



RESOLUTION

concerning

CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
POLICY ON WORKPLACE
THREATS AND VIOLENCE

July 17, 1998

- WHEREAS, The Board of Trustees for the Connecticut State University System values the safety and security of its employees, and
- WHEREAS, Threats, threatening behavior, or acts of violence against employees, students, visitors, guests, or other individuals by anyone on Connecticut State University System property will not be tolerated, and
- WHEREAS, The CSU Council of Presidents has endorsed the development of a systemwide policy on workplace threats and violence, therefore be it
- RESOLVED, That the attached document entitled "Connecticut State University System Policy on Workplace Threats and Violence" is hereby adopted, and be it further
- RESOLVED, That violations of this policy can lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal and criminal prosecution.

A Certified True Copy:

William J. Cibes, Jr.
Chancellor

Policy on Workplace Threats and Violence
Connecticut State University System
July 17, 1998

Introduction

Recent events in Connecticut and throughout the country have highlighted the devastating effect that violence in the workplace and in our schools can have on the lives of employees, students and members of the community. The need for programs that will effectively address incidents of violence in the workplace has not been anticipated by many employers. The Connecticut State University System policy on workplace threats and violence is intended to ensure the safety and security of all employees, students and visitors to any Connecticut State System property. In addition to our policy, guidelines for implementation of the policy have been included. These are intended as benchmarks to assist in assessing the state of current practices in addressing such matters in each of our universities and in the System office.

As employers we have a moral and legal obligation to provide a safe workplace for our employees, students and visitors. However, we realize that it is not always possible to predict when a person will become violent nor is the appropriate course of action in a particular situation always readily apparent. The attached policy and guidelines, (developed and adapted from "Guidelines for Employers and Law Enforcement", Bureau of Justice Administration), establish appropriate procedures and identify warning signs for potential violent behavior that alert employers specific actions should be initiated.

The policy requires that anyone who makes substantial threats, exhibits threatening behavior, or engages in violent acts on Connecticut State University property, shall be removed from the premises as quickly as safety permits. Determining what constitutes a "substantial threat" may be viewed as more difficult to assess than perhaps blatant behavior. A threat may be viewed as "substantial" if there is a high level of risk posed by the threat, both in severity and the likelihood it would be carried out, i.e. a death threat or physical harm. In the investigation of such threats the university should evaluate the level of risk and bring together all the necessary resources that are needed to address the situation. The development of a Threat Incident Report will insure that all threats, whether viewed as substantial or not, will be investigated and allow for proper evaluation of the incident. The policy suggests the designation of a management representative who will oversee all reports of threats or behaviors warranting potential action by the university.

Policy on Workplace Threats and Violence

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety and security of Connecticut State University System employees. Threats, threatening behavior, or acts of violence against employees, students, visitors, guests, or other individuals by anyone on Connecticut State University System property will not be tolerated. Violations of this policy can lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal and criminal prosecution.

Any person who makes substantial threats, exhibits threatening behavior, or engages in violent acts on Connecticut State University System property shall be removed from the premises as quickly as safety permits, and shall remain off the property pending the outcome of an investigation. The university or System Office will initiate an appropriate response. This response may include investigation, suspension and/or termination of any business relationship, reassignment of job duties, suspension or termination of employment, and/or criminal prosecution of the person or persons involved.

All Connecticut State University System personnel are responsible for notifying the designated management representative(s) of any threats which they have witnessed, received, or have been told that another person has witnessed or received. Even without an actual threat, personnel should also report any behavior they have witnessed which they regard as threatening or violent, when that behavior is job related or might be carried out at the university, or is connected to university employment. Employees have an obligation to make this report regardless of the relationship between the individual who initiated the threat or threatening behavior and the person or persons who were threatened or were the focus of the threatening behavior. If the designated management representatives are not available, personnel should report the threat to their supervisor or another member of the management team, or to the university police. A "Threat Incident Report" as appended to this policy should be completed as quickly as possible by the designated management representative.

All individuals who apply for or obtain a protective or restraining order which lists university locations as being protected areas, must provide to the designated management representatives a copy of the petition and declarations used to seek the order, a copy of any temporary protective or restraining order which is granted, and a copy of any protective or restraining order which is made permanent.

The sensitivity of the information requested is understood and each university and the System Office are responsible for developing confidentiality procedures which recognize and respect the privacy of the reporting employee(s).

Each university and the System Office shall identify the designated management representative(s) and make this information, along with a copy of this policy available to all personnel.

Threat Incident Report

Board policy requires employees to report all threats or incidents of violent behavior which they observe or are informed about to the designated representative(s) who will take the steps necessary to complete a threat incident report as quickly as possible, including private interviews of the victim(s) and witness(es). The following facts should be included in the threat incident report:

- Name of the threat-maker and his/her relationship to the university and to the recipient
- Name(s) of the victims or potential victims
- When and where the incident occurred
- What happened immediately prior to the incident
- The specific language of the threat
- Any physical conduct that would substantiate an intention to follow through on the threat
- How the threat-maker appeared (physically and emotionally)
- Names of others who were directly involved and any actions they took
- How the incident ended
- Names of witnesses
- What happened to the threat-maker after the incident
- What happened to the other employees directly involved after the incident
- Names of any supervisory staff involved and how they responded
- What event(s) triggered the incident
- Any history leading up to the incident
- The steps which have been taken to ensure that the threat will not be carried out
- Suggestions for preventing workplace violence in the future

The attached information is adapted from "Guidelines for Employers and Law Enforcement", distributed by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. It is provided for guidance only and is not part of this policy.

Warning Signs of Potentially Violent Individuals

There is no exact method to predict when a person will become violent. One or more of these warning signs may be displayed before a person becomes violent but does not necessarily indicate that an individual will become violent. A display of these signs should trigger concern as they are usually exhibited by people experiencing problems.

- Irrational beliefs and ideas
- Verbal, nonverbal or written threats or intimidation
- Fascination with weaponry and/or acts of violence
- Expressions of a plan to hurt himself or others
- Externalization of blame
- Unreciprocated romantic obsession
- Taking up much of supervisor's time with behavior or performance problems
- Fear reaction among coworkers/clients
- Drastic change in belief systems
- Displays of unwarranted anger
- New or increased source of stress at home or work
- Inability to take criticism
- Feelings of being victimized
- Intoxication from alcohol or other substances
- Expressions of hopelessness or heightened anxiety
- Productivity and/or attendance problems
- Violence towards inanimate objects
- Stealing or sabotaging projects or equipment
- Lack of concern for the safety of others

Recognizing Inappropriate Behavior

Inappropriate behavior is often a warning sign of potential hostility or violence, when left unchecked it can escalate to higher levels. Employees who exhibit the following behaviors should be reported and disciplined in accordance with university policy:

- Unwelcome name-calling, obscene language, and other abusive behavior
- Intimidation through direct or veiled verbal threats
- Throwing objects in the workplace due to anger regardless of the size or type of object being thrown or whether a person is the target of a thrown object
- Physically touching another employee in an intimidating, malicious, or sexually harassing manner. That includes such acts as hitting, slapping, poking, kicking, pinching, grabbing, and pushing.

Personal Conduct to Minimize Violence

DO

- Project calmness: move and speak slowly, quietly and confidently.
- Be an empathetic listener: encourage the person to talk and listen patiently.
- Focus your attention on the other person to let them know you are interested in what they have to say.
- Maintain a relaxed yet attentive posture and position yourself at a right angle rather than directly in front of the other person.
- Acknowledge the person's feeling. Indicate that you can see he or she is upset.
- Ask for small, specific favors such as asking the person to move to a quieter area.
- Establish ground rules if unreasonable behavior persists. Calmly describe the consequences of any violent behavior.
- Use delaying tactics which will give the person time to calm down. For example, offer a drink of water (in a disposable cup).
- Be reassuring and point out choices. Break big problems into smaller, more manageable problems.
- Accept criticism in a positive way. When a complaint might be true, use statements like "You're probably right" or "It was my fault." If the criticism seems unwarranted, ask clarifying questions.
- Ask for his/her recommendations. Repeat back to him/her what you feel he/she is requesting of you.
- Arrange yourself so that a visitor cannot block your access to an exit.

Do Not

- Use styles of communication which generate hostility such as apathy, brush off, coldness, condescension, robotism, going strictly by the rules or giving the run-around.
- Reject all of a client's demands from the start.
- Pose in challenging stances such as standing directly opposite someone, hands on hips or crossing your arms. Avoid any physical contact, finger-pointing or long periods of fixed eye contact.
- Make sudden movements which can be seen as threatening. Notice the tone, volume and rate of your speech.
- Challenge, threaten, or dare the individual. Never belittle the person or make him/her feel foolish.
- Criticize or act impatiently toward the agitated individual.
- Attempt to bargain with a threatening individual.
- Try to make the situation seem less serious than it is.
- Make false statements or promises you cannot keep.
- Try to impart a lot of technical or complicated information when emotions are high.
- Take sides or agree with distortions.
- Invade the individual's personal space. Make sure there is a space of 3' to 6' between you and the person.

ITEM

Policy on Workplace Threats and Violence

BACKGROUND

Recent tragic incidents both in the State of Connecticut and nationwide have pointed out the need to have a policy in place to address the issue of a secure environment for employees in the Connecticut State University System. All threats must be considered potentially dangerous and action must be taken to ensure the welfare and safety of all CSU personnel.

ANALYSIS

The Council of Presidents have requested that a systemwide policy be adopted, similar to that already in place at Eastern Connecticut State University. The proposed policy states the types of behavior or actions by any person on Connecticut State University System property which is cause for immediate removal of that person from the premises and subsequent investigation of the incident. The policy also identifies how incidents should be reported and to whom, and appropriate responses which include but not limited to suspension and/or termination of any business relationship or employment, and/or criminal prosecution of the person or persons involved.

CHANCELLOR'S RECOMMENDATION

Approval of the proposed Policy on Workplace Threats and Violence.