

# **BAY COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY**

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:**

The Bay County Library System (“the Library”) recognizes the need to provide reasonable safety and security for all employees and visitors. In compliance with Section 5(a), of the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSHA), the Library will not tolerate threats, threatening behavior, or acts of violence against employees, visitors, guests, or other individuals by anyone on Library property. This includes physical and verbal attacks or threats, destruction of property, sexual harassment, intimidation, or abusive language.

## **DEFINITIONS:**

**Workplace Violence:** includes, but is not limited to harassment, threats, physical attack, and/or property damage.

**Threat:** verbal or physical conduct that threatens property or personal safety or that reasonably could be interpreted as intent to cause harm.

**Physical Attack:** unwanted or hostile physical contact such as hitting, fighting, pushing, shoving, biting, spitting, and/or throwing objects.

**Property Damage:** intentional damage to property which includes property owned by the Library, employees, visitors, and/or vendors.

## **PREVENTION:**

The Library supports the prevention of workplace violence. Prevention efforts include, but are not limited to, informing employees of this policy, instructing employees regarding the dangers of workplace violence, communicating the sanctions imposed for violating this policy, and providing a procedure to report incidents of violence without fear of reprisal.

## **PROHIBITED ACTIONS AND SANCTIONS:**

It is a violation of this policy to engage in any act of workplace violence, except for law enforcement personnel as authorized by law and within the confines of the law enforcement agency policies.

No employee or third party, excluding law enforcement personnel, is permitted to bring weapons or firearms into the workplace, or onto Library property, or possess weapons within Library vehicles.

Any person who in the opinion of the Managing Librarian, or person-in-charge of the building poses a threat to herself or himself or others will be asked to leave the premises. Failure to leave will result in a call to 911 in order to have law enforcement personnel escort the individual(s) off Library property. Persons who are asked to leave or are escorted off Library property because they are deemed to pose a threat will remain off Library property pending the outcome of an investigation by the Library’s Crisis Management Team identified in this policy.

The Library will initiate an appropriate response which may include, but is not limited to, reassignment of job duties, suspension or termination of employment, suspension and/or termination of any business relationship, and/or referral for criminal prosecution of the person or persons involved.

#### EMPLOYEES' RESPONSIBILITY:

During orientation new employees will be given a copy of this policy along with an explanation of how it is to be implemented, how to report incidents of violence, what to do if the employee is threatened, and what to do if an incident of violence actually takes place. A copy of this policy is always accessible, along with all personnel policies, on the Library's Intranet.

An employee witnessing violence in the workplace directed against another or who is a victim him/herself should immediately notify the Managing Librarian or person-in-charge in the building, or call 911, depending on the situation.

Any employee having knowledge of violence in the workplace involving any other employee (as victim or perpetrator) must report it to the Managing Librarian or person-in-charge of the building immediately. Disciplinary action may result if the employee having such knowledge fails to report the incident.

All employees who apply for or obtain a protective or restraining order that lists Library property or facilities as being protected areas must provide this information to the Managing Librarian or person-in-charge of the building, who is then responsible for reporting it to the Assistant Director or Director.

The Library and its employees will cooperate fully with law enforcement officials in the investigation and prosecution of violent acts.

The Library understands the sensitivity and confidentiality of information that may be requested, and will respect the privacy of the reporting employee(s) to the extent required by law.

All employees should openly communicate with each other to be aware of any unusual activity that may identify the potential for or actual occurrence of workplace violence.

Valid and valuable ideas for improved safety often come as suggestions from employees. These suggestions are encouraged and may be channeled through the supervisory chain or communicated directly with the Assistant Director or Director.

#### DEALING WITH A POTENTIALLY VIOLENT SITUATION:

Employees are expected to assist the general public and fellow employees in a courteous manner, but not subject themselves to abusive conduct if confronted by:

- A. A distraught, harassing or abusively angry person.

If a person becomes angry or abusive, the employee should attempt to calm the person down. If that does not work, the employee shall ask a supervisor to intervene. If the supervisor is unavailable, ask a co-worker to call 911. Department heads must make sure that a practical system is in place for employees to get help during a threatening situation.

- B. A person threatening bodily harm. If an employee feels that he/she or another person is threatened, and in danger of imminent bodily harm:
- a. The employee should attempt to leave the scene, if it can be done safely
  - b. 911 must be notified by the threatened person or a co-worker if possible.
  - c. If the supervisor is not aware of the situation, the employee must notify the Managing Librarian or person-in-charge of the building, as soon as it can be done safely.

#### REPORTING INCIDENTS:

Each incident of violent behavior, whether committed by an employee or other individual, must be reported to the employees' supervisor. The Managing Librarian or person-in-charge of the building will investigate the incident and forward a completed Incident Form to the Director, who will then determine the appropriate action to be taken. Retaliation against a complainant for the act of filing a good-faith report is prohibited.

In critical incidents in which serious threat or injury occurs, 911 should be called immediately. As necessitated by the seriousness of the incident, the Director may assemble the Crisis Management Team to establish the protocol to be followed in the aftermath of a violent incident.

#### DOCUMENTATION & RECORD KEEPING

All incidents, including actions taken against those who are asked to leave or are removed from Library property by law enforcement, will be documented using the Library's Incident Form, which is to be completed by the investigator(s), reviewed by the Director, and filed in the administrative office along with any supporting documents such as police reports, witness statements, etc.

#### CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Crisis Management Team will consist of the Library Director, Assistant Director, Managing Librarian of the affected branch, and others deemed necessary. The Crisis Management Team is responsible for the following:

- \* evaluating potential violence problems
- \* assessing an employee's fitness for duty in the context of potential violence
- \* selecting intervention techniques
- \* establishing a plan for the protection of co-workers and other potential targets
- \* coordinating with victims, families, other employees, media, and law enforcement personnel
- \* referring victims for appropriate assistance