Violence Prevention

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Policy Statement:
The purpose of the Violence Prevention Policy is to establish procedures to ensure a continued state of readiness for the protection of employees, clients, and/or visitors of facilities located in the South Central Louisiana Human Service Authority and support a Zero Tolerance to Work Place Violence. The Violence Prevention Policy is designed to promote awareness of the facility environment in order to eliminate any conditions which would make our employees, clients, contractors, visitors and facilities more vulnerable to an act of violence.

Rationale:
Workplace violence is any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site or at any site that an employee/contractor is placed for the purpose of completing job assignments. It can involve employees, contractors, clients, customers and visitors and is currently the third leading cause of fatal occupational injuries in the United States.

Procedure:

A. Workplace Analysis and Violence Prevention: Acts of violence in the workplace cannot always be prevented; however, there are precautions which can be taken to reduce the opportunity for the occurrence of acts of violence in the workplace.

1. Evaluate the environment (ex. lobby, hallways, offices, etc.) and identify any objects or situations which would be unfavorable during a threatening or violent act.
    a. Arrange lobby and office furniture to allow quickest route of escape.
    b. Remove any objects from your desk which can be used as weapon (ex. stapler, hole puncher, scissors, pens, pencils, letter opener, paper weight, staple removers, tape dispensers, etc.) and place in a location which is out of reasonable reach.
    c. Ensure that items hung in the lobby are secured to the wall so that it would be difficult to use for harm.
    d. Do not leave items in the hallways.
    e. Keep barrier doors locked according to building policy.
2. Be aware of unidentified persons in the clinic. If you are unsure of a person's identity, politely inquire. Do not assume that they are a client being waited on. Follow our policy on escorting persons from point to point and not leaving clients or visitors unattended in offices.

3. Be aware of persons and activities occurring in the lobby and diffuse them as early as possible.
4. Follow the uniform dress policy of the agency and wear your name tag.
5. Monitor all entrances. All entrances except for the main front entrance should be locked to outside entry. Doors not intended for exit should be marked as such. Doors intended for emergency use only shall be marked.
6. Individuals from other agencies, clients, friends, and family are to enter the facility through the front door. All visitors are to sign in and out according to agency policy.
7. Persons in treatment areas should be there for clinical or SCLHSA business reasons.
8. Be alert to any obvious weapons clients may possess (i.e. guns, knives, etc.)
9. Avoid being in an isolated area with a client or visitor.
10. Be aware of what is going on around you. Offer support or possible intervention to coworkers.
11. Assure that during group sessions, clients remain in the group room and not permitted in hallways unattended.
12. Follow site protocol for securing the building at the close of business.
13. There should always be at least two staff members in the building, especially during extended hours and those staff members should leave the premises together after hours.
14. Safety officers should assure that outside areas are well lit and operational.
15. Be aware of person(s) immediately outside facility. Persons who are on facility premises without just cause (individual sessions, doctor appointments, group sessions, etc. or family members accompanying client) should be asked to leave.
16. Utilize Crisis Intervention Training to diffuse situations. Call for Code Brown to summon physical support to de-escalate a possible crisis situation.
17. Security personnel are responsible for making rounds of all areas including visitor waiting, treatment and assessment areas and outside in parking and other common areas.

B. <u>Procedures for Handling Credible Threats or Acts of Violence</u>:

1. <u>Be Empathetic</u>. Try to remain objective (i.e. "I am sorry this happened, let me see if I can correct this for you.") Provide feedback. Be courteous. Express empathy. Acknowledge the person's feelings by gestures such as nodding your head.
2. <u>Clarify Messages</u>. Ask questions and <u>listen</u> attentively to responses. Take all threats seriously. Be patient and encourage the person to talk.
3. <u>Respect Personal Space</u>. Keep physical distance. Stay at least an arm's length away. Step back if necessary.
4. <u>Be Aware of Body Position</u>. Body position and body language can be construed as a threat. Keep your non-verbal cues non-threatening. (Clenched fists, stomping feet, movements towards you, etc.) Maintain personal space. Maintain relaxed yet attentive posture and position yourself at an angle rather than directly in front of the other person (supportive stance). Position yourself so the person cannot block your access to an exit.
5. <u>Permit Verbal Venting</u>. Venting is acceptable as long as it is not threatening or abusive.
6. <u>Set and Enforce Reasonable Limits</u>. Do not personalize. Stay focused on the problem at hand. Be careful of issuing ultimatums. Establish ground rules if reasonable behavior persists. Calmly describe the consequences of violent behavior. Try to reach consensus – Compromise and focus on what you can do and not what you can't do. Plan to follow through with anything you say.
7. <u>Avoid Overreacting</u>. Keep calm. Move and speak slowly, quietly, and confidently.
8. <u>Ignore Challenging Questions</u>. They do not solve problems, just escalate the situation. Redirect the person back to the topic.
9. <u>Call for support or assistance early</u>. This changes the dynamic of the situation, can bring in more eyes and ears and can confirm conditions of support for all involved. If the client or co-worker makes a credible threat of battery and/or assault occurs, you must immediately notify the nearest employee. Signal a co-worker or supervisor that you need help. Calling "Code

Brown" before a situation gets out of control may prevent escalation and allow the team time to plan a more effective intervention.

10. For someone threatening you with a gun, knife or other weapon:
    a. Stay calm and quietly signal for help if possible.
    b. Maintain eye contact.
    c. Stall for time.
    d. Keep talking, but follow instructions from the person who has the weapon.
    e. Don't risk harm to yourself or others.
    f. Don't try to be a hero.
    g. Never try to grab the weapon.
    h. Watch for a safe chance to escape.

11. Steps to Defusing Anger:
    a. Maintain eye contact.
    b. Focus your attention on the other person to demonstrate your interest in what he/she has to say.
    c. Ask what the individual wants you to do. (This helps focus the situation.)
    d. Ask the person to move to a less public, quiet area, if appropriate, or get others to move to diffuse the situation.
    e. Use delay tactics which will give the person time to calm down. (i.e. Offer a drink of water)
    f. Accept criticism in a professional manner.
    g. State your position.
    h. Keep your tone, volume and rate of speech even and regular.

12. In a Potentially Violent Situation **DO NOT**:
    a. Make false statements or promises you cannot keep.
    b. Try not to impart a lot of technical or complicated information when emotions are high.
    c. Take sides or agree with distortions.
    d. Invade the individual's personal space.
    e. Use styles of communication which generate hostility such as apathy, brush off, coldness, condescension, going strictly by the rules, or giving the run-around.
    f. Reject all of an individual's demands from the start.
    g. Pose in challenging stances such as standing directly opposite or over someone, hands on hips or crossing of arms.
    h. Avoid any physical contact, finger-pointing or long periods of fixed eye contact.
    i. Make sudden movements which can be seen as threatening.
    j. Challenge, threaten, or dare the individual. Never belittle the person or make him/her feel foolish.
    k. Criticize or act impatiently toward the agitated individual.
    l. Attempt to bargain with a threatening individual.
    m. Try to make the situation seem less serious than it is.

13. Handling a Suicidal Phone Call:
    a. Keep calm.
    b. Keep talking.
    c. Don't hang up or transfer the caller to other personnel.
    d. Try to get the person's name, telephone number, address and write it down.
    e. Signal a co-worker to call 911 on another line or use your personal cell phone. Give 911 the name, telephone number, and address if the person gives the information. If not, ask for the call to be traced.

f. After the call, notify your supervisor and document the actions of the staff via the incident reporting process.

C. <u>Response to Threats or Acts of Violence</u>

1. If a threat or act of violence cannot be safely and appropriately managed using agency resources and non-violent physical crisis intervention, the situation should be immediately reported by calling 911 or local law enforcement headquarters. Designate someone to speak to emergency responders to give as complete a description of the situation as possible, including instructions for entering the building and who will be the agency contact person.
2. Evacuate the building if it is safe to do so and follow site evacuation protocol.
3. Shelter in place safely until law enforcement clears the building and assures your safety.
4. All threats and acts of violence will result in the completion of the appropriate Incident Reporting Form.
    a. SCLHSA Internal Incident Report form is intended to be briefly completed at the time of the incident to alert administration pending the completion of other forms.
    b. DA2000 used for incidents involving staff.
    c. DA3000 used for incidents involving visitors.
    d. Witness statements must be obtained independently.
    e. A sentinel event investigation will be launched if criteria are met and determined by agency leadership.

5. Any combination of the following approaches should be considered:
    a. Develop safety plans with the intended victim(s) and for those who may be affected in the agency.
    b. Assist the victim or intended victim in linking with appropriate community resources and agencies.
    c. Monitor the situation.
    d. Formal meetings to involve SCLHSA Administration, Human Resources, and/or SCLHSA Attorney to meet with the person who has made threats or responded with violence to clearly state and provide written documentation that inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated and to clearly indicate what disciplinary responses may be used or have been implemented.
    e. Engage law enforcement agents to order for the behavior to stop or to remove the person from the property.
    f. Separate victim(s) from the offender(s)

6. If employees are involved:
    a. Initiate corrective action, education, and/or consider mandatory referral to Employee Assistance Program or other counseling services.
    b. Consider Protection Orders for intended or actual victim(s) and possibly for overall agency.
    c. Place the offender on leave (type of leave to be determined by Human Resources, Administration and Attorney)
    d. Require medical (psychiatric) evaluation to determine fitness for duty.
    e. Press charges against the offender for any unlawful behavior after consultation with administration.

Always contact local police or emergency responders when a situation involves the threat of serious harm of others or when harm has been caused. Involve appropriate emergency responders including police, fire, EMS, etc.

D. Situation and Post-Situation Management:

Conduct a debriefing utilizing the Code Brown/Debriefing Form to review responses, to document recommendations on processes or policies and any follow up needed. Debriefing occurs with any involved staff which covers the following:

1. Consider and plan what one would do in a variety of situations involving risk. Discuss effective approaches to preventing violence, ensuring personal safety, and for assisting others.
2. Develop procedures to be used when help is needed.
3. Discuss and coordinate safety strategies with co-workers
4. Review the use of processes already in place and their effectiveness and identify any concerns or needs for revision of those processes.
5. Determine if escape routes were functional.
6. Develop alarms and signals to be used throughout the agency to signal for help, to alert others, and to relay information needed to prevent or reduce potential harm. Evaluate their effectiveness post event.
7. Provide training on non-violent physical crisis intervention and refer to desk top job aids for reminders on early intervention. Practice skills and techniques with co-workers. Request for trainers to do on-site refreshers with your team. Safely practice techniques during role play.
8. Assess physical security needs of the department and develop plans to improve security as needed (increase security guards, metal detectors at main entrance, furniture placement, removing items that may be used as weapons, panic buttons, security alarms, video cameras, hallway mirrors, etc.)
9. Modify use of entrances and exits, access to keys, or type of key access.
10. Following debriefing to all employees affected by the threats or acts of violence, consider Employee Assistance Program (EAP) referral for persons with needs following the incident.
11. Be aware that responding law enforcement agencies will not attend to occupants of a building in the case of an active shooter or other violent situation until the building is secured and all real and potential threats are addressed. Employees may wait several hours in a shelter in place scenario before being released by law enforcement personnel.

E. Disciplinary proceedings for employees Refer to SCLHSA Policy Disciplinary Actions 202

1. Adverse disciplinary actions should be planned and initiated at a location and with employee(s) in attendance that best meet the needs of all involved and to prevent or reduce aggressive responses.
2. The focus of the proceedings should center on the facts of the situation, not the personality of the employee.
3. Consider involving security guards or law enforcement officials when there is significant concern that the employee may respond aggressively.

F. Employee/Contractors Responsibilities:

South Central Louisiana Human Service Authority employees are required to report to their supervisors all credible threats, acts of battery and/or incidents of violent behavior in the workplace which they observe or of which they are informed. Examples of inappropriate behavior which shall be reported include:

1. Any intentional act of intimidation (implied threats), threat of violence (verbal, written, or other clearly communicated threat), or act of violence committed against any person or to the property of another while on SCLHSA property.
2. Firearms, explosives, and other weapons are prohibited on SCLHSA property except firearms carried by authorized agents (police, sheriff, guards).
3. Any conduct which involves acts of intimidation and/or threats is considered inappropriate for the workplace and shall be taken seriously and investigated.
4. Unwelcome name-calling, obscene language, and other abusive behavior.

5. Intimidation through direct or veiled verbal threats.
6. Physical touching either by another employee/contractor or client in an intimidating, malicious, or sexually harassing manner, including such acts as hitting, slapping, poking, kicking, pinching, grabbing, and pushing.
7. Physically intimidating behavior such as obscene gestures, “getting in your face”, fist shaking, or throwing any object.
8. Threats of harm or concern an employee/contractor experiences outside of work that may be transferred to the work site are respectfully requested to be reported so that the safety of all at the work site may be preserved.
9. Employee involvement and feedback enables workers to develop and express their own commitment to safety and security and provide useful information to design, implement, and evaluate the program. SCLHSA employee involvement includes, but not limited to:
    a. Understanding and complying with the workplace violence prevention program and other safety and security measures.
    b. Participating in employee complaint or suggestion procedures covering safety and security concerns.
    c. Providing prompt and accurate reporting of violent incidents.
    d. Cooperating with the Safety Officers & Safety Committee that reviews violent incidents and security problems and makes security inspections.
    e. Participating in education that covers techniques to recognize escalating agitation, assaultive behavior or criminal intent.
    f. Any employee who is the subject of or a witness to a suspected violation of this policy should report the violation through the chain of command to the appropriate staff who is not involved in the violation.
    g. Employees making threats of violence or demonstrating violent behavior will be subject to disciplinary actions. Failure to respond appropriately to suspected threats or actions of violence may also lead to disciplinary action.

G. Supervisor/Contract Monitor Responsibilities:

1. Supervisors/Contract Monitor shall serve as role models by consistently demonstrating professionalism, patience, and respect in handling even the most difficult situations.
2. Supervisors/Contract Monitor will promptly address all inappropriate behavior, limited productivity, potential signs of employee dissatisfaction, significant changes in behavior, and obvious signs of intimidation, threat or acts of violence.
3. Supervisors/Contract Monitor shall document all suspected concerns and consult with their direct supervisors. Supervisors/Contract Monitor shall assist in the investigation and response of any employee’s behaviors that present a concern to the overall functioning and safety of the agency.
4. Supervisors/Contract Monitor are expected to do the following:
    a. Consistently treat employees fairly and with respect
    b. Recognize and/or reward employees for good performance/behavior
    c. Hold employees/contractors accountable for poor performance/behavior
    d. Never use insults, inappropriate or foul language, threats of unsanctioned or unapproved disciplinary actions, or lose temper when meeting with an employee.
    e. Reinforce and support these expectations with their employees/contractors and to reinforce the principles presented in relevant violence prevention educational presentations.
    f. Initiate the debriefing process utilizing the Code Brown/Debriefing form and follow through with recommendations and suggestions made.

H. Management Responsibilities:

1. Managers will encourage employees to report any suspected acts of intimidation, threat or acts of violence.

2. Develop effective orientation and ongoing education and training to increase employee awareness of workplace violence, recognition of warning signs, and ability to prevent and manage behaviors and situations that may lead to aggression and violence.
3. Managers who have knowledge of a suspected threat or act shall require that the situation be fully investigated and documented. When events occur, managers will coordinate the debriefing process via the Code Brown/Debriefing form and participate in the process in conjunction with all supervisory staff. Please see the Code Brown Guide and Code Brown Debrief Form. Results and recommendations will be forwarded to the Clinical Director, Deputy Director and Executive Director.
4. Management will consult with SCLHSA Administration and Human Resources regarding all suspected threats, acts of violence or regarding other behaviors that may require a supervisory plan or disciplinary action.
5. Management will be mindful of the Employee Assistance Program and provide prompt referrals for services in order to mitigate factors that may be contributing to an employee's dissatisfaction, frustration, and ineffective coping.
6. Management will maintain documentation regarding all events involving threats or acts of violence. Documentation will be kept in appropriate areas and by all persons involved in the event or management of the event.

I. Training:

All employees/contractors who have direct care responsibilities are required to attend an initial non-violent physical crisis intervention training or an annual refresher course. Clinical level drills utilizing the skills taught are recommended to be conducted annually. Every staff member participates in State of Louisiana mandated course(s) on Preventing Sexual Harassment. All employees/contractors are also expected to participate in emergency drills, follow site specific safety rules, know evacuation routes, safe meeting spaces and security code words to be used in the course of a real or practiced event at the domiciled location. Debriefing and the use of the Code Brown/Debriefing form is part of every person's responsibility in managing violent/emergency events. (Please see attached Code Brown Guide and Code Brown Form.)

Compliance Requirement:

- State of Louisiana mandated course(s) on Preventing Sexual Harassment

Attachments:

- Code Brown Guide
- Code Brown Form
- SCLHSA Internal Incident Report form
  - DA2000
  - DA3000

Linkages:

- Disciplinary Actions 202