

# Workplace Violence Prevention

(Paper-Based Version – intended for printed distribution only)

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## Course Introduction

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### Office of Safety, Security and Protection (OSSP)

By continuing, you acknowledge awareness of the United States Department of Agriculture's **Zero Tolerance Policy** for Workplace Violence.

## Course Details

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\*\*\*\*\* ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY AT USDA \*\*\*\*\*

### Purpose and Scope

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) remains committed to creating and maintaining a diverse and inclusive workplace free from workplace violence.

USDA's policy is intended to promote a safe environment for our employees, contractors, and the visiting public; and to maintain a work environment that is free from violence, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior, through engagement of our employees. The USDA's policy prohibits any and all forms of violence, including threats of violence.

All employees and contractors must help to prevent workplace violence and shall take immediate and appropriate action when it occurs.

***This program guidance is intended to cover employees, contractors, and visitors within all USDA facilities.***

## Training Objectives

- Define workplace violence
- Review USDA workplace violence policies
- Discuss Post-COVID return to workplace
- Review workplace violence
  - Background
  - Warning signs
  - Workplace violence behaviors
  - Categories of workplace violence
  - Escalation levels
  - Action steps
- Provide contact information
- Appendices and questions

## Workplace Violence Policy

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### What is Workplace Violence?

Workplace violence is any act of violence against persons or property; threats; intimidation; harassment, or other inappropriate, disruptive behavior that causes fear for personal safety at the work site. Workplace violence can involve employees, visitors, contractors, and other non-federal employees.

Many triggers in work environment can cause workplace violence. It may even be the result of non-work-related situations such as domestic violence, “road rage,” or hate incidents or crime. Workplace violence can be inflicted by an abusive employee, a manager, supervisor, co-worker, customer, family member, or even a stranger.

***USDA Zero Tolerance Policy: Violent behavior of any kind or threats of violence, either implied or direct against persons or property will not be tolerated.***

### Setting Policy Standards

Remember that it is ***USDA’s policy*** that every customer and employee be treated fairly and equitably, with dignity and respect. This policy applies not only to how you as an employee should act, but also to how you deserve to be treated by others.

***There is zero tolerance for workplace violence and other prohibited behaviors at USDA.***

### Workplace Violence Policies

Violent behavior of any kind or threats of violence, either implied or direct, against persons or property will not be tolerated. This includes acts of intimidation or harassment, or other prohibited behavior which causes fear for personal safety.

Workplace Violence Policies include:

USDA Departmental Regulation 4200-001, Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Program: <https://www.usda.gov/directives/dr-4200-001>

DR 4430-792-1, Employee Assistance Program: <https://www.usda.gov/directives/dr-4430-792-1>

DR 4710-001, Alternative Dispute Resolution: <https://www.usda.gov/directives/dr-4710-001>

USDA Handbook on Workplace Violence and Prevention:  
<https://www.dm.usda.gov/workplace.pdf>

5 United States Code § 2302 Prohibited Personnel Practices:  
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2019-title5/html/USCODE-2019-title5-partIII.htm>

USDA Departmental Regulation 4070-735-001, Employee Responsibilities and Conduct: <https://www.usda.gov/directives/dr-4070-735-001>

## Returning to USDA

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### Returning Workforce to USDA - Post COVID

As USDA begins a Post-COVID-19 return to work, supporting employees is critical in creating a safe environment. Safety measures, such as sanitizing protocols and respiratory hygiene, are vital considerations for physical wellness in the workplace. Taking a broader view of employee health that also includes emotional and social wellness can help employees manage uncertainty, engage in the workplace and adjust to a “new normal.”

USDA Leadership strives to support all USDA employees through their safe return to the physical workplace during this time. Supervisors and employees are encouraged to maintain open, honest communication.

*It is imperative to create the safest possible environment  
for USDA employees, contractors, and visitors.*

## Employee Assistance Program

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## Returning Workforce to USDA - EAP Engagement

The **Employee Assistance Program** is a short-term assessment and referral service to help employees deal with emotional, behavioral and well-being issues that may be affecting their work. The EAP is free of charge, and is open to employees and their immediate family members. Family members who share a household and dependent children who may be away at school are all eligible for EAP services.

The Employee Assistance Program is available 24/7, and includes access to:

- Licensed/certified counselors
- Licensed attorneys
- Qualified financial consultants

The USDA Employee Assistance Program Roster is available here:

<https://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/employeerelations/drugfree/docs/EAPC+Contact+Roster+20211007.pdf>

## Workplace Violence Background

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Workplace violence is an issue facing all Federal agencies today.

Why is it important for employees to report workplace violence?

Workplace violence can cause:

- Employees to be hurt emotionally
- Reduced productivity
- Increased absenteeism
- The work of the agency to be jeopardized
- Employees to be fearful of others
- Reduced workplace morale

***Violent behavior may be subject to criminal prosecution and/or disciplinary action up to and including removal from Federal Service.***

## Warning Signs of Potential Violence

Recognizing the behaviors and attitudes that may be potential indicators of disruptive, threatening, or violent behavior, may assist in prevention. People rarely commit a violent act with no warning. A violent act is almost always preceded by several warning signs or changes in behavior.

Consider the totality of the below behaviors, and don't focus on one isolated act. This list is a summary of behaviors displayed by individuals who have at times committed violent acts. The purpose of this list is to heighten your awareness and to help you to determine if you have a cause for concern:

- Morally superior, self-righteous
- Feels entitled to special rights and their desire to manipulate rules
- Feels wronged, humiliated, degraded; wants revenge
- Is isolated or a loner
- Is preoccupied with weapons
- Has known history of violence
- Believes themselves to have no choices or options for action, **except violence**
- Has communicated specific proposed act(s) of disruption or violence

## Behaviors of Workplace Violence

What are Workplace Violence Behaviors?

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Workplace violence includes violent acts or threats of violence in the workplace, including bullying, disruptive, threatening, and violent behavior. Incidents do not need to include assaults and/or weapons to be considered workplace violence.

**Bullying behavior** is repeated, abusive conduct that is threatening, humiliating, or intimidating, that prevents work from getting done.

**Disruptive behavior** disturbs, interferes with or prevents normal work functions or activities. Examples include yelling, using profanity, waving arms or fists, verbally abusing others, and refusing reasonable requests for identification.

**Threatening behavior** includes physical actions short of actual contact/injury, general oral or written threats to people or property, as well as implicit threats. Examples include moving closer aggressively, and statements like “You better watch your back,” or “you’ll be sorry.”

**Violent behavior** includes any physical assault, with or without weapons. Violent behavior includes actions or words that endanger or harm an employee or client, as well as actions that lead a person to reasonably believe that they are in danger, or specific threats to inflict physical harm. Examples include throwing things, pounding on a desk or door, destroying property, and threats to shoot a named individual.

**Possession, use, or threat of use of a firearm, explosive, or other dangerous weapon in a Federal facility.** Only exceptions included in 18 USC §930 will be permitted:

([http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode18/usc\\_sec\\_18\\_00000930----000-.html](http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode18/usc_sec_18_00000930----000-.html))

- Lawful performance of official duties by an officer, agent, or employee of the United States, a State, or a political subdivision thereof, who is authorized by law to engage in or supervise the prevention, detection, investigation, or prosecution of any violation of law.

## Categories of Workplace Violence

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Workplace Violence can be categorized into four different types. The types are: Violence by Strangers, Violence by Customers/Clients, Violence by Co-workers, and Violence by Personal Relations.

### Type 1 - Violence by Strangers

This is violence committed by an assailant who has no legitimate business relationship with the USDA and usually enters the affected workplace to commit a robbery or other criminal act. Employees who have face-to-face contact and exchange money with the public, work late at night and into the early morning hours, and work alone or in very small numbers are at greater risk.

### Type 2 - Violence by Customers/Clients

This is violence committed by an assailant who either receives services from or through the USDA. Assailants can be current or former customers, or clients.

### Type 3 - Violence by Co-workers

This involves violence by an assailant who has some employment-related involvement with the USDA; for example, a current or former employee, supervisor or manager. Any workplace can be at risk of violence by a co-worker. While engaging in bullying, issuing a threat, or committing an assault, the individual's actions are motivated by perceived difficulties in his or her relationship with the victim or with the affected workplace, and the individual may seek revenge for perceived unfair treatment. There are many forms of workplace violence among co-workers. Unfortunately, the one form that receives the most attention is workplace homicide. Some examples of the most frequently encountered situations among co-workers are:

- Verbal abuse including offensive, profane and vulgar language;
- Intimidating or frightening others;
- Actions which damage, destroy, or sabotage property;
- Physically aggressive acts, such as shaking fists at another person, kicking, pounding on desks, punching a wall, angrily jumping up and down, screaming at others;

- Threats (direct or indirect), made in person or through letters, phone calls, or electronic mail;
- Harassing, stalking, or showing undue focus on another person;
- Physical assault upon oneself or another person; and
- Concealing or using a weapon.

## Type 4 - Violence by Personal Relations

This includes incidents of domestic violence at the workplace by an assailant who confronts an individual with whom he or she has or had a personal relationship outside of work. Personal relations include a current or former spouse, family member, friend or acquaintance. The assailant's actions can be motivated by perceived difficulties in the relationship or by psycho-social factors that are specific to the assailant. Domestic violence accounted for **27% of violent events** in the workplace during 2021. If the victim has sought shelter or a restraining order, the workplace is frequently where the perpetrator will confront the victim.

## Workplace Violence Escalation Levels

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### Level 1

Early Warning Signs may include: intimidating/bullying; uncooperative behavior; and/or verbal abuse.

Response:

- Immediately report concerns to a supervisor for assistance.
- Call into the USDA Workplace Violence Hotline at **202-603-5366**.
- Report concerns to the OIG Hotline at **800-424-9121**.

### Level 2

Escalation of Situation may include arguing with customers, co-workers, and management; refusing to obey USDA agency policies and procedures; sabotage of equipment and stealing property; verbalizing wishes to hurt co-workers and/or management; sending threats to co-workers and/or management; and/or seeing self as victimized by management.

Response:

- Your personal safety comes first. Leave the area if needed.
- If the situation requires immediate medical and/or law enforcement personnel, escalate to Local Law Enforcement, or dial **911**.
- Immediately report concerns to a supervisor for assistance.

- Contact USDA Workplace Violence Hotline at **202-603-5366**.

### Level 3

Further Escalation may include suicidal threats; physical fights or assaults; destruction of property; displays of extreme rage or physically aggressive acts and/or utilization of weapons to harm others.

Response:

- Your personal safety comes first. Leave the area if needed.
- If the situation requires immediate medical and/or law enforcement personnel, escalate to Local Law Enforcement, or dial **911**.
- If possible, contact others who may be in danger.
- Immediately report concerns to a supervisor for assistance.
- Contact USDA Workplace Violence Hotline at **202-603-5366**.

## Occupant Emergency, Safety and Security Resources

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### EMERGENCIES

Contact Local Law Enforcement or call **911**.

### SAFETY & SECURITY CONCERNS

Contact your Facility Security, Local Law Enforcement, Federal Protective Services (FPS), and/or **911**.

Contact USDA's Workplace Violence Hotline at **202-603-5366**.

National Capital Region (NCR) only: Call the Security Control Center at **202-720-0000**.

### OCCUPANT EMERGENCY PLAN (OEP)

Contact your Facility Manager for your Emergency Occupant Plan.

## Additional Resources

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Publications:



*“Dealing with Workplace Violence, a Guide for Agency Planners,”* Office of Personnel Management.

*“USDA Departmental Regulation 4200-1 dated May 31, 2000,” “Workplace Violence Prevention Program,”* and *“What You Should Know About Coping With Threats and Violence in the Federal Workplace,”* Federal Protective Service, General Services Administration.

*“Dealing With Workplace Conflicts and Concerns, A guide for Employees,”* USDA Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center.

## Resource Websites:

USDA Workplace Violence Coordinators Contact Roster:

<https://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/employeeerelations/docs/WVPPC+Contact+Roster+20211007.pdf>

USDA Employee Assistance Program:

<https://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/employeeerelations/drugfree/docs/EAPC+Contact+Roster+20211007.pdf>

Department of Labor Workplace Violence Program:

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/human-resources-center/policies/workplace-violence-program>

Occupational Safety and Health Act: [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

## Course Conclusion

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This completes the Workplace Violence Prevention Training course.