

SERENITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEMS

SUBJECT: Preventing Workplace Violence
POLICY NUMBER: HR-55
EFFECTIVE DATE: January 2002
SUPERSEDES: N/A
LAST REVISION DATE: December 2008

POLICY:

It is the policy of Serenity Behavioral Health Systems (SBHS) to be concerned about the health and safety of all individuals. SBHS employees, supervisors, and managers are to use safe work practices; follow policies, procedures and directives; and assist in maintaining a safe and secure work environment.

GENERAL PROVISIONS:

- I. Employees, supervisors and managers are expected to maintain a professional and businesslike relationship with fellow employees, clients, patients, customers, vendors, and all other work-related contacts.
- II. SBHS will not tolerate acts of violence in the workplace, while on duty, or while off duty when the act is directed toward a work-related contact, or otherwise bears a relationship to work.
- III. Examples of prohibited behavior include but not limited to:
 - A. Threatening, abusive, or intimidating language or written material;
 - B. Fighting or other acts of violence whether directed toward a manager, supervisor, co-worker, person, patient, customer, vendor or any other individual while on duty or representing SBHS;
 - C. Stalking;
 - D. Possession of weapons on the work premises unless specifically authorized due to the nature of work performed.
- IV. SBHS reserves the right to conduct reasonable searches on any type of SBHS property, including but not limited to desks, lockers, work areas, state vehicles, etc.
- V. Everyone should remain alert and be familiar with their surroundings in order to recognize potentially serious situations. Most acts of targeted workplace violence are preceded by direct or indirect threats. Employees at all levels must take all threats seriously and report them as soon as possible.

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AVOID HIRING POTENTIAL VIOLATORS:

One of the best ways to reduce or prevent workplace violence is to avoid hiring individuals who are likely to be perpetrators of such violence. If selected applicants are to drive state or personal vehicles for work related purposes, verification of valid driver's licenses and appropriate vehicle insurance is required.

- I. Applications for employment should be carefully reviewed. Explanation of gaps in employment history should be requested. Clarification on any other unclear areas should be sought.
- II. Dates of previous and current employment should be verified.
- III. Reasons given for leaving previous employers should be reviewed.
- IV. Employment references, including previous/current employer, should be checked.
- V. Criminal background records must be checked, in accordance with SBHS Policy HR-41: Criminal History Records Check.
- VI. Tests for the presence of illegal drugs should be conducted, if authorized for the job. Whenever possible, results should be received prior to selected applicants reporting to work.
- VII. Applicants may be asked if they have ever been charged with acts or threatened acts of violence or released from employment for these reasons.

WARNING SIGNS:

- I. Individuals may exhibit certain behaviors that may be warning signs of potential violent behavior. The presence of these behaviors, however, does not necessarily mean that someone is about to commit a violent act. Others may not exhibit any unusual behavior prior to committing acts or threatened acts of violence. Employees, supervisors, and managers should be aware of circumstances or behaviors, including but not limited to:
 - A. Recent disciplinary action, passed over for a promotion, or pending separation;
 - B. No outside interests, such as family life, hobbies or friends;
 - C. A loner;
 - D. Often blames others for problems, has difficulty accepting authority or refuses to accept responsibility;

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- E. May be going through personal problems such as a family crisis or illness;
 - F. May have a history of substance abuse;
 - G. May have financial problems;
 - H. Fascinated with guns and weapons and may discuss gun ownership at work;
 - I. Has a history of violent behavior and may frequently discuss past incidents of violence;
 - J. Has made direct or indirect threats of violence toward co-workers or others; or,
 - K. Added stress in the workplace due to impending layoffs or staff reductions.
- II. If appropriate, employees exhibiting potential problems should be referred to a behavioral health service program, which specializes in behavioral problem/issues.

REPORTING ACTS OR THREATENED ACTS OF VIOLENCE:

- I. Employees are responsible for notifying their supervisors, Human Resources Manager, or the Chief Executive Officer of all acts or threatened acts of violence. Failure of an employee to report such acts or threats of violence shall be considered a basis for disciplinary action up to and including separation from employment.

NOTE: Safety precautions should be put in place, if determined appropriate, as soon as incidents are reported. Staff should be warned of potential danger if directly involved or likely to be involved.

- II. Employees must notify their supervisors, Human Resources Manager or Chief Executive Officer when any restraining order has been initiated by or against them. This includes issues of a personal nature (e.g., domestic disputes, stalking, etc.) when the workplace could be affected.

NOTE: A restraining order may be sought by SBHS on behalf of employees under circumstances where employees are threatened or harmed due to the performance of work-related duties. The Chief Executive Officer should be contacted for assistance.

- III. A Workplace Acts or Threatened Acts of Violence Report (SBHS Form 873) must be completed by the employee, supervisor, or any person who becomes aware of the situation. This report is also to be completed by the receiver of anonymous reports. The completed report is to be immediately forwarded to the Human Resource Department for review.

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- IV. Employees who report acts or threatened acts of violence are protected from retaliation. Any acts of retaliation should be reported to Human Resources Department as soon as possible.
- V. All alleged acts or threatened acts of violence are to be taken seriously including anonymous reports.
- VI. Any recurring or continuing alleged or threatened acts of work related violence on or off of the work premises should be immediately reported.

INVESTIGATING PROCEDURES:

- I. All alleged acts or threats of violence would be reviewed by appropriate managers. When the nature of the alleged threat or act of violence warrants investigation, the means of investigating shall be determined by the Chief Executive Officer in conjunction with the Human Resources Manager. Available resources for the investigations include the Office of Fraud and Abuse, Office of Human Resources Management, local management and local law enforcement. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation may be used with the approval of the Chief Executive Officer.
- II. Investigations are to begin as soon as possible.
- III. Witnesses may be interviewed in person or by telephone, as determined necessary or appropriate.
- IV. Written statements may be requested.
- V. In the absence of an emergency, the accused employee/individual should be interviewed and given the opportunity to provide information regarding the alleged incident(s). The accused employee/individual should not be interviewed if this would create significant potential for harm to any individual.

NOTE: If the investigation involves non-employees, investigators should consult with appropriate officials (e.g., law enforcement) regarding available investigative options.

- VI. When an investigation of an alleged threat or acts of violence is conducted, a written report containing findings and recommended actions should be completed within fifteen (15) calendar days of the reported incident(s).
- VII. The investigative report will be forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer for review, and potential action.
- VIII. Individuals in a “need to know” status will be informed of the findings and action.

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- IX. The employees/individual who reported the acts or threatened acts of violence also will be informed of the findings and action. These employees/individuals are to report any reoccurrences of acts or threatened acts of violence to their supervisors, Chief Executive Officer or the Human Resources Manager as soon as possible.

CORRECTIVE ACTION:

- I. The penalty for acts of violence shall be separation. The penalty for threats of violence shall be separation, in the absence mitigation evidence as determined by management in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer.
- II. When mitigating evidence exists and accused employees are retained, they should be referred to a behavioral health services program that deals with behavioral problems/issues, if determined appropriate.
- III. If separation occurs, all items belonging to the department (e.g., keys, identification badge, access cards, etc.) are to be retrieved immediately.
- IV. Post separation monitoring should occur to ensure the safety of those involved.
- V. If action-involving non-employees is necessary, the appropriate supervisor, Chief Executive Officer or Human Resources Manager should be contacted.

REFERENCE:

- I. SBHS Human Resource Personnel Policy HR11-Standards of Conduct and Ethics in Government

ATTACHMENTS:

- I. [Workplace Acts or Threatened Acts of Violence Report](#) SBHS Form 873

APPROVAL SECTION:

Chief Executive Officer

Date

Committee Chairperson

Date

RESCISSION SECTION:

Chief Executive Officer

Date

REVIEW SECTION:

Committee Chairperson

Date

Committee Chairperson

Date

Committee Chairperson

Date