

Texas A&M University-Texarkana
Workplace Violence Prevention Program

Texas A&M University Police
Department
Approved December 4th,
2012
Revised January 6th, 2017

1. PURPOSE

Texas A&M University-Texarkana is committed to providing a safe working and learning environment for all members of the University community. While workplace violence is not something new to our society, it was brought to the forefront of national attention due to extreme acts of violence at public buildings and schools. This program was developed to reduce the risk of workplace violence on our campus and to become better equipped to handle violent situations should they occur.

2. PROGRAM STATEMENT

A&M-Texarkana can best perform its mission of teaching, research and public service when faculty, staff, and students all co-exist in a climate that supports the free exchange of ideas and utilizes constructive methods of conflict resolution. The University is committed to creating and maintaining an environment that is free from intimidation, threats, and violent acts. Any and all acts of intimidation, threats or acts of violence will be considered serious misconduct and will be the basis for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. These acts will be referred, when appropriate, to legal authorities. Assurance of a safe working environment is important for everyone. It is the responsibility of everyone at A&M-Texarkana to report any occurrence of intimidation, threat or violence to the appropriate supervisor. Threats, intimidation, and acts of violence will not be ignored, condoned or tolerated. The University defines these behaviors as follows:

- 2.1 Intimidation – an act towards another person, the purpose of which is to coerce, and the result of which could reasonably cause another person to fear for his or her safety or the safety of others.
- 2.2 Threat of violence – a communicated intent to inflict physical or other harm on any person or property.
- 2.3 Act of violence – exercise of physical force against another person or property.

3. GENERAL

This program will describe processes to be followed in responding to acts of intimidation, threats of violence or actual violence at A&M-Texarkana. To effectively deal with any of these acts, A&M-Texarkana will utilize the existing Emergency Management Team (EMT). This team is composed of representatives from departments who have the delegated authority to deal with these acts. In the event of any of these acts, the EMT will convene as quickly as possible to provide assistance in responding to these acts. The University Police Department will be the primary department to handle the incident until notification has been given to the EMT. However, when dealing with threats of violence or actual violence, Police duties and responsibilities will be handled in accordance with the law by the UPD, and an arrest may occur by UPD prior to the EMT meeting.

- 3.1 The Emergency Management Team is composed of the following persons or their designated representatives:
 - 3.1.1 President
 - 3.1.2 Vice President for Academic Affairs
 - 3.1.3 Vice President for Finance and Administration
 - 3.1.4 Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
 - 3.1.5 Director of Physical Plant
 - 3.1.6 Environmental Health and Safety Officer
 - 3.1.7 University Chief of Police
 - 3.1.8 Human Resources Manager
 - 3.1.9 Public Information Officer

3.2 The EMT will have the following responsibilities:

- 3.2.1 Meet and evaluate all reports of intimidation, threats or acts of violence
- 3.2.2 Develop a plan of action
- 3.2.3 Assist the victim(s) of workplace violence in obtaining needed services, such as adequate protection, restraining orders, counseling
- 3.2.4 Provide training in workplace violence prevention to all staff and faculty
- 3.2.5 Review each incident of workplace violence to determine future needs
- 3.2.6 Provide a report to the President of A&M-*Texarkana* on each incident of violence

4. SOURCES OF VIOLENCE

Violence on the A&M-*Texarkana* campus could come from any of the below listed four sources. Employees should be aware of the possibility that violence can occur on our campus and employees should plan a response to it before it happens.

4.1 Strangers

The risk of violence committed by a stranger at A&M-*Texarkana* is a moderate risk. This should include an emotionally disturbed person or someone coming on campus to commit a crime, such as a robbery, burglary or sexual assault. Crime awareness has a lot to do with crime prevention. All employees need to be aware that crime can occur anywhere and we should always be as prepared as possible. Employees who deal with money should never count it in view of the public. Simple things, such as locking up valuables in offices and the trunk of your car, not working late at night by yourself, being aware of your surroundings at all times and planning an escape route from your area should the need ever arise, can make great strides towards keeping you from being the victim of a crime.

4.2 Students

Violence by students used to be a very rare thing, but that is not the case anymore. Violence committed by youth is beginning at a much younger age and has become much more deadly. Employees must always be aware that student violence can occur on our campus. Students can be upset with grades, denial of expected benefits, or other services to which they think they are entitled. Acts of abuse by a student, whether physical or mental, against any member of the University community, will not be tolerated. Minor incidents of improper student conduct should be reported to the Director of Student Life. Student acts of abuse will subject the student of possible disciplinary action, such as probation, suspension or expulsion. More serious acts of aggression, such as threats or disorderly conduct, shall also be reported to the University Police Department (UPD).

4.3 Employees

Disputes can often arise between co-workers causing friction in the workplace. When minor friction occurs between two employees, their supervisor should step in quickly and try to defuse the situation before it escalates. An employee could also have a conflict with a supervisor. Dealing with any of these situations as soon as possible helps to prevent the situation from escalating into violence. All employees should have a good understanding of the workplace violence prevention program and the fact that all

employees will be treated equally and fairly. All employees should be aware that acts of aggression could result in disciplinary action and/or termination, depending on the circumstances. All employees will be trained in conflict and dispute resolution, which should help everyone in day-to-day dealings with fellow employees as well as student visitors.

4.4 Personal Relationships

The risk of violence from personal relationships is very real. This could include husbands or wives (divorced, separated or still together), boyfriends or girlfriends, especially if they have broken up, and any other relative or close friend. Employees who have been victims of domestic violence away from work (especially if the victim has left the suspect) should alert their supervisor that there is a possibility the violence could follow them to the workplace. The supervisor should alert the UPD as to the situation. The EMT shall be notified to discuss future appropriate actions, such as adequate security, banning the suspect from the University, assisting the employee in such things as obtaining a restraining order and counseling. Employees who are victims of violence, either at work or home, shall not be discriminated against in any way by A&M-Texarkana.

5. AGGRESSION AND THREATS OF VIOLENCE

Physical acts of aggressive behavior by anyone on the A&M-Texarkana campus should not be overlooked as a personality trait or ‘someone having a bad day.’ Any act of physical aggression, no matter how minor, should be reported to the UPD.

5.1 Immediate acts or threats

A University employee, student or visitor experiencing or aware of a threat or act of violence should contact the UPD Office by calling 6611. The EMT shall meet to decide a course of action.

5.2 Less immediate threats

When any employee is aware of a situation in which a threat of violence may exist, they should notify their supervisor immediately. The supervisor shall then notify the UPD. The UPD shall determine whether immediate action is required. If the threat has been made and the suspect is gone, the UPD shall take an initial report of the incident and shall call a meeting of the EMT as soon as possible to determine what, if any, further action is necessary.

5.3 Emergency Management Team

Once a member of the EMT is informed of a threatening situation, a meeting of the full team shall be called. The team shall analyze each case and develop a plan of action to address the situation. Types of potentially violent situations the team may address might include: threats of violence between employees, concerns over a disciplinary action involving the potential for violence, student aggression toward faculty or staff and threats of domestic violence brought onto the campus.

5.3.1 The EMT will decide:

5.3.1.1 The level of seriousness of the threat

5.3.1.2 Determine the appropriate action/response to the threat

5.3.1.3 The level of security needed

5.3.1.4 If there is a need to involve the local Police Department

5.3.1.5 If a recommendation should be made for the employee(s) to receive counseling

Once an incident is over, the EMT shall respond quickly and appropriately to the medical and psychological needs of all employees affected by a workplace violence incident. The EMT should then review the incident, collecting facts as to how and why the incident happened. This effort should be geared toward preventing recurrence of the situation and not faultfinding. The EMT can then recommend corrective action, considering changes in controls, procedures or policy.

6. PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR

In keeping with this policy, A&M-Texarkana prohibits any employee from engaging in any act either on University property or during the performance of work-related duties elsewhere that threatens the safety of any person, affects the health, life or well-being of any person, or results in damage to property owned by the University or any person.

6.1 Such acts include, but are not limited to:

6.1.1 Threatening, intimidating, coercing, harassing, or assaulting any person

6.1.2 Sexually harassing any person

6.1.3 Carrying concealed weapons on University property

6.1.4 Using, duplicating, or possessing keys to buildings or offices within a building that you are not authorized to have

6.1.5 Stealing, or attempting to steal, property of the University or any other person

6.1.6 Damaging or attempting to damage, property owned by the University or any other person

7. REPORTING PROCEDURES

One of the best ways to reducing the risk of violence in any workplace is reporting what we see and hear in a prompt manner. In almost all of the tragic high school shootings in the U.S. over the last few years, the suspect(s) talked to other people about what they were going to do before the incident happened and either no one believed them, or they failed to tell anyone in authority about the threat.

All A&M-Texarkana employees are responsible for reporting threats that they have witnessed, received, or have been told that another person has witnessed or received. Employees should also report any behavior they have witnessed which they regard as threatening or violent when that behavior is or might be carried out on University property. Employees should contact the UPD at 6611. Any violent or threatening act committed by or against a student should also be reported. Reports of violence will be handled as confidentially as possible, and information will only be disseminated on a need-to-know basis. Employees who report acts of violence will be protected and should not fear reprisals for bringing their concerns to their supervisor. Once an incident does occur, the EMT will meet and evaluate the threat and decide on an appropriate course of action.

8. RESPONDING TO DISRUPTIVE, THREATENING OR VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

Listed below are suggested ways to deal with a person exhibiting any of the above types of behavior. As stated, these are only suggestions and cannot be expected to work in every situation.

8.1 Follow Step 1 for general response to disruptive behavior (no threats or weapons)

- 8.1.1 Respond quietly and calmly. Try and defuse the situation
- 8.1.2 Do not take the behavior personally. Usually, the behavior has little to do with you, but you are used as a target in the situation
- 8.1.3 Ask questions. Respectful concern and interest may demonstrate that aggression is not necessary
- 8.1.4 Consider offering an apology for what happened. Even if you've done nothing wrong, an apology may calm the individual and encourage cooperation. *"I'm sorry that happened. What can we do now that will help solve the problem?"*
- 8.1.5 Summarize what you hear the individual saying. Make sure you are communicating clearly. In a crisis, a person may feel humiliated and wants respect and attention. Your summary of the person's concerns reflects your attention. Focus on areas of agreement to help resolve the concern.
- 8.1.6 If this approach does not stop the disruption, assess whether the individual seems dangerous at this point. If, in your best opinion, he/she is upset but not a threat, set limits and seek assistance as needed.

8.2 Follow Step 2 if Step 1 response is ineffective and individual DOES NOT seem dangerous

- 8.2.1 Calmly and firmly set limits. *"Please lower your voice. There will be no disruptions in this office. Please be patient so that I can understand what your need and try to help you."*
- 8.2.2 Ask the individual to stop the behavior and warn that official action may be taken. *"Disruption is subject to University disciplinary action so you need to calm down or you may be reported."*
- 8.2.3 If the disruption continues despite a warning, tell the subject that they may be disciplined or prosecuted. Tell them the discussion is over and direct them to leave the office. *"Please leave now. If you don't, we will call the Police."*
- 8.2.4 If the individual still refuses to leave after being told to do so, advise them that this refusal is subject to discipline, exclusion from work, or arrest. Call UPD at 6611 and seek immediate help from other co-workers to stand by until Police can arrive.

8.3 Follow Step 3 if Step 1 response is ineffective and the individual SEEMS DANGEROUS

- 8.3.1 Use a calm, non-confrontational approach to defusing the situation. Indicate your desire to listen and understand the problem
- 8.3.2 Do not isolate yourself with an individual who may seem dangerous. Maintain a safe distance from the subject and don't turn your back to him/her
- 8.3.3 Never touch the individual yourself to try and remove them from the area. Even a gentle push or holding the person's arm may be interpreted as an assault by an agitated person who may respond with violence toward you or file a lawsuit against you later
- 8.3.4 Try and set limits on the individual's behavior. *"Please lower your voice. Please stop shouting (or using profanity)."*

- 8.3.5 Signal for assistance if you think the situation is getting out of control. It would be a good idea to have a prearranged 'distress' signal with a co-worker to have them check on you or call the police if needed, such as 10-10 which means disturbance.
- 8.3.6 Do not mention discipline or the police if the subject has become very angry and you fear a violent response
- 8.3.7 If the situation escalates, try to find a way to leave the area as quickly as possible and call UPD.

9. EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

For crimes in progress, violent incidents or specific threats of imminent violence, notify the UPD (6611) immediately.

When confronted with a situation where another person is armed with a weapon or you're not sure if that person is armed, but they are behaving in such a manner that causes you to fear for your safety or that of another, immediately contact the UPD. If possible, use a phone out of sight/hearing of the individual. Do not attempt to intervene physically or deal with the situation yourself. It is critical that the police take charge of any incident that can or does involve physical harm, especially if a suspect is armed. Get yourself and others to safety as quickly as possible. If you don't have an exit away from the subject, lock yourself in a room and call 9-911. If possible, keep an open line to the police until they arrive. If you cannot stay on the line, give the police dispatcher as much information as possible and tell them where you are located so they can come to you.

10. TRAINING

Knowing what to do before a serious incident occurs can help prevent injury and possibly even save lives. A basic Workplace Violence Prevention Seminar will be offered to all employees. Employees hired after the initial offering will receive training when available. The EMT shall meet on a yearly basis to decide what, if any, new training is needed or required for University employees

11. RECORD KEEPING

The UPD shall keep a record of workplace violence incidents, no matter how minor. Serious incidents that require more than first aid shall be reported to EH&S office as well. These records will help in selecting the appropriate level of controls to prevent recurrence and in determining future training.

3.2 The EMT will have the following responsibilities:

- 3.2.1 Meet and evaluate all reports of intimidation, threats or acts of violence
- 3.2.2 Determine whether local Police Department should be involved
- 3.2.3 Develop a plan of action
- 3.2.4 Assist the victim(s) of workplace violence in obtaining needed services, such as adequate protection, restraining orders, counseling
- 3.2.5 Provide training in workplace violence prevention to all staff and faculty
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