

## **CHAPTER XIV**

<b>CHAPTER XIV WORKPLACE VIOLENCE</b>
---

- 
- 14.01 PURPOSE/OVERVIEW**
  - 14.02 RESPONSIBILITIES**
  - 14.03 PREVENTION**
  - 14.04 REPORTING AND INVESTIGATIONS**
  - 14.05 DEFUSING AND DEBRIEFING**
  - 14.06 RECORD KEEPING**
-

#### **14.01 OVERVIEW.**

Verbal and/or physical threats and actual and potential acts of violence, including family and domestic violence, shall not be tolerated in Sarasota County Government's workplace, facilities, vehicles or on County property, equipment or sites at which county business is conducted. County employees and others who violate these procedures may be subject to being removed from the workplace and/or may be banned from County premises, facilities, work sites, etc. In addition, other corrective and/or disciplinary actions, appropriate for the severity of the offense committed, up to and including dismissal from employment, and/or the filing of criminal charges may be taken.

#### **14.02 RESPONSIBILITIES.**

- (1) All levels of management shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with the provisions of these Procedures and related policies, by employees and others under their authority and/or influence.
- (2) The General Manager, Human Resources shall be responsible for: ensuring the maintenance of these procedures; creating a Threat and Violence Assessment & Response Team; oversight of overall workplace violence prevention initiatives and activities including, but not limited to, the effective communication, distribution and access to relevant information and training; the conducting of surveys to assess the potential of threats and the reporting/handling of incidents of violence in the workplace. The General Manager, Human Resources and/or his designee(s) shall also monitor the timely reporting and investigation of threats and incidents of violence in the workplace.
  - (2) A Threat and Violence Assessment & Response Team (TVA/RT) shall be established and maintained to assist the County and management in assessing the vulnerability to workplace threats and violence at County facilities and work-sites, and shall recommend preventive actions to be taken. The TVA/RT and/or specific team members will be responsible for: Assisting with assessing and evaluating the physical facilities of County.
  - (3) Workplaces or work-sites to determine the potential for workplace threats and/or violence, and recommending immediate courses of action and improvements to resolve the problem and/or decrease the risk.
- (5) Business Center or Office Workplace Violence Prevention Coordinator (Designees) (WVPC). A WVPC will be appointed by the Executive Director or Officer. The WVPC will serve as initial point of contact for reporting threats and/or violent incidents; receive and/or complete Threat & Violence Incident Reports; make preliminary determinations of the severity of threats and violent incidents; report threats and incidents which occur in their assigned area to the County's TVA/RT and law enforcement when appropriate; conduct investigations of lower risk/severity threats and incidents; assist and/or participate in the investigation of threats and violent incidents, as applicable, when conducted by the countywide TVA/RT. The WVPC shall retain relevant records and files regarding threats and incidents of violence in their area, as deemed appropriate by the TVA/RT and the affected Executive Director/major office head.
- (6) All employees have the responsibility to report immediately any threat or act of workplace violence experienced or witnessed in the workplace. Reporting of such threats or act will be in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the "reporting" section of these Procedures.
- (7) Employees and others who report legitimate concerns of threats, and potential or actual violent acts in accordance with these guidelines shall not be retaliated against for doing so.

#### **14.03 PREVENTION.**

(1) The following actions/measures should be considered and taken in an effort to prevent threats and incidents of violence in the workplace: conduct comprehensive pre-employment screening; comply with established workplace violence prevention procedures; ensure all employees, supervisors, managers, general managers and senior managers are adequately trained to be aware of, and to recognize and address threats and violence in the workplace, including family or domestic violence which can either negatively affect employees at work or may actually result in threats and violence at work.

(2) Workplace Security. The WPVC should conduct periodic evaluations of the workplace and work tasks of employees to determine the presence of hazards, conditions, operations and situations, which might place employees at risk of occupational, assault incidents. Appropriate action will be taken to eliminate or minimize any identified risks or hazards.

(3) Possession of Weapons. Employees are prohibited from being in possession of weapon(s) while on County owned or leased property (including parking lots and garages), in County owned vehicles, in a personal vehicle being used to conduct County business and/or at any time or location at which County business is being conducted.

#### **14.04 REPORTING AND INVESTIGATIONS.**

(1) REPORTING.

(a.) Any County employee having knowledge of a violent act involving oneself or another County employee (as victim or perpetrator), incidents of workplace abuse, verbal attacks and/or aggressive behavior that may be threatening to an employee (or customer, clients, visitors to County work sites/facilities), including cases of reported domestic-family violence and non-criminal disputes, shall report all such threats, acts and/or incidents to:

1. The employee's immediate supervisor;
2. The WVPC; or
3. The affected manager, general manager or Executive Director, who will then report it to the General Manager, Human Resources.

(b.) For an act involving the threat of bodily injury, the supervisor must notify the General Manager, Human Resources (or his designee) and affected Executive Director as soon as it can be done safely, to make them aware of the situation.

(c.) Documenting (completion of the Threat and Violence Incident Report form) and reporting of these incidents are referenced above shall be the responsibility of the applicable WVPC, supervisor or manager who was first notified of and/or witnessed the incident.

(d.) The supervisor, manager or the WVPC to whom the incident is reported shall complete a Threat and Violence Incident Report form and forward/fax the completed form Report to the General Manager, Human Resources as soon as the initial danger has passed, but no later than one work day after being notified that a workplace threat or violent incident occurred. Each threat and/or incident will be evaluated, initially, by the WVPC.

(2) INVESTIGATIONS.

(a.) As with all other serious administrative matters that come to the attention of the organization, taking at least a few minutes to learn or get an overview of the situation will provide enough information to determine what to do next. If there is imminent danger, local law enforcement must be notified immediately by the individual who is best able to explain objectively what has taken place. In most cases this will be the WVPC designated to perform this function or the General Manager, Human Resources (or his designee).

(b.) It is important to ensure that the incident is reported immediately to the General Manager, Human Resources (or his designee) who will coordinate efforts with appropriate members of the TVA/RT. This coordination of efforts ensures that the appropriate persons are assigned to conduct the investigation and that actions taken by

County employees during an administrative investigation do not create problems during a potential criminal prosecution.

- (c.) The type of investigation to conduct depends on the nature of the incident.
    - 1. If the behavior or act is criminal in nature, a criminal investigation should be requested and conducted by the appropriate law enforcement agency/office.
    - 2. If the behavior, action or comments are not criminal in nature, one or more members of the TVA/RT will conduct an administrative investigation.
  - (d.) All threats and incidents of workplace violence shall be investigated thoroughly and as warranted by the seriousness of the threat or incident. The designated WVPC shall be expected to investigate independently lower-level threats and incidents. All incidents of workplace violence that involve threats of physical harm or result in assault and/or battery shall be investigated: the Human Resources staff and/or the TVA/RT.
  - (e.) In cases where the perpetrator is not a County employee or in any other case the County deems advisable, Human Resources and/or the TVA/RT may request that law enforcement personnel conduct the investigations.
  - (f.) Human Resources, and/or the Threat and Violence Assessment Team will review the data and determine if further intervention is required. When necessary the General Manager, Human Resources will contact appropriate intervention agencies for assistance.
- (3) Any employee that perpetrates an act of workplace violence will be subject to corrective and/or disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

#### **14.05 DEFUSING AND DEBRIEFING.**

All employees affected by an incident of workplace violence will be afforded appropriate medical and psychological treatment and follow-up. Counseling assistance will be provided through the County's EAP. Employees in the work unit, as appropriate, will be debriefed; and other actions, as deemed necessary, will be taken to defuse the situation. The TVA/RT will recommend for implementation security, safety and/or other measures identified as necessary to prevent future occurrences of similar threats or violent incidents.

#### **14.06 RECORD-KEEPING.**

An accurate record of workplace violence threats and incidents shall be maintained on file in the Human Resources Office. Records shall include completed Workplace Threat and Violence Incident Report forms, investigation reports and recommendations, employee training records, surveys, and TVA/RT meeting minutes. Records will be maintained for the time specified by applicable regulations.