



University Policies and Procedures

06-01.10 – POLICY ON THREATS AND VIOLENCE

I. Policy Statement: Threats, threatening behavior, or acts of violence against students, faculty, staff, employees, visitors, guests or other individuals by anyone on Towson University property will not be tolerated. Towson University defines workplace violence as actions or words that endanger or harm another individual or result in other persons having a reasonable belief that they are in danger. Such actions include:

- Verbal or physical harassment
- Verbal or physical threats
- Assaults or other violence
- Any other behavior that causes others to feel unsafe (e.g. bullying, stalking, etc.)

Violations of this policy may lead to actions, (as appropriate) which can include mediation, counseling, suspension, expulsion, dismissal, administrative sanctions, arrest, and criminal prosecution.

Any person who in the judgment of the university makes substantial threats, exhibits threatening behavior, or engages in violent acts on Towson University property may be removed from the premises as quickly as safety permits, and may be required to remain off Towson University premises pending the outcome of an investigation. Towson University will initiate an appropriate response. This response may include, but is not limited to, suspension and/or termination of any business relationship, reassignment of job duties, suspension or termination of employment, and/or criminal prosecution of the person or persons involved.

No existing Towson University policy, practice or procedure should be interpreted to prohibit decisions designed to prevent a threat from being carried out, a violent act from occurring, or a life-threatening situation from developing.

All Towson University students, faculty, and staff are responsible for reporting any threats which they have witnessed, received, or have been told that another person has witnessed or received. Even without an actual threat, any behavior witnessed which is regarded as threatening or violent, when that behavior is school related or might be carried out on a University controlled site, or is connected to University employment, should be reported. Please refer to the procedures section for further information on reporting threats.

II. Reason for Policy: Nothing is more important to Towson University than the safety and security of its campus. Violence or threats of violence in the classroom, residence hall or workplace can have devastating effects on the productivity and quality of life for students, faculty, and staff. Recent national events have highlighted the need for clear policies to guide our actions when faced with potential violence or threats of violence so that we can respond in an appropriate and rational manner.

III. Responsible Executive and Office:

Responsible Executive: Vice President for Administration and Finance
and Chief Fiscal Officer

Responsible Office: University Police

V. Entities Affected by this Policy: All divisions, colleges, departments, operating units, students and visitors.

VI. Procedures: The following procedures were written with extensive reliance on the work of the International Association of Chiefs of Police in their guide “Combating Workplace Violence, Guidelines for Employers and Law Enforcement” and the Baltimore County Public Schools “Critical Response and School Emergency Safety Management Guide” 2002. This policy and procedure are intended to supplement any existing or future workplace violence procedure published by the University.

A. Threat Incident Report

All University students, faculty, and staff are responsible for notifying the University Police Department of any actual threats which they have witnessed, received, or have been told that another person has witnessed or received. This report should be made regardless of the relationship between the individual who initiated the threat or threatening behavior and the person or persons who were threatened or were the focus of the threatening behavior.

In some cases there may not be an actual threat made by someone, however their behavior or demeanor may cause fear or concern. In these cases, it is still important to tell someone in authority about this apprehension so that it can be documented, evaluated, and handled appropriately. If a member of the campus community is concerned about a threat of violence, he/she should document the reason for their concern and discuss this with a supervisor, administrator, department chairperson, the University Police, Student Affairs, or Human Resources as appropriate.

1. Actual Threats

- a. Report threats to University Police (4-2134) who will file a report and conduct an investigation.
- b. Notify supervisor, administrator or department chairperson.
- c. If a student is the alleged threatening party or is the recipient of the treat, the Office of Vice President for Student Affairs will also be notified.
- d. If an employee is the alleged threatening party or is the recipient of the threat, the Office of Human Resources will also be notified.
- e. If a faculty member is the alleged threatening party or is the recipient of the threat, the Provost’s office will also be notified.

While the University Police will be the lead agency in conducting the investigation and

evaluating the threat, if it is determined that the conduct was not criminal, the police may promptly refer the matter to another department as appropriate. Depending on nature and severity of complaint, the necessary campus resources will be contacted up to and including the Threat Management Team.

2. Threat Evaluation and Assessment

For the purposes of evaluation, understanding, and a common vocabulary in classifying threats, the following levels have been borrowed from the Baltimore County Public Schools “Critical Response and School Emergency Safety Management Guide”.

3. Threat Levels

Each threat is different and can be grouped based upon the nature, specificity, potential to carry out the threat, etc. Each threat level has specific indicators:

a. Low Level of Threat

- (i) Stated in vague or general manner
- (ii) Often reflects anger, frustration, lack of hope, or distrust
- (iii) Does not include a specific target other than self
- (iv) Does not specify concrete steps to carry out threat
- (v) Unrealistic or (where this is a factor) developmentally inappropriate.

b. Medium Level of Threat

- (i) Clearly stated; often a function of anger or frustration
- (ii) Uncertain about specific targets of threat
- (iii) Lacking in capacity or resources to act on threat
- (iv) Lacking in concrete steps taken to carry out threat
- (v) Suggestive of attention-seeking behavior
- (vi) Could continue or escalate if not addressed

c. High Level of Threat

- (i) (Clearly stated
- (ii) Targeted to specific individuals or property
- (iii) Identifies behaviors that can realistically be carried out
- (iv) Implies that concrete steps have been taken to carry out threat

B. Factors used in evaluating threats/facts to include in threat incident report:

The following dot points represent key information that is beneficial in evaluating and responding to reports of threats or threatening behavior. Not every item will be available in every case; however, the more information provided, the more thorough and appropriate actions can be taken.

The report will be used to assess the safety of the classroom, residence hall, or workplace, and to decide upon a plan of action.

The following facts should be included in the threat incident report:

1. Name of the threat-maker and his/her relationship to the University and to the recipient
2. Name(s) of the victim(s) or potential victim(s)
3. When and where the incident occurred
4. What happened immediately prior to the incident
5. The specific language of the threat
6. Any physical conduct that would substantiate an intention to follow through on the threat
7. How the threat-maker appeared (physically and emotionally)
8. Names of others who were directly involved and any actions they took
9. How the incident ended
10. Names of witnesses
11. What happened to the threat-maker after the incident
12. What happened to the other people directly involved after the incident
13. Names of any supervisory staff involved and how they responded
14. What event(s) triggered the incident
 - a. Any history leading up to the incident
 - b. The steps taken to ensure that the threat will not be carried out
 - c. Suggestions for preventing workplace violence in the future

Each situation is different and will be handled on a case-by-case basis by the appropriate and involved department(s). Before formulating an action plan, the concerned person/supervisor or team should discuss the issue with Student Affairs, Human Resources, University Police, and/or the Provost's Office as appropriate. The following options are offered when formulating an action plan.

C. Options available when Formulating Action Plan:

1. Student-related Action Items
 - a. Removal from residence housing
 - b. Removal from class
 - c. Transfer to different residence hall room
 - d. Suspension from University
 - e. Expulsion from University
 - f. Referral to Judicial Affairs
 - g. Voluntary Referral to Counseling Center
 - h. Mandatory Referral to Counseling Center
2. Employee-related Action Items
 - a. Supervisory Counseling
 - b. Referral to Employee Assistance Program
 - c. Suspension from duty
 - d. Fitness for Duty Evaluation
 - e. Termination

3. Universal Action Items

- a. Document Threat and Actions Taken
- b. Evaluate Level of Risk Posed by Threat Maker (Consultation resources include Counseling Center Staff, Office of Human Resources, Police, etc.)
- c. Inform Others with Need to Know (i.e., target of threat, co-workers, room-mates, etc.)
- d. Instruct Others on What to Do if Threatening Party Seeks Entry or Contact
- e. Increased Police Presence
- f. Mediation
- g. Denial of Access for Threatening Party
- h. Emergency Petition for Psychiatric Evaluation (legal criteria present)
- i. Arrest and Prosecution
- j. Emotional and/or Psychological Support for Victim of Threat
- k. Provide Victim Referrals to Other Community Resources
- l. Provide appropriate information to victims on various options available (e.g., Ex Parte' or Peace Orders, or Criminal Prosecution)
- m. Follow up

While some may consider off campus situations to be a private matter, the fact is that if the threatening party comes on to campus to carry out the actions, it can affect the intended and other innocent bystanders. As such it is vital that the University is made aware of any threats made toward a member of the campus community off campus or by persons not affiliated with the University. For example, if an employee of the University is experiencing domestic problems and their estranged spouse threatens harm to their person or property, that violence could be carried out here on campus. It is important for the employee's manager and campus police to be aware of this threat so that appropriate measures can be taken. It is too late to learn of the problem after the threatening party shows up in the classroom or the office. Persons with a need to know have to be made aware of the potential threat, along with the identity or description of the threatening party.

All individuals (Students, faculty, staff, or employees of contractors and subcontractors) who apply for or obtain a protective or restraining order which lists University locations as being protected areas, must provide to the University Police Department a copy of the petition and declarations used to seek the order, a copy of any temporary protective or restraining order which is granted, and a copy of any protective or restraining order which is made permanent.

Towson University understands the sensitivity of the information requested and has developed confidentiality procedures, which recognize and respect the privacy of the reporting students, faculty, or staff.

D. Threat Management Team

The University has established a threat management team consisting of the following University officials or their representatives:

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, or designee
Vice President for Student Affairs, or designee
Associate Vice President and Director of Human Resources
Special Assistant to Vice President of Student Affairs/ Director of
Counseling Center

University Counsel
Director of Public Safety

The threat management team is authorized to enlist the expertise and assistance of resources (e.g. Baltimore County Police Department Workplace Violence Specialists, Maryland State Police, contracted forensic psychologist, etc.) outside the university as needed.

The team may also recommend and manage violence prevention programs, including needs assessment and awareness training. Each threat situation is different depending on such factors as the people involved, their status with the university, the nature and specificity of the threat, etc. The circumstances of each situation will dictate the threat management team's degree and nature of involvement.

E. Evaluation

1. It will be the responsibility of the threat management team to ensure that there is regular ongoing assessment and evaluation of the university's violence prevention programs.

F. The attached appendices contain additional information regarding workplace/campus violence.

Related Policies: University System of Maryland Policy VI-1.10, Policy on Acts of Violence and Extremism.

Approval Date: 12/13/2006

Effective Date: 12/15/2006

Approved by: President's Council 12/04/2006

APPENDICES

Recommended Preventive Practices

Preventive measures can include pre-employment screening, identifying problem situations and risk factors, and security preparations:

- *Pre-employment screening. Identifying and screening out potentially violent people before hiring is an obvious means of preventing workplace violence. Pre-employment screening practices must, however, be consistent with privacy protections and anti-discrimination laws. To ensure that practices are consistent with privacy protection and anti-discrimination laws, it is strongly recommended that you discuss these practices with the Office of Human Resources or the Office of the Provost as appropriate. As an applicant is examined, the following should be taken into consideration as potential areas of concern.*
 - *Indications of current abuse of drugs or alcohol.*
 - *Past conflicts (especially if violence was involved) with coworkers.*
 - *Past convictions for violent crimes.*
 - *Indications of a defensive, hostile attitude*
 - *A history of frequent job changes and*
 - *A tendency to blame others for problems.*

- *Operation of effective Employee and Student Assistance Programs to aid in early identification and intervention efforts for those employees or students who may be displaying signs of emotional stress or who may be experiencing one or more of the life experiences commonly associated with psychological or emotional trouble.*

Recognizing Inappropriate Behavior

Inappropriate behavior is often a warning sign of potential hostility or violence. When left unchecked it can escalate to higher levels. Employees who exhibit the following behaviors should be reported and disciplined in accordance with organizational policy:

- Unwelcome name-calling, obscene language, and other abusive behavior
- Intimidation through direct or veiled verbal threats
- Throwing objects in the workplace regardless of the size or type of object being thrown or whether a person is the target of a thrown object
- Physically touching another employee in an intimidating, malicious, or sexually harassing manner. That includes such acts as hitting, slapping, poking, kicking, pinching, grabbing and pushing
- Physically intimidating others including such acts as obscene gestures, “getting in your face” and fist-shaking

Warning Signs of Potentially Violent Individuals

There is no exact method to predict when a person will become violent. One or more of these warning signs may be displayed before a person becomes violent but does not necessarily indicate that an individual will become violent. A display of these signs should trigger concern as they are usually exhibited by people experiencing problems.

- Irrational beliefs and ideas
- Verbal, nonverbal or written threats or intimidation
- Fascination with weaponry and/or acts of violence
- Expressions of a plan to hurt himself or others
- Externalization of blame
- Unreciprocated romantic obsession
- Taking up much of supervisor’s time with behavior or performance problems
- Fear reaction among coworkers/clients
- Drastic change in belief systems
- Displays of unwarranted anger
- New or increased source of stress at home or work
- Inability to take criticism
- Feelings of being victimized
- Intoxication from alcohol or other substances
- Expressions of hopelessness or heightened anxiety
- Productivity and/or attendance problems
- Violence towards inanimate objects
- Steals or sabotages projects or equipment

Follow these suggestions in your daily interactions with people to de-escalate potentially violent situations. If at any time a person's behavior starts to escalate beyond your comfort zone, disengage.

Do Not

Do

- Project calmness: move and speak slowly, quietly and confidently.
- Be an empathetic listener: encourage the person to talk and listen patiently.
- Focus your attention on the other person to let them know you are interested in what they have to say.
- Maintain a relaxed yet attentive posture and position yourself at a right angle rather than directly in front of the other person.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings. Indicate that you can see he or she is upset.
- Ask for small, specific favors such as asking the person to move to a quieter area.
- Establish ground rules if unreasonable behavior persists. Calmly describe the consequences of any violent behavior.
- Use delaying tactics which will give the person time to calm down. For example, offer a drink of water (in a disposable cup).
- Be reassuring and point out choices. Break big problems into smaller, more manageable problems.
- Accept criticism in a positive way. When a complaint might be true, use statements like "You're probably right" or "It was my fault." If the criticism seems unwarranted, ask clarifying questions.
- Ask for his recommendations. Repeat back to him what you feel he is requesting of you.
- Arrange yourself so that a visitor cannot block your access to an exit between you and the person.

- Use styles of communication which generate hostility such as apathy, brush off, coldness, condescension, robotism, going strictly by the rules or giving the run-around.
- Reject all of a client's demands from the start.
- Pose in challenging stances such as standing directly opposite someone, hands on hips or crossing your arms. Avoid any physical contact, finger-pointing or long periods of fixed eye contact.
- Make sudden movements which can be seen as threatening. Notice the tone, volume and rate of your speech.
- Challenge, threaten, or dare the individual
Never belittle the person or make him/her feel foolish.
- Criticize or act impatiently toward the agitated individual.
- Attempt to bargain with a threatening individual.
- Try to make the situation seem less serious than it is.
- Make false statements or promises you cannot keep.
- ***Try to impart a lot of technical or complicated information when emotions are high.***
- Take sides or agree with distortions.
- Invade the individual's personal space. Make sure there is a space of 3' to 6'

Note: much of the material in this document has been taken from two main sources:

The International Association of Chiefs of Police Model Policy on Workplace Violence and The U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation publication entitled Workplace Violence, Issues in Response