

What to Do When Violence Occurs

During the Incident

Try to stay calm. Raising your own voice may increase the anxiety of the potentially violent person.

Speak slowly, softly, and clearly to reduce the momentum of the situation.

Listen empathetically by really paying attention to what the person is saying. Let the person know that you will help them within your ability to do so or you will send for additional help.

Neither agree with distorted statements nor attempt to argue. Avoid defensive statements. This is not the time to place blame on the enraged person.

Ask the belligerent person to leave the area and come back when they feel calmer.

Ask questions to help regain control of the conversation.

Ask uninvolved parties to leave the area if this can be done safely. Use the prearranged code word to alert your coworker(s) to call the Campus Police.

Never challenge, try to bargain, or make promises you cannot keep.

Describe the consequences of any violent behavior.

Avoid challenging body language such as placing your hands on your hips, moving toward the person, or staring directly at them. If seated, remain in your chair and do not turn your back on the individual.

Do not physically touch an outraged person, or try to force them to leave.

Move away from any object, such as scissors or heavy objects that could be used as a weapon.

Calmly ask the person to place any weapons in a neutral location while you continue to talk to them.

Never attempt to disarm or accept a weapon from the person in question. Weapon retrieval should only be done by a police officer.

After/Post Incident Response

After the safety of the workplace has been restored, provide detailed facts and the names of witnesses to the Campus Police (who, what, where, when).

Discuss and/or debrief the incident with your staff.

If necessary, revise your office plan.

If needed, arrange for counseling services for employees, students and any affected family members.

Do not expect to immediately return to "business as usual" conditions. Flexibility, compassion and understanding will be required to establish a new state of normal operations for your office. Supervisors and managers need to watch closely for signs of stress among employees and students following a violent incident.