

Workplace Violence Prevention Advisory Committee

Campus Risk Factors Identified in Risk Assessment Process

Control Measures/Practical Guidance

Following are the five high risk factors which were identified in the recent risk assessment process conducted at Binghamton University:

Risk Factor #1 – *Offices which handle the exchange of money, including cash, checks and credit card receipts.*

Risk Factor #2 – *Offices which handle issues which are stressful to students, such as the Health and Counseling Services, Registrar, Student Accounts, Office of Residential Life, Academic Advising Offices, Services for Students with Disabilities, Deans Offices, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Office of the Ombudsman and Parking Services.*

Risk Factor #3 – *Offices which handle issues which are stressful to faculty and staff such as the Office of Human Resources, EAP, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Office of the Ombudsman and Parking Services.*

Risk Factor #4 – *Working alone or in small groups.*

Risk Factor #5 – *Working late at night or early in the morning.*

General Indicators of Potential Violence:

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Unexplained increase in absenteeism; vague physical complaints
- Noticeable decrease in attention to appearance and hygiene
- Depression / withdrawal
- Behavior which is suspect of being paranoia
- Escalation of domestic problems into workplace; talk of severe financial problems
- Empathy with people committing violence or exhibiting a preoccupation with violence
- Increased severe mood swings
- Resistance and overreaction to changes in policy and procedures
- Intimidating, harassing, bullying, or otherwise inappropriate and aggressive behavior

- Body language suggesting anger – (e.g. clenched jaws or fists; shallow rapid breathing; scowling or sneering; glaring or avoiding eye contact; trembling or shaking; red face, sweating)
- Making delusional comments or statements
- Writing poems or letters that are bizarre or make reference to violence

General Protocol for De-escalating Potentially Volatile Situations:

- Speak in a calm, soft manner
- Approach the person slowly and calmly
- Avoid sudden moves or intrusive gestures
- Do not argue or contradict
- Listen attentively and repeat back what is told to you. Do not be judgmental.
- Give simple, supportive directions
- The louder they speak, the softer you speak.
- Never make counter threats
- Treat all people with respect
- Do not touch without permission
- Encourage the person to sit down
- Be vigilant for weapons or aggressive signals
- Observe the individual's body language for signs of stress or anger (e.g. clenched jaws or fists, shallow, rapid breathing; scowling or sneering; glaring or avoiding eye contact; trembling or shaking; red face; sweating)
- Think "What if?"

Departmental Emergency Planning

- Code word or expression to notify co-workers of trouble
- Procedure to summon assistance from police – program 777-2393 into your cell phone and/or 911 into your office phone
- Potential escape procedure for inside and outside the facility
- Be alert, be a good witness and note:
 - Height
 - Race
 - Clothing and hair – visually scan from the head to shoes
 - Speech – note accent peculiar speech pattern, words used
 - Weapons – type and description
 - Direction of travel
 - Anything else police should know.
- Practice "what if" scenarios at department meetings

Offices Dealing with Cash or Credit Cards:

- Keep minimal cash on hand.
- Make regular bank deposits.

- For regular high volume deposits, a security guard company may be arranged through Revenue Accounting/Business Office.
- For occasional high volume deposits, University Police can be contacted to provide an escort.
- Restrict access to areas where money is kept or handled
 - Lock doors
 - Barriers
- Consider installing surveillance cameras (arranged through the University Police Department)
- Consider using a drop safe
- Install signage stating “limited cash”
- Consider installing panic buttons (arranged through Telecommunications)
- Lighting improvements may be arranged through Physical Facilities
- Install height markers near exits to help in physical description of people
- Install mirrors and raised platforms to keep area where money is exchanged visible
- Identify safe places to escape to both inside and outside the facility.
- Install door locks that lead to staff-only areas

Working Alone or in Small Groups / Late at Night or Early in the Morning:

- Notify others where and when you will be working
- Notify others of the time you expect to return to a previously arranged location
- Ask a friend to call you at your work location
- Inform co-workers working in the area of your location – work out a “buddy system” where one co-worker will check on another from time to time.
- Call New York State University Police for an escort from work location to/from your vehicle
- Call New York State University Police, identify yourself, give your location and time frame in which you expect to be working and ask that an officer check in on you
- Notify New York State University Police when you are about to enter your facility early in the morning and advise that you will call when you arrive at your work area
- Notify New York State University Police when you are about to leave your facility after working late and advise that you will call when you in your automobile or have arrived at your off campus destination
- Listen to “that little voice” – if something does not seem right, it probably isn’t. Stay calm and take measures to control the situation and summon assistance
- Carry a pocket alert device or a good whistle and know how to use them
- Walk in lighted areas. If lighting is poor notify your supervisor and ask that corrective action be taken.

WHEN IN A ROOM WITH A PERSON WHO COULD BE/IS THREATENING:

- Position yourself so something is between you and the threat
- Sit closest to the door
- Seat yourself in a rolling chair, if possible

- Leave the door open
- Avoid isolated areas
- Ask someone to sit in or to listen outside the room if you are having a meeting that could escalate