

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON
MANUAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SECTION: Human Resources
AREA: Employee Relations

Number: 02.04.04

SUBJECT: Violence in the Workplace

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This document describes the university position on violence and threats of violence in university facilities and identifies university resources and programs to deal with such eventualities. The explicit goals of this document and the programs it describes are to protect people and property, reduce fear and stress, return the workplace and classroom to a productive and safe environment, and establish a consistent process for managing incidents of threatened violence.

This document also defines and describes the processes to be followed in responding to threats of violence and managing incidents of threatened violence. It applies to all facilities of the University of Houston and all faculty, staff, students, and visitors to the university. This document also applies to incidents involving university employees or students at other locations when they are participating in a university-sponsored activity.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

The University of Houston seeks to provide a safe environment for learning and work. In pursuit of that goal, university administration finds violence and threat of violence unacceptable. To foster a safe and supportive work/learning environment, the university provides police services and intervention, and--where it is deemed appropriate--counseling, training, and education about violence and prevention of violence for employees and students. This document outlines the mechanisms and offices through which these services are provided.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Threat: Words or action that create a reasonable perception that there is intent to physically harm persons or property.
- B. Violence: Exertion of physical force so as to injure, abuse, or damage.

IV. POLICY PROVISIONS

- A. It is a violation of the law to touch another person in an unwelcome way with the intent to harm, or to threaten to do so if one has the present ability to perform the act threatened. Threatening, intimidating, or assaulting of university employees, students, or visitors by other employees, students, or visitors will not be tolerated.
- B. Firearms, illegal knives, clubs, and prohibited weapons are not allowed in or on university property. It is a felony to possess firearms in or on university property.

- C. University administration will provide police services and--where appropriate--will make counseling, direction, training, and education regarding violence, threats of violence, and violence prevention available to managers, employees, and students.

University offices and officials with primary roles in meeting these needs include:

- Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
- Dean of Students
- Assistant Vice President for Human Resources
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)/Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- General Counsel
- University of Houston Police Department (UHPD)

To supplement and enhance the services of these university offices, the following work groups shall be created and available as needed to deal with threats and incidences of violence at the university:

- Threat of Violence Advisory (TOVA) Team: A team representing the appropriate offices from those listed above that will convene quickly to provide direction in response to acts or communications constituting threats of violence.
- Campus Crisis Response Team: UHPD, individuals, and outside resources working toward the safe resolution of a violent situation.
- Trauma Resolution Team (TRT): A team directed by the assigned staff person from the EAP to provide counsel for trauma resulting from acts or threats of violence at the university.

- D. Every employee or student who is contacted about or has knowledge of a threat of violence or a violent act at the university or while on university business should contact UHPD, who will respond in accordance with this document.

In all cases, UHPD should be kept informed of acts of violence and potential violence at the university.

- E. Violation of this document may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination, expulsion from school, and/or criminal charges.

V. PROCEDURES - GENERAL

The University of Houston responds to real and potential acts of violence through the following means:

- Protection: UHPD's objective is to provide a safe and protected environment for people and property at the University of Houston. In addition to law enforcement services, the department provides police escorts, vehicle assistance, and handicapped assistance to employees, students, and visitors; crime prevention programs; and money transfers.
- Education and training: CAPS and/or Human Resources, in consultation with the TOVA Team, will periodically provide training programs and individual counseling to managers and supervisory personnel, students, and to other employees on violence-related subjects--prevention of and response to

violence and threats of violence, stress management, and conflict resolution dealing with difficult people.

- Prevention: The university services described herein seek to prevent acts of violence at the university through training and intervention.
- Intervention and crisis management: Through the TOVA Team and other task forces described herein, training, intervention, and crisis management services are provided when threats or actual acts of violence occur at the university.
- Follow-up: The TRT will be available to support and counsel employees and students following acts of violence at the university.

VI. THREATS OF VIOLENCE

- A. Immediate threats or acts: A university employee, student, or visitor experiencing or aware of a threat or act of violence should contact UHPD by calling 911 or, depending upon the urgency, the UHPD regular number 713-743-0600.

When in doubt about the urgency of the threat of violence, UHPD should be contacted.

- B. Less immediate threats: When a manager or other employee is faced with or aware of a situation in which a threat of violence may exist, the matter should be referred immediately to the appropriate responsible office. It is always an appropriate option to contact UHPD, but in less immediate situations, the following offices are also prepared to act as resources.

If the violence involves:

- Faculty - Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
- Staff - Assistant Vice President for Human Resources
- Students - Dean of Students
- Visitors - UHPD

Depending upon the situation involved, any of these offices may convene the TOVA Team immediately to address the problem.

- C. TOVA Team: When a department is faced with a potentially violent situation, this team of representatives of key departments (as defined in this document) functions as expert resources, analyzing the case from their respective areas of expertise, and develops an action plan to address the situation. Types of potentially violent situations might include domestic violence threats brought into the workplace; threats of violence between employees, students, or employees and students; and concerns over disciplinary action involving potentially violent employees or students.

This team will determine:

- The existence of a serious threat
- The scope of security required
- The need for counseling and/or training

- Recommendations concerning continued employment/enrollment
- The need to involve other law enforcement agencies

The TOVA Team will treat all threats seriously and be guided by considerations such as responding in a timely manner, respecting confidentiality, and involving key resources.

VII. INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE

- A. Campus Crisis Response Team: In the event of an act of violence and the potential for ongoing harm to either person or property, UHPD will be charged with providing appropriate leadership to safely resolve the situation.

To plan for such an eventuality, UHPD shall establish a protocol for protecting and communicating with the campus community and aiding in protecting their property. UHPD shall also call upon resource persons and/or other law enforcement agencies with expertise in dealing with the particular type of emergency involved. UHPD will act as liaison with the Office of Internal Communications in such an event.

- B. TRT: This team is charged with providing needed services to deal with trauma resulting from acts of violence, including trauma resulting from situations such as injuries or death of a co-worker(s) or fellow student(s) resulting from violence on campus, assaults by non-university persons, hostage-taking events, or fires or bombings.

An assigned staff member from the EAP/CAPS, who is responsible for establishing and assembling the team and developing the team protocols, shall chair this team. The TRT will include assigned representatives from the Student Health Service, Office of Internal Communications, and UHPD. Depending upon the nature of the event, additional members from any of the following offices may be added:

- President's Office
- Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
- Dean of Students
- Campus Ministry
- General Counsel
- Human Resources
- Safety and Risk Management
- Residential Life and Housing
- Officials who have special responsibility for persons/places involved in the event

The team is charged with responding rapidly to the event, providing crisis intervention and supportive counseling services, notifying family members where required, and debriefing involved individuals.

VIII. SANCTIONS FOR ACTS OF VIOLENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY

Violation of this document may involve penalties up to and including termination of employment, expulsion from school, and/or criminal charges. The determination of the penalty will be handled by the responsible office, with the appropriate involvement of UHPD and/or the Office of General Counsel, as necessary.

Visitors may be escorted off campus, barred from campus, and/or subject to criminal charges.

IX. REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITY

Responsible Party: Assistant Vice President for Human Resources

Review: Every three years, on or before April 1

X. APPROVAL

Randy J. Harris
Vice President for Administration and Finance

Arthur K. Smith
President

Date of President's Approval: 07/19/00

XI. REFERENCES

Controlled Substance Act of Texas
Drug-Free Schools and Campuses Act
Texas Penal Code §46.02 Unlawful Carrying of Weapons
Other provisions of the Texas Penal Code Sections 19, 20, 22, 29, 42, and 46 dealing with violent acts, alcohol and drugs, and weapons
UH System Administrative Memorandum 01.C.04 - Reporting/Investigating Fraudulent Acts

Index Terms: Threats of violence
Violence