

Zero Tolerance of Workplace Violence

Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals Policy & Plan

FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE STATEWIDE POLICY. The State of Minnesota hereby adopts a policy of zero tolerance of violence. It is state policy that every person in the state has a right to live free from violence.

DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE. Violence is words and actions that hurt people. Violence is the abusive or unjust exercise of power, intimidation, harassment and/or the threatened or actual use of force which results in or has a high likelihood of causing hurt, fear, injury, suffering or death.

Workplace violence generally falls into three categories:

1. A violent act or threat (real or perceived) by a current or former employee, supervisor, or manager, or someone who has some involvement with a current or former employee, such as an employee's spouse, significant other, relative or another person who has a dispute with an employee.
2. A violent act or threat (real or perceived) by someone served by the agency.
3. A violent act by someone totally unrelated to the work environment. The purpose of the visit is to commit a criminal act such as robbery or bombing.

The Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals recognizes violent acts are frequently the end result of long-standing disputes or unresolved arguments that can begin with a disrespectful comment or action that escalates to more serious levels of violence. Violence often begins with such acts as name-calling or other negative comments which progress to pushing, shoving, or shouting that can escalate into physical assaults such as shootings.

The Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals recognizes that to foster a workplace where violence is less likely to occur, it is important to look at the complete workplace climate rather than just how to respond to incidents of violence in the workplace. We must be aware of outside factors that impact safety, such as the spill-over effects of family violence into the workplace.

AGENCY GOAL STATEMENT ON WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

The Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals will work to ensure a safe working environment for employees and clients and to prevent workplace violence. Further, all employees will:

- Not engage in or tolerate any abuse or violence in the workplace.
- Treat others with respect and dignity.
- Recognize the need to ensure their own safety when in the office.

AGENCY POLICY

It is the policy of the Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals and the responsibility of judges, supervisors, and all employees to maintain a workplace free from threats and acts of violence. The Agency will work to provide a safe work environment for employees and visitors. Each employee and everyone we come in contact with deserves to be treated with courtesy and respect. This will be accomplished by encouraging mutual respect among all individuals, establishing open and honest communication, and enforcing "zero tolerance" for any type of violent behavior. The Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals will strive to foster a work environment that is free from violence for its employees and clientele by:

- Making all employees aware of the zero tolerance for violence policy
 - A copy of this policy will be provided to the employees
 - A copy of this policy will be posted on the office notice bulletin board
- Ensuring employees conduct themselves within identified guidelines of acceptable behavior
 - Employees will treat each other and clients with respect and dignity
 - Employees are expected to assist co-workers and clients in a professional, calm, pleasant manner.
 - The following behaviors will not be tolerated: shouting, name-calling, swearing or other obscene language, throwing things, pushing, making threats, stalking, hitting, viciously making fun of others, slapping, grabbing, pinching, inappropriate touching, bullying, intimidation, harassment, obscene gestures, negative racial or sexual comments, rape, assault, or carrying weapons.
- Responding to security concerns immediately.
- Investigating all reported threats or acts of violence and taking appropriate disciplinary and/or legal action.