

ZERO TOLERANCE OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE **POLICY AND PLAN**

INTRODUCTION

In 1992, the Minnesota Legislature adopted the following act (Minn.Stat. 1.5):

Freedom from Violence

The State of Minnesota hereby adopts a policy of zero tolerance of violence. It is state policy that every person in the state has a right to live free from violence.

In furtherance of this policy, Minn. Stat. 15.86 mandates that each agency of state government adopt a goal of zero tolerance of violence in, and around, the workplace.

Each agency is also encouraged to develop a plan that describes how the agency will (1) seek to eliminate any potential for violence in and around the agency workplace; and (2) seek to eliminate any potential for violence by affecting the attitudes and behavior of the people that the agency serves or regulates.

GOAL

It is the goal of Minnesota State University Moorhead to achieve a work environment which is free from threats and acts of violence. The university will not tolerate workplace violence of any type, from any source. This includes threatening or violent actions by employees directed against other employees, by employees directed against students, or visitors, and by students, or visitors directed against university employees.

POLICY

It is the policy of Minnesota State University Moorhead and the responsibility of its managers, its supervisors and all of its employees to maintain a workplace free from threats and acts of violence. The university will work to provide a safe workplace for employees, students and visitors to the university.

The university's policy on work-related violence includes:

- *The university will actively work to prevent and eliminate acts of work-related violence.
- *The university will respond promptly, positively, and aggressively to deal with the threats or acts of violence. This response will include timely involvement of law enforcement agencies, when appropriate.
- *The university hereby adopts, and will work to enforce, a policy prohibiting possession of firearms and other dangerous weapons in the workplace.
- *Incidents of work-related threats or acts of violence, will be treated seriously by the university. Reports of such acts will promptly investigated, and management will take action, as necessary, to appropriately address each incident.
- *The university will take strong disciplinary action, up to and including discharge from State employment, against employees of the university who are involved in the commission of work-related threats or acts of violence. Students engaging in such behavior will be dealt with in accordance with the student code of conduct.
- *The university will support criminal prosecution of those who threaten or commit work-related violence against its employees, students, and visitors to its work environment.
- *Pursuant to Minnesota Statute 15.86, this policy does not create any civil liability on the part of the State of Minnesota.

PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING ZERO TOLERANCE OF VIOLENCE IN, AND AROUND, THE WORKPLACE

1. The University Will Provide A Safe Workplace.

The university is committed to ensuring that the workplace provides for the safety of employees, and students, and visitors for reasonable protection from workplace violence.

2. The University Will Attempt to Reduce the Potential for Internal Workplace Violence By Positively Affecting the Attitudes and the Behavior of its Employees.

* Creating a low-risk work environment: Administrators, managers and supervisors are expected to promote positive behavior, and to lead by example, by treating employees with the respect and dignity each person deserves. Emphasis will be placed on creating a workplace where established standards of conduct are clear, communicated, and consistently enforced, and where discipline is used fairly and appropriately to deal with instances of unacceptable behavior.

* Supervisory Training: Managers and supervisors will be provided with training in how to deal with workplace-related threats and acts of violence. This training will focus on prevention, recognition and de-escalation of violence, will include suggestions for appropriate responses to threats and acts of violence, and will identify those resources which are available for use once a potential problem has been identified, or an incident has occurred.

* Employee Training: Employees will be given the opportunity to receive training in threat awareness, and appropriate responses to aggressive, threatening and violent behaviors. Assessment of additional training needs from employees will be made upon request of the unit supervisor, and appropriate training programs will be developed and presented.

* Employee Counseling and Assistance: The university will encourage use of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP is primarily an assessment, short-term counseling and referral agency. While supervisors, union representatives, or family members may encourage employees to seek help from the EAP, the decision to use the services must be a voluntary one. Employees may also choose to seek assistance from private health services to deal with pressures, stress, emotional problems, or other personal issues which could, if ignored, lead to threats or acts of violence.

* Self-help: Informational brochures and other media will be used to make all employees familiar with the services offered by the EAP, and the university will provide information on how to take advantage of those services. Information will also be provided about other options for the resolution of personal and work-related problems which may have a potential for escalating to a violent incident. Employees will be encouraged to utilize all available resources.

3. The University Will Effectively Deal With Threats of Violence, and With Actual Incidents of Violence.

Supervisory Responsibilities: Managers and supervisors have primary responsibility for ensuring a safe work environment. Managers and supervisors are specifically empowered to take immediate action to resolve or stabilize violent situations in the workplace, and to protect people from harm. Supervisors will ensure that, when a threat is made or a violent incident occurs, appropriate incident response resources are notified immediately. Supervisors and managers will also ensure that appropriate disciplinary responses to internal workplace violence & aggression are made, and coordinate these efforts with the Human Resources Office.

4. The University Will Work to Eliminate Dangerous Weapons from the Workplace.

Dangerous Weapon Prohibition: Effective immediately, the possession of any dangerous weapon, to include any firearm, in any university premises by any person other than a law enforcement officer in the course of his/her duty, is strictly prohibited. University personnel are prohibited from possessing any dangerous weapon, to include any firearm, while on official duty. See Appendix A, for a list of dangerous weapons included in this prohibition.

Exceptions: In the course of a general academic and work application, faculty and staff may possess and use knives that may exceed three (3) inches to complete course work or job tasks.

Those who are registered to carry concealed weapons must inform University Public Safety of the registration number and the type of weapon carried.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Copies of this policy and plan will be distributed to all employees, and will be posted on employee bulletin boards. Managers and supervisors will be responsible for informing employees of this policy and plan, and for enforcing compliance with them. This policy and plan will be provided to all current and new employees. A copy of this plan will also be available in the university library.

The university will continue to provide information about the services available through the Employee Assistance Program, to help employees deal with concerns and issues related to workplace or family violence. Training needs will be assessed, and training sessions for managers, supervisors, and employees will be developed and presented. The university will work to further advance this plan, and will identify and address specific action items.

The University Director of Human Resources and Director of Campus Security will assume responsibility for coordinating the university response to workplace-related threats and acts of violence. Managers and supervisors will continue to have primary responsibility for ensuring a safe workplace, for monitoring and resolution of employee conflicts or disputes, for taking appropriate corrective action when potentially violent situations develop and for working with the Human Resources Director when threats or acts of violence occur.

APPENDIX A

DANGEROUS WEAPONS

For purposes of this Plan and Policy, the following items are considered to be "dangerous weapons":

*any weapon which, per applicable law, is illegal to possess

*any firearm, loaded or unloaded, assembled or disassembled, including pellet, "BB", and stun guns (electronic incapacitation devices)

*replicate firearms, as defined in Minn. Stat. 609.713

*knives (and other similar instruments) with a blade length of more than three inches, other than those present in the workplace for the specific purpose of food preparation and service

*any "switchblade" knife

*"brass knuckles", "metal knuckles", and similar weapons

*bows, cross-bows and arrows

*explosives and explosive devices, including fireworks and incendiary devices

*"throwing stars", "numchucks", clubs, saps, and any other item commonly used as, or primarily intended for use as, a weapon

*any object that has been modified to serve as, or has been employed as, a dangerous weapon