Workplace Violence Prevention Policy and Procedures

Policy: To inform employees and clients that violence in the workplace is not tolerated and/or permitted. Therefore an employee in violation will be disciplined, up to and including termination. Clients in violation will be removed from the premise and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Workplace violence is defined by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) as “violent acts (including physical assaults, and threats of assaults) directed toward persons at work or on duty.” However this agency also considers the following Non-medical Incidents as violent and/or threatening behavior and should also be reported: harassment of any nature, stalking, verbal attacks, unethical and aggressive behavior, threats and/or remarks, obscene phone calls, theft, bringing weapons and/or contraband into the facility, property damage and any disturbance where a safety officer was contacted.

A workplace may be any location either permanent or temporary where an employee performs any work-related duty. This includes, but is not limited to, the buildings and the surrounding perimeters, including the parking lots, field locations, clients’ homes and traveling to and from work assignments.

Management, employees and clients should take an active role by reporting all incidents to ensure the safety and well being of all employees and of the clients to which we serve.

Employees need to understand the concept of “Universal Precautions for Violence”, i.e., that violence should be expected but can be avoided or mitigated through preparation.

Types of Workplace Violence:
- Violence by strangers
- Violence by customers or clients
- Violence by coworkers
- Violence by personal relations
- Active Shooter

Risk Factors:
- Prevalence of handguns and other weapons among patients, their families, or friends.
- Increasing use of clinics by criminal justice system.
- Increasing number of acute and chronically mentally ill patients, who now have the right to refuse medicine and who can no longer be hospitalized involuntarily unless they pose a threat to themselves or others.
- Unrestricted movement of the public in clinic areas.
- Presence of gang members, substance abusers which may be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
- Low staffing levels during times of increased activity.
- Isolated work with clients during exams or treatment.
- Solo work, often in remote locations, high crime settings with no back-up or means of obtaining assistance such as communication devices or alarm systems.
- Lack of training in recognizing and managing escalating hostile and aggressive behavior.
- Poorly-lighted parking areas.
- Poor economy and money is not kept in a secure location, making them likely to be robbery targets.

Procedures:
Whenever imminent danger and/or an injury occur to staff and/or clients, 911 must contacted immediately.

Administration must be contacted, after an event and/or as soon as possible. All incidents will be investigated thoroughly. All employees are encouraged to report incidents and suggest ways to...
reduce or eliminate risks. This will enable management to come up with a plan that they believe will be the best way to prevent future situations from occurring.

When a situation is occurring, administration will calmly inform staff of the situation by making an announcement through the paging system. Following are examples of codes that may be used: **Code Grey = Combative Person; Code Silver = Weapon or Hostage situation.**

If necessary, administration will initiate a building lockdown or will start evacuation of the area or building by making a verbal announcement “Code (color as above)” to staff. Staff will be instructed to follow Evacuation Procedures or Lockdown Procedures as necessary.

Administration will also designate another employee(s) to contact the other offices within the building as well as other staff. Exceptions to this are an Active Shooter event (see documentation beginning on page 3).

**Please follow your Evacuation or Lockdown Procedures.**

**Reportable Incidents:**

1. Incidents requiring medical attention for employees. Follow our Worker’s Compensation Policy and Procedures.
2. Incidents requiring medical attention for clients and/or property damage. Follow our Liability Injury Policy and Procedures.
3. Incidents that are non-medical (threatening behavior, theft, stealing, verbal attacks, etc.). Follow our Non-Medical Incident Policy and Procedures.

Appropriate forms are located at the front desk of every facility or can be downloaded from our web site at [www.vbcassdhd.org](http://www.vbcassdhd.org).

Employees will be trained on how to respond to situations that may place themselves in harms way and learn how to recognize warning signs.

If an employee is aware of an unethical situation involving a client they must report it to the supervisor and/or administration as soon as possible.

Clients must be informed that violent behavior, threats and other similar incidents to staff and/or other clients is not acceptable and/or tolerated. If necessary, clients may be declined services.

Clients must be informed of whom to contact whenever they suspect they have been a victim of unethical behavior from an employee.

Employees must report to their immediate supervisor and/or administration of any personal circumstance that may also affect the workplace, such as domestic violence, including PPO (Personal Protective Orders) & RO (Restraining Orders). Special precautions may need to be taken for the employee’s safety as well as others. Employees must become aware that when circumstances occur of this nature it may be necessary to inform staff so safety measures can be taken to protect them as well as others. Employees should be instructed to get a copy of the PPO, RO to their supervisor and/or management along with other information such as a picture of the perpetrator, information about the vehicle the perpetrator may have/use. If the perpetrator is a client, he/she must be informed they are no longer eligible to receive services.

Once all information is received, front desk personnel and other staff will be informed of the situation. If the perpetrator does enter a facility or the vehicle the perpetrator has/uses is found in any health department parking lot, the employee should be contacted immediately and 911 contacted immediately. If necessary a lockdown of the facility will be implemented.
Nonretaliation:
Anyone who reports or experiences workplace violence, unethical or threatening behavior will not face reprisals. All reports are kept confidential unless needed for legal purposes and to ensure the safety of the employees and clients.

Warning Signs of Violent Behavior:
When violence occurs at work, employees may say their co-worker or client “just snapped”, but the truth is, people usually don’t snap. They display warning signs long before they actually act out. The key is to talk to employees and/or clients in this “pre-violence” stage to offer assistance and let them know their behaviors are unacceptable.

Be on the lookout for those individuals who display any of these warning signs of violent behavior. This list is not comprehensive, nor is it intended as a mechanism for diagnosing violent tendencies:

1. Fascination with weapons.
2. Substance abuse.
3. Severe stress and/or anxiety in personal life
4. Violent history
5. Decreased or inconsistent productivity
6. Social isolation and poor peer relationships
7. Poor personal hygiene
8. Drastic changes in personality
9. Angry with self or others
10. Blames others for their problems and failure to acknowledge sense of responsibility for disapproval and/or difficulties.
11. Making threats of violence, directly or implied
12. Frequent confrontations
13. Crossing professional and/or personal boundaries
14. Easily provoked

ACTIVE SHOOTER RESPONSE
An Active Shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill as many individuals as possible. Most events evolve quickly and are often over in 10-15 minutes before law enforcement arrives. Staff needs to be prepared to deal with an active shooter situation. Therefore, whenever gun shots are heard, staff should try to do the following:

1. **Evacuate/run**
   - Take note of the two nearest exits and escape the building
   - Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow
   - Leave belongings behind
   - Help others escape, if possible
   - Call 911, when it is safe to do so, to alert police to the active shooter’s location.
     - If you cannot speak, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen.
   - Once you have reached a safe location, you will likely be held in that area by law enforcement until the situation is under control
   - Do not leave until law enforcement authorities have instructed you to do so.

2. **Hide.** If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you.
   - Lock the door; block the door with heavy furniture
   - Silence cell phone and/or pager
   - Turn off any source of noise (radio, television, etc.)
   - Hide behind large items (cabinets, desks)
   - Be quiet
3. **Attack/Fight** (as a last resort; and only if your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate active shooter)
   - Acting as aggressively as possible
   - Throw items and improvising weapons (chairs)
   - Attack in a group if possible
   - Commit to your actions

**How to Respond When Law Enforcement Arrives**

Law enforcement’s purpose is to stop the active shooter as soon as possible. Officers will proceed directly to the area in which the last shots were heard. The first officers that arrive on scene are not there to help the injured. Expect additional emergency personnel and medical help to follow. These teams will treat and remove any injured persons.

1. Remain calm, and follow officers’ instructions. Officers may shout commands, and may push individuals to the ground for their safety (officers do not know who the active shooter is; therefore do as they say, for your safety and theirs).
2. Put down any items in your hand (bags, jackets, etc.)
3. Immediately raise hands and spread fingers
4. Keep hands visible at all times, out of pockets.
5. Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as holding on to them for safety
6. Avoid pointing, screaming and/or yelling
7. Proceed in the direction officers indicate

**Information to provide to law enforcement or 911 operators:**

1. Location of active shooter
2. Number of shooters, if more than one
3. Physical description of shooter(s)
4. Number and type of weapons held by the shooter(s)
5. Number of potential victims at the location