Title: Workplace Violence

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to provide direction and resources for violence in the workplace in order to provide a work environment that is safe, secure and free of harassment, threats, intimidation and violence in accordance with appropriate federal (e.g. Code of Federal Regulations [CFR]) and state law (i.e. Ohio Revised Code, Ohio Administrative Code) Governor directives and executive orders, other governing agency (e.g. DAS, OBM) policy or guidance, and/or Executive Director expectations.

II. APPLICABILITY

This procedure applies to all employees and contractors (e.g. temporary employees, personal services).

III. DEFINITIONS

**Active Aggressor** – an individual who is actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined or populated area or attempting to cause harm to as many people as possible and in most cases, using firearms with no pattern or method to their selection of victims.

**Field Office** – location where an OOD employee is headquartered (e.g. OOD field office, County one-stop, educational services center, and school).

**Safety Coordinator** – an employee at OOD who assists in the safe and orderly direction of people to either a place of refuge or to a designated safety zone in the event of a disaster or emergency requiring evacuation. A Safety Coordinator also assists during a medical emergency to ensure notification of emergency responders. The Department of Administrative Services refers to these staff as “Floor Wardens.”
Threats or Acts of Violence – Threats or acts of violence include, but are not limited to, conduct against persons or property that is sufficiently severe, offensive, or intimidating to alter the conditions of state employment, or to create a hostile, abusive, or intimidating work environment for one or more OOD employees, OOD contractors, individuals with disabilities, or the general public.

Workplace Violence – threats or acts of violence which include but are not limited to: ones that occur on state property, regardless of the relationship between the state and the individual involved in the incident; ones that do not occur on state property but involve someone who is acting in the capacity of a representative of OOD or an employee of OOD if these threats or acts affect the legitimate interests of the state; and if the threats or acts result in the conviction of an employee or agent of OOD or of an individual performing services on the OOD’s behalf on a contract basis, under any criminal code provision relating to these threats or acts that adversely affect the legitimate interests of the state.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Employees and contractors should take the following precautions to remain safe in the workplace.

1. All meetings held in public locations should be held at sites where there is easy access to other people.

2. An Emergency Information Card (50-LR-03.A) should be attached to individual’s OOD issued identification badge.

3. Individuals working in an OOD field office should work with their supervisor to identify safety strategies for their location.

4. Employees who meet with the public must maintain accurate up-to-date itineraries and provide this information to their supervisor or designee as determined by division policy/procedure.

5. Under SEIU/District 1199 collective bargaining agreement, 1199 employees, “may request back up help in making home visits prior to 6:00 pm in areas which are dangerous. That back up help shall be provided or the client’s appointment shall be rescheduled in the office.”

6. Employees must maintain current personal and emergency contact information in OAKS.

B. Employees and contractors who encounter a suspicious person or potential active threat situation in their work area shall proceed as detailed below.

1. If a suspicious person is encountered, assess the person so that if required, a description of the suspicious person could be provided to building security/management and/or an OOD management representative. A description would include, but not be limited to the following:
   a. age;
   b. gender;
   c. race;
   d. hair features (blonde/black – long/short – wavy/straight);
   e. facial features (glasses, mustache, beard);
   f. body markings and piercings;
   g. clothing (especially pants and footwear); and
   h. location where person was last seen.
2. If a person is witnessed undertaking an activity in the building or work area that seems abnormal and not easily explained, as soon as possible, share the observation with an OOD management representative.
   
a. Information is also to be shared with building security/management and/or call 911 if there is potential for harm to persons or damage to property.

3. Do not approach a suspicious person unless another individual is present and then only if you feel safe to do so.
   
a. If the person appears approachable or if you are approached, ask, “Can I help you? Are you here to meet with someone?”

   i. If the person appears suspicious or his/her response seems odd or vague, ask him/her to leave the premises in a firm, calm voice and immediately notify an OOD management representative.

   a) The OOD management representative will determine whether building security/management and/or 911 should be notified.

   ii. If safe to do so, observe, the movement of the person from a distance. Do not attempt to make further contact.

4. If the suspicious person is engaging in threats or acts of violence, appears be an active aggressor (e.g. brandishing a weapon, suicide bomber, terrorist), or if there is an active threat situation (e.g. report of a bomb or sniper), call 911 and remain as calm as possible. Individuals at OOD reception desks may use the panic button located at the desk to notify 911, however the panic buttons do not allow for conversation with the 911 operator.
   
a. Once it is safe to do so, proceed as detailed below.

   i. Provide as many details as possible to the 911 operator (refer to Section B.1 for an active aggressor).

   ii. Notify an OOD management representative or a safety coordinator of the situation.

   iii. Safety coordinators and other designated personnel (e.g. management representative) shall initiate the “Run, Hide, Fight” warning to impacted staff which will be disseminated through OOD’s employee notification system (i.e. One Call Now) via calls, emails, and text messages (refer to Tab D of the “Agency-wide Safety and Security Action Plan” Manual [50-LR-03-06] for the One Call Now job aid).

   a) The warning shall be sent to the employees’ personal contact information that is maintained in OAKS (i.e. My Ohio) under “My Info”, therefore employees need to ensure the information is kept up-to-date.

   iv. If there are members of the public on site, permit them to accompany staff to safety.

   v. When practical, notify occupants of nearby buildings.

5. When an employee observes or is notified via the “One Call Now” system that an active aggressor or active threat situation exists, employees and contractors must consider the actions below.
a. **Run** - If there is an acceptable path, attempt to evacuate the premises. Instructions should also be given to:

   i. call 911 when safe to do so (if not already done);
   
   ii. have an escape route and plan in mind that moves away from the active aggressor or threat;
   
   iii. evacuate to the area predetermined in your safety meetings regardless of whether others agree to follow;
   
   iv. leave belongings (e.g. cell phone) behind;
   
   v. help others escape, if possible;
   
   vi. alert anyone who might be entering the area where the active aggressor or threat may be;
   
   vii. keep hands visible for responding law enforcement;
   
   viii. follow law enforcement instruction; and
   
   ix. do not attempt to move wounded people.

b. **Hide** – Remain in place until contacted by law enforcement or circumstances dictate otherwise and proceed as follows:

   i. if practical, allow non-employees access to the safe zone;
   
   ii. hide in a place outside of the active aggressor’s view and staying as low as possible,
   
   iii. lock the door;
   
   iv. block the doorway with heavy furniture;
   
   v. silence your cell phone;
   
   vi. turn off any source of noise (e.g. radio);
   
   vii. hide behind large objects (e.g. desk, bookcase);
   
   viii. remain quiet and still even if someone identifies themselves as law enforcement (i.e. until you can confirm authenticity); and
   
   ix. stay put, do not expose yourself until determined it is safe to do so

c. **Fight** – As a last resort and only if your life is in danger, take action against the aggressor by attempting the following:

   i. disrupt and/or incapacitate the aggressor by acting as aggressively as possible against him/her;
   
   ii. use improvised weapons;
   
   iii. scream/yell; and
   
   iv. commit to actions and follow through.
6. Upon arrival of law enforcement it is important to:
   a. remain calm and follow all instructions;
   b. put down any items in your hands and raise your arms high;
   c. keep hands visible at all times and avoid sudden movements;
   d. avoid screaming, yelling or shouting;
   e. provide any information when asked;
   f. do not ask questions, just follow instructions; and
   g. do not leave the scene until instructed to do so except as described in Section B.7.

7. Once the scene is safe, OOD management shall:
   a. develop information strategies (e.g. notifications to employees, families, media);
   b. determine if anything needs to be completed prior to employees and contractors returning to the area; and
   c. if there is an injury to an employee, refer to “Accident and Illness Reporting” (50-LR-03-03)

C. Reporting Requirements

1. Employees shall contact an OOD management representative and submit a written report of the incident as soon as possible.
   a. If there is fear of retaliation or when issues such as confidentiality or personal safety exist, HR, ELR may be contacted directly instead.
   b. Additional reporting requirements as dictated by external entities (e.g., SSA) are expected to be followed.

2. The OOD management representative shall:
   a. In a OOD field office, contact the appropriate area manager and the Division of Human Resources (HR), Employee and Labor Relations (ELR); or
   b. In Central Office, contact HR, ELR.

3. In cases where the reporting individual is not a state employee, they will be directed to follow procedures as outlined in this procedure.

D. Evaluation and Investigation

1. All reports will be evaluated by HR, ELR and if appropriate, promptly investigated by appropriate personnel.
2. In cases where an investigation confirms threats or acts of violence, HR, ELR will provide guidance and discipline to the appropriate parties to ensure corrective action is taken in accordance with the applicable law, rule or collective bargaining agreement.

3. HR, ELR shall contact OOD’s Chief Legal Counsel and report incidents of threats or acts of physical violence.

4. If appropriate, the Chief Legal Counsel will contact the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

5. Affected employees, contractors, their immediate supervisor/manager and if applicable, the employee’s union representative will be kept informed of the actions taken in response to the incident.

E. Any person who is determined to have knowingly made false, meritless, or malicious reports under this procedure will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including removal, as well as legal action if appropriate.

F. OOD shall provide training on issues associated with workplace violence.

G. Dissemination of Information

1. All new employees, will be trained through ELM and provided a copy of this procedure as part of their orientation within 30 days of their hire date. Any questions regarding their rights and obligations under this procedure are to be directed to HR, ELR.

2. Safety Coordinators will ensure staff are trained on this procedure as part of OOD’s biannual safety trainings.

3. OOD reserves the right to revise the procedures set forth in this workplace violence procedure with or without notice. Nothing in this procedure is intended or should be construed as a contract express or implied.

H. Violation

An employee who violates this procedure may be subject to discipline up to and including removal.

FORMS AND ATTACHEMENTS

- N/A

RESOURCES

- Refer to the ASAP Manual, Tab D – “Workplace Violence and Suspicious Persons”.

REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the Deputy Director, or designee, to review this procedure, on or before, the date listed in the header and if applicable, make any necessary revisions. The Deputy Director or designee shall document the review as required in “Policy and Procedure Development, Review, Dissemination and Acknowledgement” (10-ADM-01).