

Workplace Violence

1.0 Purpose

It is the intent of Bladen County to provide a workplace for County employees that is free from violence by establishing preventative measures, holding perpetrators of violence accountable and by providing assistance and support to victims.

2.0 Applicability

To all Bladen County employees (full and part time), contractors and visitors.

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 *Workplace Violence* includes, but is not limited to, intimidation, threats, physical attack, domestic violence or property damage and includes acts of violence committed by County employees, clients, customers, relatives, acquaintances or strangers against County employees in the workplace.
- 3.2 *Intimidation* is engaging in actions that includes but is not limited to stalking or behavior intended to frighten, coerce, or induce duress.
- 3.3 *Threat* is the expression of intent to cause physical or mental harm. An expression constitutes a threat without regard to whether the party communicating the threat has the present ability to carry it out and without regard to whether the expression is contingent, conditional or future.
- 3.4 *Physical Attack* is unwanted or hostile physical contact such as hitting, fighting, pushing, shoving or throwing objects.
- 3.5 *Domestic Violence* is the use of abusive or violent behavior, including threats and intimidation, between people who have an ongoing or prior intimate relationship. This could include people who are married, live together or date or who have been married, lived together or dated. Property Damage is intentional damage to property and includes property owned by the County, employees, visitors or vendors.

4.0 Policy

Bladen County is concerned about every individual's well being and personal safety while on County property. Acts of violence and / or threats of violence, including any act of an assault nature, whether expressed or implied toward individual(s), while on County property, are prohibited. Included are acts of violence when such conduct stems from County business or may affect County business, operations, reputation, or employees, regardless of the time or location.

The County shall make efforts to protect victims of workplace violence by offering all available security measures. Victims may also need special accommodations or adjustments to their work schedule, location or working conditions in order to enhance their safety. The County shall accommodate these requests and needs whenever

Workplace Violence

possible and appropriate. The County shall work closely with victims to ensure that both the needs of the victims and the county are addressed. Management is expected to offer support to victims of workplace violence, which includes domestic violence. In addition, management shall use their discretion to grant a victim leave time for medical, court, or counseling appointments related to trauma and/or victimization.

The following options should be considered:

- Flex Scheduling
- Vacation Leave
- Sick Leave
- Leave without pay

5.0 Procedure

5.1 Acts of Violence and Threats

Should a threat or act of violence become known, the following procedure should be followed by both employees and non-employees alike.

5.1.1 Immediately report the incident to someone in management. Provide as much information relating to the incident as possible (i.e., name, description of person, vehicle or object, location of incident or subject, wording of statements made, etc.). Incidents reported to management should be forwarded to Emergency Services (911).

5.1.2 All reports regarding threats or acts of violence will be kept confidential. Employees are required to report such incidents without regard or fear of retribution from management. Failure to report such incidents may result in disciplinary action.

5.2 Employee Conduct

5.2.1 Any employee initiating and/or participating in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination and/or a criminal complaint. In addition, any employee not terminated for such conduct may be required to submit to a fitness for duty evaluation before returning to work to ensure he/she does not present a threat to persons and/or property. Any person who is not an employee, such as a contractor, vendor or visitor, will be subject to removal from County property and/or a criminal complaint.

5.2.2 Any employee who receives a protective/restraining order, which lists Bladen County owned or leased property as a protected area is

Workplace Violence

required to provide Human Resources a copy of the official document. A copy of this document will be forwarded to the proper individual(s) in the employee's work area, County Manager and Emergency Services.

5.3 Weapons on County Property

5.3.1 Firearms and other dangerous weapons are not permitted on or in Bladen County property at any time, with the exception of tools of the trade. This procedure does not apply to local, state or federal law enforcement officers acting in the line of duty. Employees needing clarification of the definition of a dangerous weapon will contact a department head.

Possessing or carrying mace/pepper spray, as well as possessing or carrying any weapon as described in N.C.G.S. 14-269(a) or N.C.G.S. 14-415.10 whether open or concealed, in or on any County Building and its appurtenant premises, in or upon County motor vehicles, or in any County park is prohibited, with the exception of tools of the trade. Exception: This does not apply to those individuals exempt under N.C.G.S. 14-269(b).

5.3.2 The County reserves the right to conduct a search of personal effects and vehicles while these items are located on or in County properties.

6.0 Prohibited Actions and Sanctions

It is a violation of this policy to:

- Engage in workplace violence as defined herein;
- Use, possess or threaten to use an unauthorized weapon during a time covered by this policy; and
- Misuse authority vested to any employee of Bladen County in such a way that it violates this policy.

A violation of this policy shall be considered unacceptable personal conduct as provided in the Disciplinary Action, Suspension and Dismissal Policy. Acts of violence, as defined herein, may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination. An act of off-duty violent conduct may also be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination. In these situations, the County must demonstrate that the disciplinary action, suspension or dismissal is supported by the existence of a rational behavior between the type of violent conduct committed and the potential adverse impact on a County employee's ability to perform the assigned duties and responsibilities.

Workplace Violence

7.0 Authorized Exceptions to Policy

An employee may possess a weapon if possession is:

- In compliance with North Carolina law,
- Authorized by the County Manager,
- Used by an employee who is a certified law enforcement officer,
- Required as a part of the employee's job duties with Bladen County, or
- Connected with training received by the employee in order to perform the responsibilities of their job.

8.0 Retaliation

This policy prohibits retaliation against any employee who, in good faith, reports a violation of this policy. Every effort will be made to protect the safety and anonymity of anyone who comes forward with concerns about a threat or act of violence.

9.0 Reporting Responsibilities

All employees are encouraged to be alert to the possibility of violence on the part of employees, former employees, customers and strangers. Employees shall place safety as their highest concern, and shall report all acts of violence and threats of violence. All reports of violence will be handled in a confidential manner, with information released only on a need-to-know basis. Management shall be sensitive and responsive to the reporting employees' fear of reprisal.