



ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

SECTION: 500 – Health, Safety & Security	POLICY#: 503
TITLE: Workplace Violence Prevention	R & O #: 16-148
	IMPLEMENTED BY PROCEDURE #: 503-A
SPONSORING DEPT: Human Resources	
ADOPTED: 10/25/2016	REVISED: December 2024

PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to define workplace violence, establish procedures to keep staff and visitors safe and to respond to acts or threats of violence in the workplace.

APPLICABILITY: This policy and the implementing procedures apply to all employees, volunteers, interns, contractors and elected officials of Washington County (referred to collectively herein as ‘staff’)

DEFINITIONS:

“Bullying” in the workplace means a pattern of targeted, harmful mistreatment. Bullying often involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behavior that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people. It has also been described as the assertion of power through aggression. Bullying can come from both peers or from supervisors and managers.

“Stalking” means knowingly alarming or coercing another person or a member of that person’s immediate family or household by engaging in repeated and unwanted contact with the other person that causes reasonable apprehension regarding the personal safety of the employee or a member of the employee’s immediate family or household.

“Weapons” means all firearms, ammunition, clubs, brass knuckles, explosives or destructive devices. It includes knives, with the exception of pocket knives with blades that are less than four inches in length and not capable of opening automatically. This definition also includes chemical weapons and devices with the exception of pepper spray intended for personal protection, as well as stun guns, or other objects that may be considered weapons as defined in ORS 166.360(10).

“Workplace violence” means any physical or non-physical act that results in threatened or actual harm to a person or threatened or actual damage to property. It includes any threatening words or actions whether verbal or non-verbal, which creates in the mind of any reasonable person the belief that immediate or future harm to any person or property is imminent. (Exception – duly appointed law enforcement personnel when required to use force to defend persons or property.) Examples of workplace violence include but are not limited to the following:

1. Verbal or physical threats of violence, regardless of whether there is any intent to carry out the threat.
2. The possession of a weapon while in or on a public building, as defined in ORS 166.370, or any reasonable facsimile of any such weapon, on County property unless specifically authorized under ORS 166.370(3)(a-c) and (e-g) or by the County Administrator.
3. The display or use of any weapon.(Exception – duly appointed law enforcement personnel while acting within the scope of their employment).
4. Illegal use of pepper spray, defined in ORS 163.212 as reckless discharge against another person; or misuse including displaying in a threatening or intimidating manner when personal protection is not indicated.
5. Any visual or physical actions or gestures that could be reasonably perceived to be violent in nature, including physically disruptive behaviors such as slamming doors or throwing items in anger, regardless of whether or not a person is the target.
6. Bullying.
7. Any physical or sexual assault and/or offensive physical contact.
8. Obscene, threatening or harassing phone calls.
9. Stalking.
10. Threats or acts of domestic violence (including threats across social media platforms or by text) that could affect the workplace.
11. Threatening comments (including those made across social media platforms or by text) regarding or referring to violent events or behavior.
12. Intentional damage, destruction, arson, or sabotage of County property or equipment, another person’s property or equipment, or any threat to destroy County property or equipment or another person’s property or equipment.
13. Bomb threats.
14. Any other act or behavior in the workplace that could be reasonably perceived as violent.

GENERAL POLICY:

Washington County does not permit, tolerate or condone any acts of violence in the workplace directed at staff or visitors. Staff members are responsible for maintaining a safe and secure work environment by reporting threats or acts of violence in the workplace, refraining from exhibiting behavior or actions that could be interpreted as threatening or violent, and by being fully cooperative in the investigation of threats or acts of violence.

The County recognizes exceptions to this policy when sworn law enforcement officers and/or employees of the Sheriff's Office are acting within the scope of their employment, to include protecting life and property, maintaining order, securing County facilities and/or restoring peace or in the course of training scenarios. The County also recognizes that the Washington County Sheriff's Office has their own specific policy that addresses workplace violence prevention and this County policy is not intended to be used to supplant or replace that policy. Rather, it is intended to fill in any gaps between the department's policy and the county policy.

POLICY GUIDELINES:

1. Responsibilities:

1.1. The Human Resources Department shall be responsible for developing procedures to implement this policy and for monitoring compliance.

1.2. Department Directors and supervisors are responsible for informing staff about this policy and for its enforcement.

1.3 Staff must report behaviors that could be perceived as violent. (Exception – duly appointed law enforcement personnel while acting within the scope of their employment)

1.4. Department Directors, supervisors and staff shall take preventative measures to reduce the risk of workplace violence. Examples of preventative measures can be found in the Administrative Procedures corresponding to this policy (503-A).

1.5. Employees who choose to carry pepper spray for personal protection while coming to and from work may bring such items on-site but are required to store them in a secure location after arriving at their work station. (Exception—duly appointed law enforcement personnel and any others who are authorized to use pepper spray while acting within the scope of their employment.)

1.5.1 Any employee choosing to carry pepper spray for their personal protection while coming to and from work may be held responsible for the cost of property damage, cleanup or injury to others should the device discharge at work.

1.5.2 Any employee choosing to carry pepper spray for their personal protection while coming to and from work is responsible for learning how to use it in a safe and prescribed manner by reviewing training materials prepared for this purpose.

2. Weapons:

2.1. Staff members are prohibited from possessing weapons on County premises or properties, or while conducting County business. This includes housing/carrying a weapon in a private vehicle parked on County owned or leased property (see_

Prohibition of Carrying Firearms Policy). Exceptions:

- A sworn law enforcement officer while acting within the scope of their employment;
- A person summoned by a sworn law enforcement officer to assist in making an arrest or preserving the peace while the summoned person is engaged in assisting the officer;
- An active or reserve member of the military forces when engaged in the performance of duty; or
- A person who is authorized by the County to possess a weapon for the purpose of controlling a public building.

2.2. Unless otherwise specifically authorized herein, staff who are personally licensed to carry concealed weapons are prohibited from doing so on County premises or property, or while conducting County business.

3. Awareness and Reporting:

Staff must report to their supervisor, Department Director, or Human Resources representative concerning behaviors or incidents that they observe or are aware of that involve other staff, former staff, customers or visitors that may be considered workplace violence as defined by this policy. This includes but is not limited to, threats or acts of violence, aggressive behavior, offensive acts, threatening or offensive comments or remarks, possession of weapons on County property, threats of domestic violence that could be directed at a County staff member and potentially affect the workplace, restraining orders, threats of workplace violence made by members of the general public against staff or County property, or other examples provided in this policy. Staff must report these behaviors as soon as possible after the incident occurs.

4. Retaliation:

Retaliation or any adverse action taken against staff that report acts of violence, as defined by this policy, will not be tolerated. Staff must report any acts of retaliation directly to their supervisor, manager, or Human Resources representative as soon as possible after the incident occurs.

5. Searches:

- 5.1. The County reserves the right to enter and search County property with or without notice based on investigatory or operational needs. County property includes but is not limited to desks, file cabinets, computer files, e-mail, phones, lockers, work areas, toolboxes and County vehicles.
- 5.2. The County will work with law enforcement to respond to a credible threat that has been reported or acts of violence that have been committed.

5.3. The County reserves the right to search personal property in cooperation with law enforcement including but not limited to packages, briefcases, purses, bags, backpacks and similar containers as well as private vehicles parked on County property.

6. Training.

All staff are required to participate in annual workplace violence prevention and response training.

7. Exceptions:

Exceptions may only be granted by the Washington County Board of Commissioners unless such authority has been delegated to the County Administrator.

8. Implementation:

Department Directors are expected to be knowledgeable of, and shall be responsible for, implementing this policy within their respective departments.

Staff members who commit threatening or violent acts may be removed from the workplace and may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination and criminal prosecution.

9. Periodic Review:

This policy shall be reviewed by the Human Resources Department at least every three years and updated as necessary.