

Preventing Workplace Violence

I. Employees

Prior to Hiring an Employee Hiring officials should conduct a thorough screening of applicants to include contacting at least three former employers or other references as part of the required reference check.

Hiring officials must have applicants sign an application form indicating that the information being provided is truthful and accurate, and that omissions and false statements will result in discharge. The standard Virginia and George Mason University hiring forms include the appropriate statements.

After Hiring an Employee careful and thoughtful management of people is the best tool to avoid incidents of workplace violence. Handle problems between employees or between faculty and students quickly, fairly, and consistently using standard University procedures.

Supervisors should ensure all employees attend an orientation session that includes a briefing on the Standards of Conduct and the disciplinary system. Supervisors should also schedule periodical instruction on the Standards of Conduct for employees, or have them attend "Make a Difference at Mason" or "Let's Talk" seminars on related subjects.

Maintain open lines of communication with employees and students. Keep everyone informed of pertinent issues and ask for safety suggestions.

Supervisors should remain alert to dramatic changes in an employee's behavior or work performance. Supervisors should also obtain training in how to diffuse confrontations.

All employees should be informed of emergency procedures and who to contact in the event of an emergency. Employees should work in "teams" of two or more so that no one person is alone in your facility. The Campus Police can provide escorts to remote parking areas when employees work outside normal hours.

Take all threats of violence very seriously.

II. Non-Employees

Management should consider appropriate measures to reduce the risks to employees or students from outsiders. For example, violence may be eliminated by locking certain doors (but without obstructing emergency exits), limiting office access, contacting the Campus Police to schedule additional security checks, improving lighting, or installing security cameras. Other physical devices such as convex mirrors, an elevated vantage point, and strategically place internal barriers can also be installed to reduce risk.

Restrictions on visitors may be used to reduce the potential threat of violence. For example, vendors or other visitors could be required to sign in at a central location in an office or building.

Buildings should be periodically inspected to determine if there are obstructions, hiding places or the like that might permit an individual to hide before committing an attack.

Design work areas so that there is an unobstructed secondary exit, whenever possible.

Establish a "code word" or other distress signal to convey the need to summon University Police for assistance.

Don't leave keys lying about the office.

Notify Campus Police if you notice suspicious persons or vehicles, especially after normal working hours. Do not get in an elevator with someone who looks suspicious to you.

Post emergency numbers at every phone.

Keep potential weapons of opportunity (scissor, paperweights, letter openers) out of casual reach of customers.

Know and watch out for your co-workers and students.