatcher will direct the police to you. The more information the police receive, the more likely they can bring a potentially violent situation to a safe conclusion.