

Plattsburgh Housing Authority

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

POLICY STATEMENT

The Plattsburgh Housing Authority is concerned and committed to our employees' safety and health. We refuse to tolerate violence in the workplace and will make every effort to prevent violent incidents from occurring by implementing a Workplace Violence Prevention Program (WVPP). We will provide adequate authority and budgetary resources to responsible parties so that our goals and responsibilities can be met.

The Executive Director and all Supervisory staff are responsible for implementing and maintaining our WVPP. We encourage employee participation in designing and implementing our program. We require prompt and accurate reporting of all violent incidents whether or not physical injury has occurred. We will not discriminate against victims of workplace violence.

A copy of this Policy Statement and our WVPP is readily available to all employees from their Supervisor.

Our program ensures that all employees, including the Executive Director and Supervisors, adhere to work practices that are designed to make the workplace more secure and do not engage in verbal threats or physical actions, which create a security hazard for others in the workplace.

All employees, including the Executive Director and Supervisors, are responsible for using safe work practices; for following all directives, policies and procedures, and for assisting in maintaining a safe and secure work environment.

The management of the Plattsburgh Housing Authority is responsible for ensuring that all safety and health policies and procedures involving workplace security are clearly communicated and understood by all employees. Supervisors are expected to enforce the rules fairly and uniformly.

Our program will be reviewed and updated annually.

OVERVIEW

Workplace Violence Prevention Manual

Introduction

Workplace violence presents a serious occupational safety hazard for workers. On June 7, 2006 New York State enacted legislation that requires Public employers (other than schools covered under the school safety plan requirements of the education law) to perform a risk evaluation of its workplaces and develop and implement programs to prevent and minimize workplace assaults and homicides.

Purpose

The purpose of the Workplace Violence Prevention Program and Procedures Manual is to provide information to the Executive Director, Supervisors, and employees about preventing and responding to incidents of workplace violence or threats of violence and the “New York State Public Employer Workplace Violence Prevention Law”.

The goals of the program and manual are:

1. To reduce the probability of threats or acts of violence in the workplace, and
2. To ensure that any incident, complaint, or report of violence is taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

This manual outlines the major components of the effort to meet these goals; program, procedures, workplace security risk evaluation, prevention, training, and other support services.

Access to this manual

The Workplace Violence Prevention Program and Procedures Manual can be downloaded from the Plattsburgh Housing Authority website: www.phaplattsburgh.com.

Plattsburgh Housing Authority Workplace Violence Prevention Program

The Plattsburgh Housing Authority will not tolerate violence in the work place. All incidents, complaints, and or reports of violent behavior will be taken seriously because the Plattsburgh Housing Authority is committed to providing its employees with a reasonably safe and secure work environment.

Purpose of Program

Violence in the workplace is a leading cause of fatal and non-fatal occupational injury throughout the U.S. that may affect an organization at any time. The purpose of this program is to address the issue of potential workplace violence, prevent workplace violence from occurring to the fullest extent possible, and set forth procedures to be followed when such violence has occurred.

Statement of Program

Violence, threats of violence, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior in the workplace will not be tolerated by the Plattsburgh Housing Authority. Examples of disruptive behavior can include oral or written statements, gestures, or expressions that communicate a direct or indirect threat of harm. Such behavior will be taken seriously and will be dealt with appropriately.

Scope of Program

All Plattsburgh Housing Authority employees are required to comply with this Program. In addition, since visitors of the Plattsburgh Housing Authority owned property and facilities are required to conduct themselves in a nonviolent manner in conformity with existing law, employees who observe or experience visitors of Plattsburgh Housing Authority owned property engaging in violent behavior should follow the procedures in the Manual for the reporting of such behavior.

Application of Program

Violence and other disruptive behavior by or against any employee of Plattsburgh Housing Authority or member of the public in a Plattsburgh Housing Authority designated workplace is unacceptable. A Plattsburgh Housing Authority designated workplace includes offices, work sites, vehicles, field locations, apartments, and any other location where Plattsburgh Housing Authority business is conducted. Individuals who commit such acts may be removed from the premises and may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including, where legally appropriate, termination of employment and/or criminal penalties.

Training

All Supervisors shall ensure that employees of their particular department are informed of the requirements of the law, the risk factors in their workplace, and the location of the written workplace violence prevention program. Training is also required for employees on the measures that employees can take to protect themselves from risks and the details of the written workplace violence prevention program. Employee workplace violence training is to be provided at the time of job assignment and at least annually thereafter.

Reporting of Violence

At the core of this Workplace Violence Prevention Program is the Plattsburgh Housing Authority's commitment to work with its employees to maintain a work environment free from violence and other disruptive behavior to the greatest degree possible.

- Any Plattsburgh Housing Authority employee, upon becoming aware of an instance of physical assault, threatening behavior or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting, must immediately report the facts and circumstances of said incident to their Supervisor. In the event that employees observe or experience violent behavior from Plattsburgh Housing Authority employees or visitors of the Plattsburgh Housing Authority owned properties in which there is an immediate threat to their safety or the safety of others or where an injury has occurred, the employee should immediately obtain police and medical assistance and in addition notify their supervisor.
- The supervisor will immediately conduct a preliminary inquiry into the facts and circumstances of the incident and make a prompt report to the Executive Director.
- The Executive Director will determine if there is:
 - a. An immediate threat of violence. If so, the Executive Director will ensure police and emergency medical personnel have been notified and thereafter follow the procedures outline in subparagraph (b) or (c) below.
 - b. Serious misconduct or criminal behavior by a Plattsburgh Housing Authority employee. If so, the Executive Director shall immediately notify the Board Chair, the Plattsburgh City Police and the Attorney for the Plattsburgh Housing Authority and take actions outlined in negotiated contract between the Plattsburgh Housing Authority and the Local 788, and NY Council 66 AFSCME.
 - c. No immediate threat of violence and no serious misconduct or criminal behavior by a Plattsburgh Housing Authority employee. In that event, the Executive Director will:
 - Continue the investigation;
 - Resolve/mediate matter;
 - Initiate disciplinary action, if appropriate;

NOTE: In all instances, a written summary report of the incident and all action taken is prepared and placed in the appropriate employee file within three business days.

Retaliation against an employee who makes a good faith report of violence or other disruptive behavior is strictly prohibited and shall be subject to appropriate corrective or disciplinary measures. An employee, who, in bad faith makes a false report, is also subject to disciplinary action.

New York State Workplace Violence Prevention Law

Introduction

The “New York Public Employer Workplace Violence Prevention Law” was enacted on June 7, 2006 to ensure that public employers evaluate their workplaces and develop and implement effective response and prevention strategies to prevent and minimize workplace violence.

Requirements of the law

Employers must evaluate their workplace or workplaces for factors or situations that may increase the risk of occupational violence. Examples of such factors include working in public settings, working alone or in small numbers, and working late night or early morning hours. The next section of this manual, “Workplace Risk Evaluations”, identifies the results of the Plattsburgh Housing Authority’s workplace risk evaluation.

In addition, employers with at least 20 full time permanent employees must develop and implement a written workplace violence prevention program. The written program must identify the risk factors identified in the workplace risk evaluation and the methods the employer will use to prevent incidents of violence in the workplace.

Finally, the law requires employers to inform employees of the requirements of the law, the risk factors in their workplace, and the location of the written workplace violence prevention program. Training is also required for employees on the measures that employees can take to protect themselves from risks and the details of the written workplace violence prevention program. Employee workplace violence training must be provided at the time of job assignment and annually thereafter. The Executive Director and all Supervisors shall ensure that this required training is provided in accordance with the law.

Application of the law

“Any employee or representative of employees who believes that a serious violation of a workplace violence protection program exists or that an imminent danger exists shall bring such matter to the attention of a Supervisor in the form of a written notice and shall afford the employer a reasonable opportunity to correct such activity, policy, or practice. This referral shall not apply where imminent danger or threat exists to the safety of a specific employee or to the general health of a specific patient and the employee reasonably believes in good faith that reporting to a supervisor would not result in corrective action.” (NYS Labor Law sections 27-b (b)(a)).

“If following a referral of such matter to the employee’s Supervisor’s attention and after a reasonable opportunity to correct such activity, policy or practice the matter has not been resolved and the employee or representative of employees still believes that a violation of a workplace violence prevention program remains, or that an imminent danger exists, such employee or representative of employees may request an inspection by giving notice to the Commissioner of Labor of the State of New York of such violation or danger. Such notice and request shall be in writing, shall set forth with reasonable particularity the grounds for the notice, shall be signed by such employee or representative of employees, and a copy shall be provided by the Commissioner to the employer or the person in charge no later than the time of inspection, except that on the request of the person giving such notice,

such person's name and the names of individual employees or representatives of employees shall be withheld. Such inspection shall be made forthwith." (NYS Labor Law Section 17b (6)(b))

Further Information

See Appendix A for the full text of the "NYS Public Employer Workplace Violence Prevention Law", NYS Labor Law Section 27-b.

Workplace Risk Evaluation

Introduction

Certain factors or situations may place employees at a greater risk of workplace violence. This workplace risk evaluation is based upon evaluations of Plattsburgh Housing Authority owned, leased and operated facilities conducted by the Plattsburgh Housing Authority Risk Evaluation Committee and reviews of occupational injury and illness logs and incident reports for violence-related injuries.

Risk Evaluation

Workplace violence can occur in any work place setting. However, some settings or factors may pose a greater degree of workplace violence risk. Employment situations or factors that may pose higher risks for Plattsburgh Housing Authority employees include, but are not limited to:

- Working in public setting
- Working late night or early morning hours
- Exchanging money with the public
- Working alone or in small numbers
- Working in a setting with uncontrolled access to the workplace
- Having a mobile workplace assignment
- Working with a population which might expose one to potentially violent persons (e.g. in health care, social service, or criminal justice settings)
- Having duties that include the delivery of passengers, goods, or services.

Prevention

Introduction

Prevention is the responsibility of every employee. This section focuses on some measures to reduce the risk of violent behavior. The Executive Director and Supervisors, as well as employees, should be familiar with and knowledgeable of the issues below before violence occurs.

Definitions and Prevalence of Violence

As noted in the Plattsburgh Housing Authority Workplace Violence Prevention Program, workplace violence is defined to include violence, threats of violence, harassment, intimidation and other disruptive behavior.

Two million American workers are victims of workplace violence annually. Workplace violence is the fourth leading cause of fatality in the workplace for all workers; it was the cause of 564 deaths in 2005. From 2002 – 2011, the annual rate of simple assault in the workplace against government employees (18.9 per 1,000) was more than three times that of private-sector employees (4.6 per 1,000). Finally, nearly 1 out of 5 occupational fatalities is attributed to workplace violence.¹

In reviewing this data, it appears clear that workplace violence is a potential problem in the modern workplace, and one that requires a multifaceted approach by the employer and employees providing support to mitigate the occurrences and effects of violence in the workplace.

Early Warning Signs of Potential Violence

Past behavior has generally been the best predictor of future behavior. There is no specific “profile” of a potentially dangerous individual. Acts of violence may also occur in the workplace due to issues of domestic violence. Sometimes victims and witnesses recount acts of violence that occurred without warning. However, certain patterns of behavior and events frequently precede episodes of violence.

A list of indicators of increased risk of violent behavior may include:

- Direct or veiled threats of harm
- Intimidation, belligerence, bullying or other inappropriate behavior directed at others
- Numerous conflicts with supervisors and employees; verbal comments indicating expressions of hostility directed at coworkers, supervisor, or others
- Bringing an unauthorized weapon to work, brandishing a weapon in the workplace, making inappropriate reference to guns or fascination with weapons
- Fascination with incidents of workplace violence, statements indicating approval of the use of violence to resolve a problem, or statements indicating identification with perpetrators of workplace homicides

¹ 17% of occupational fatalities, Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Statistics. Results based on 2011 preliminary statistics.

- Statements indicating an increased tone of desperation from the person, feeling that normal interventions to solve the problem will not work, feeling hopeless about a situation at work, with family, financial, and other personal problems
- Signs of abuse of drugs/alcohol on or off the job
- Extreme or uncharacteristic changes in behavior or displays of emotion
- Employees with ongoing domestic difficulties
- Employees with a temporary order of protection against any respondent

These behaviors should be reported to an employee's Supervisor or the Executive Director. Some behaviors may require security intervention; other may require disciplinary action.

Sometimes, small behavior problems, which can precede the above behaviors, are dismissed or ignored, allowing problems to fester. In the employee's mind, the situation can become more intense. It is important to remember the employee must be treated with dignity, mutual respect and fairness in the process. Some of these types of behavior are listed below.

- Withdrawal from friends, coworkers, and/or one's social circle
- Reduced productivity
- Unexplained absence from work area or marked increase in tardiness and/or absenteeism
- Noticeable deterioration of personal hygiene and appearance

Common Issues That May Trigger Workplace Violence

Listed below are two categories of common issues that may trigger workplace violence.

1. Employee issues
 - Negative performance review
 - Unwelcome change in role due to performance or reorganization issue
 - Criticism of performance
 - Conflict with coworker or supervisor
 - Personal stress outside the workplace
 - Increased workload or pressure, e.g. deadlines, projects, etc.

2. Workplace Issues (any of the following may be an employee's perception of issues)
 - No clearly defined rules of conduct
 - Lack of training
 - Inadequate hiring practices/screening of potential employees
 - Insufficient supervision
 - Lack of discipline or inconsistent discipline in workplace
 - Lack of or inadequate employee support systems
 - Failure to address incidents as they occur
 - Overly authoritarian management style

There are three key elements that may help to prevent a violent situation from occurring:

1. Recognizing the early warning signs (such as a change in a person's behavior preceding an episode of violence)
2. Recognizing issues or events that may trigger violence
3. Early intervention to prevent a violent incident from occurring

Please Note

It is important to be careful when drawing assumptions or relying solely on any of the above behaviors as indicators of violence.

Response Procedures

Introduction

The following procedures are recommended to be followed whenever an employee files a complaint alleging a violation of the Plattsburgh Housing Authority Workplace Violence Program has occurred or when a violent incident occurs.

Non-Emergency and Emergency (threatening) Situations

A “threatening situation” is a situation where one person, through intimidating words or gestures has induced fear and apprehension of physical or other harm in another person but there is no immediate danger of such harm being inflicted. The steps listed under the “Non-Emergency (threatening) Response Procedure” are recommended to be followed whenever a threatening situation occurs.

A situation is an “emergency” if an injury has occurred or there is an immediate threat of physical harm. Individuals should always consider their personal safety first in all emergency situations. If possible, the “Emergency Response Procedure” should be followed whenever an emergency occurs.

Threat Assessment Team

The Threat Assessment Team (TAT) will perform annual reviews of the Plattsburgh Housing Authority violence program and procedures to determine the need for revisions and updates to the program and procedures. Team members are to include representatives from maintenance, occupancy, accounting, and the Executive Director. Representatives from these departments should be made available by their Supervisors for TAT participation.

Response Procedures

<p>Non-Emergency (threatening) Response Procedure</p> <p>A Threatening situation is defined as a situation where:</p> <p>One person, through intimidation words or gestures has induced fear and apprehension of physical or other harm in another person but there is no immediate danger of such harm being inflicted.</p>	<p>Emergency Response Procedure</p> <p>A situation is an emergency if:</p> <p>1) An injury has occurred 2) There is an immediate threat of physical harm.</p> <p>You should consider your personal safety first in all emergency situations. If possible you should use the following response procedure.</p>
<p>Step 1</p> <p>Employee immediately notifies Supervisor.</p>	<p>Step 1</p> <p>First person on the scene quickly assesses the situation and risk.</p>
<p>Step 2</p> <p>Supervisor conducts preliminary inquiry and makes prompt report to Executive Director.</p>	<p>Step 2</p> <p>First person on the scene calls for security/medical assistance and ensures needs of injured are met. Employee must also immediately notify supervisor of the situation.</p>
<p>Step 3</p> <p>If there has been serious misconduct or criminal behavior by a Plattsburgh Housing Authority employee, the Executive Director will contact City Police and legal counsel and take actions outlined in negotiated contract between the Plattsburgh Housing Authority and the Local 788, and NY Council 66 AFSCME.</p>	<p>Step 3</p> <p>Supervisor will immediately assess whether there is an emergency situation and make prompt report to Executive Director.</p>
<p>Or Step 3A</p> <p>If there is no immediate threat of violence nor any serious misconduct or criminal behavior by a Plattsburgh Housing Authority employee, the Executive Director will continue investigation, resolve/mediate matter and initiate disciplinary action.</p>	<p>Step 4</p> <p>The Executive Director, in an emergency situation where there is an immediate threat of violence, will ensure the Police and medical personnel have been notified.</p>
<p>Step 4</p> <p>Executive Director ensures that a written summary report of the incident and all action taken is prepared and placed in the appropriate employee file.</p>	<p>Step 5</p> <p>Proceed with Non-Emergency Response Procedures, Steps 3-5</p>
<p>Step 5</p> <p>If an emergency situation develops, follow steps for emergency response procedure</p>	

Plattsburgh Housing Authority

Workplace Violence Prevention Policy Statement

Plattsburgh Housing Authority is committed to the safety and security of our employees. Workplace violence presents a serious occupational safety hazard to our agency, staff, and clients.

Workplace Violence is defined as any physical assault or act of aggressive behavior occurring where a public employee performs any work-related duty in the course of his or her employment including but not limited to an attempt or threat, whether verbal or physical, to inflict physical injury upon an employee; any intentional display of force which would give an employee reason to fear or expect bodily harm; intentional and wrongful physical contact with a person without his or her consent that entails some injury; or stalking an employee when such stalking has arisen through and in the course of employment.

Acts of violence against any of our employees where any work-related duty is performed will be thoroughly investigated and appropriate action will be taken, including involving law enforcement authorities when warranted. All employees are responsible for helping to create an environment of mutual respect for each other as well as clients and visitors, following all policies, procedures and practices, and for assisting in maintaining a safe and secure work environment.

This policy is designed to meet the requirements of New York State Labor Law Article 2 Section 27-b and highlights some of the elements that are found within our Workplace Violence Prevention Program. The process involved in complying with this law includes a workplace evaluation that is designed to identify the risks of workplace violence to which our employees could be exposed. Authorized Employee Representative(s) will, at a minimum, be involved in:

- Evaluating the physical environment;
- Developing the Workplace Violence Prevention Program; and
- Reviewing workplace violence incident reports at least annually to identify trends in the types of incidents reported, if any, and reviewing the effectiveness of the mitigating actions taken.

All employees will participate in the annual Workplace Violence Prevention Training Program. The goal of this policy is to promote the safety and well-being of all people in our workplace. All incidents of violence or threatening behavior will be responded to immediately upon notification. All personnel are responsible for notifying the contact person designated below of any violent incidents, threatening behavior, including threats they have witnessed, received, or have been told that another person has witnessed or received.

Designated Contact Person: Mark T. Hamilton, Executive Director

Phone: 518-561-0720 Ext 228

E-mail: mark@phaplattsburgh.com

Plattsburgh Housing Authority

Workplace Violence Incident Report

1. Date of Incident: _____

2. Time of day when incident occurred: _____

3. Workplace location where incident occurred:

4. Provide a detailed description of incident below.

Note: If the case is a “privacy concern case”, remove the name of the employee who was the victim of the workplace violence and enter “PRIVACY CONCERN CASE” in the space normally used for the employee’s name. Privacy concern cases include cases involving:

- Injury or illness to an intimate body part or the reproductive system;
- Injury or illness resulting from sexual assault;
- Mental illness;
- HIV infection;
- Needle stick injuries and cuts from sharp objects that are or may be contaminated with another person’s blood or other potentially infectious material;
- Other injuries or illnesses, if the employee independently and voluntarily requests that his or her name not be entered on the report.

Description (include the following):

- Name of employee reporting the incident (unless a “privacy concern case”);
- Names and job titles of involved employees;
- Names or other identifier of other individuals involved;
- Nature and extent of injuries arising from the incident;
- Names of witnesses; and
- Events leading up to the incident and how the incident ended.
