

COOK COUNTY WORKPLACE VIOLENCE POLICY

I. Purpose and Policy

- A. Cook County is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for employees and the public. Workplace violence is the second leading cause of work-related death in the United States. The purpose of this Policy is to prevent and address violent acts in the Cook County workplace so as to lessen the risk of harm to employees and others.
- B. This Policy is intended to provide guidelines for preventing, reporting and investigating incidents of violence in the workplace, as well as formulating appropriate remedial action. It is not intended to substitute for or discourage reporting of incidents of workplace violence to the appropriate law enforcement authorities. Nothing in this Policy is intended to nor shall be construed to create any private cause of action against the County of Cook or any of its employees, nor shall it be construed to create any contractual or other rights or expectations. However, nothing herein is intended to affect any existing civil or other remedy which may be available to any person arising out of an incident of violence in the workplace.
- C. Allegations of violence committed by or against sworn police officers and security personnel in the course of their official duties are not covered by this Policy and shall be referred to the appropriate authorities. However, this Policy covers such employees insofar as violence may result from interaction with co-workers, or fall outside the scope of their duties.

II. Definition of Workplace Violence

Workplace violence, as used in this Policy, includes but is not limited to, written or verbal communications, whether direct or indirect, which are of a threatening, intimidating or coercive nature; the use or threat of physical force, stalking; vandalism or destruction of property; and the use or possession of any weapon and/or ammunition, unless the specific weapon, ammunition, or use is authorized by the County for a particular work assignment, and used as authorized.

III. Coverage

Cook County's Policy on workplace violence applies to all County employees. Employees who violate this Policy may be subject to legal action as appropriate. Violation of this Policy by an employee may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with the applicable law, rule or collective bargaining agreement.

IV. Responsibilities of County Employees

- A.** Each County Department Head, manager/supervisor and employee shall work cooperatively regarding the implementation of this Policy.
- B.** Department Heads or their designees shall be responsible for the implementation of this Policy; for the receipt of and reporting of all incidents or violence and orders of protection reported by employees in their departments, for the investigation of reports of violence in their departments and for preparing recommendations for appropriate remedial action.
- C.** Department Heads or their designees shall be responsible for implementing and maintaining safe workplace practices, including this Policy, and for communicating this Policy to the employees under their direction.
- D.** All employees and managers/supervisors, shall immediately report incidents of violence in the workplace or any potentially dangerous situation to their respective managers/supervisors, and, where appropriate, to law enforcement authorities.
- E.** All employees, managers/supervisors, shall notify their respective manager/supervisor when an order of protection has been obtained naming County premises, and are encouraged, but not required, to make such notification when an order of protection is obtained that involves himself/herself.
- F.** Department Heads and their designees shall be responsible for oversight of the County's implementation of this Policy; development of a Cook County Violence in the Workplace Procedural Manual, which will include, but will not be limited to, incident assessment and investigation procedures; investigation of incidents of violence; recommendations for appropriate remedial action; and recommendations concerning prevention of violence in the workplace.
- G.** All employees, managers/supervisors, shall cooperate in the course of an investigation under this Policy.

H. In the event that workplace violence results in injuries requiring immediate medical attention, appropriate emergency services shall immediately be contacted as well as building security. If the injured party is a County employee, that employee, if circumstances allow, shall report said incident to a manager. If a County employee, other than the injured party, becomes aware of an injury, that employee shall report said incident to a manager. The incident shall then be reported to the Department Head or his or her designee. All employees shall cooperate with law enforcement, fire, medical and other emergency personnel. Department Heads and their designees will be responsible for monitoring incoming calls and recording actions taken in response to the crisis situation.

V. Investigation

Department Heads or their designees shall promptly investigate each report of an incident of workplace violence. Employees and other witnesses may be questioned concerning incidents of workplace violence. Department Heads or their designees shall contact law enforcement authorities whenever a possible violation of criminal law is discovered during an investigation. An investigative report, with recommendations for remedial and/or disciplinary shall then be prepared.

VI. Non-Retaliation

Retaliation against any employee who makes a good faith complaint or report of workplace violence or participates in or aids in the investigation of a complaint under this Policy is prohibited. Any person who believes that he or she has been subject to such retaliation shall bring it to the attention of the appropriate Department Head and his or her designee.

VII. False or Frivolous complaints

False or frivolous charges refer to situations in which the accuser is consciously making a false accusation pertaining to a workplace violence issue. It does not refer to charges made in good faith which ultimately cannot be proven. Given the seriousness of the consequences for the accused, a false or frivolous charge is a severe offense that is cause for disciplinary action.

VIII. Confidentiality

Consistent with the necessity of prevention of workplace violence, the privacy of the reporting employee and the investigation of violence in the workplace, all reports and investigations of workplace violence will be kept confidential to the extent practicable under the circumstances. The reports and investigations of workplace violence are not subject to public disclosure except as may be necessary for disciplinary action or as otherwise required by law.

IX. Training

Department Heads and their designees shall conduct violence in the workplace training for managers/supervisors. The managers/supervisors shall be responsible for communicating this Policy to the employees under their direction.