



ZERO TOLERANCE OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE (RCTC POLICY 1B1.3)

State Law - In 1992, the Minnesota Legislature adopted the following into State statute (sections 1.50 and 15.90): "The State of Minnesota 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 that policy, Minnesota Statute 15.86 mandates each agency of State government adopt a goal of zero tolerance of violence in, and around, the workplace. Each such agency was also required to develop a plan describing how the agency will seek to eliminate any potential for violence (a) in and around the agency workplace, and (b) affecting the attitudes and behavior of the people whom the agency serves or regulates.

Part 1. Definition of Violence

In 1994, the Minnesota Legislature's Violence Prevention Advisory Task Force endorsed this definition of violence as a reference for those working on violence prevention issues: "Violence is the abusive or unjust exercise of power, intimidation, harassment, and/or the threatened or actual use of force which results in or has a high likelihood of causing hurt, fear, injury, suffering, or death."

Workplace violence generally falls into three categories: (a) a violent act or threat (perceived or real) by a current or former employee, supervisor, or manager, or someone who has some involvement with a current or former employee, such as an employee's spouse, significant other, relative, or other person who has had a dispute with an employee; (b) a violent act or threat (perceived or real) by someone receiving service from the agency; or (c) a violent act by someone unrelated to the work environment.

Violent acts are frequently the end result of long-standing disputes or unresolved arguments which can begin with a disrespectful comment or action and escalate to more serious levels of violence. A continuum of violence often begins with such acts as name-calling or other negative comments which progress to pushing, shoving, or shouting that can continue into physical assault. The complete workplace environmental climate must be assessed in order to prevent violence, rather than merely respond to incidents or violence in the workplace. Factors external to the workplace may impact the safety of the workplace environment, e.g., the spillover effects of family violence. It is imperative Rochester Community and Technical College foster and promote a positive working environment and culture for its employees, students, and visitors.

Part 2. Rochester Community and Technical College's Goal

It is the goal of Rochester Community and Technical College to achieve a work environment which is free from threats and acts of violence, whether perceived or real. Rochester Community and Technical College will not tolerate workplace violence of any type, from any source, including threatening or violent actions by (a) employees, whether directed against students, visitors, or other employees; or (b) students or visitors, whether directed against employees or other students or visitors.

Part 3. Rochester Community and Technical College's Policy

It is the policy of Rochester Community and Technical College, and the responsibility of its employees, students, and visitors, to maintain a workplace free from threats and acts of violence. Rochester Community and Technical College will work to provide a safe workplace for its employees, students, and visitors.

Each employee, student, and visitor with whom we come into contact in our work at Rochester Community and Technical College deserves to be treated with courtesy and respect; accomplished by encouraging mutual respect among all individuals, establishing open and honest communication, and enforcing zero tolerance for any type of violent behavior.

Rochester Community and Technical College will work, through information, training, and enforcement, to foster a work environment and culture that is devoid of violence for employees, students, and visitors. Rochester Community and Technical College will:

- (1) actively work to prevent and eliminate acts of work-related violence.
- (2) clarify and enforce expectations regarding behaviors for employees, students, and visitors.
- (3) respond promptly, positively, and aggressively to deal with threats or acts of violence; including the timely involvement of law enforcement agencies when appropriate.
- (4) prohibit the possession of firearms and other dangerous weapons in the workplace.
- (5) treat seriously any and all incidents of work-related threats or acts of violence.
- (6) promptly investigate all threats or acts of violence and take appropriate action.
- (7) take strong disciplinary action, up to and including discharge from State employment, against employees who are involved in the commission of work-related threats or acts of violence.
- (8) support criminal prosecution of those who threaten or commit work-related violence against its employees, students, or visitors (pursuant of Minnesota Statute 15.86, this policy does not create any civil liability on the part of the State of Minnesota).
- (9) provide information and training for employees, students, and visitors to foster a work environment that is safe, respectful, proactive, and responsive to threats (perceived or real) or acts of violence.

Part 4. Plan for Implementing Zero Tolerance of Violence In and Around the Workplace

Rochester Community and Technical College is committed to ensuring the workplace provides for the safety, and reasonable protection from workplace violence, of employees, students, and visitors, all of whom will be treated with respect and dignity. That goal will be accomplished by these actions:

Safe Workplace. A College Safety and Security report will be prepared annually for Rochester Community and Technical College, addressing physical security on campus and including procedures for appropriate response to threats and acts of violence.

Violence Prevention. Rochester Community and Technical College will attempt to limit violence from both external and internal sources by positively affecting the attitudes and behavior of employees, students, and visitors.

Interaction. Emphasis will be placed on treating all people with respect and dignity, and on maintaining a calm attitude and demeanor towards others.

Behavior. All Rochester Community and Technical College operations will be conducted in a fair, efficient, reliable, and understandable manner.

Conduct Codes and Discipline. Standards of conduct at Rochester Community and Technical College will be clear, communicated, and consistently enforced, and discipline will be used fairly, consistently, and appropriately to deal with instances of unacceptable behavior.

Leadership. All employees will be expected to promote positive behavior, and to lead by example in the zero tolerance of workplace violence.

Language and Behavior. Rochester Community and Technical College will not tolerate threatening or violent language or behavior among its employees, students, or visitors, including, but not limited to, such things as intentionally insulting racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual comments; harassment such as bullying, hazing, pushing, or stalking; throwing things; carrying weapons for other than approved classroom activities; or assault, whether it occurs on campus or at off-campus functions sanctioned by Rochester Community and Technical College. The college acknowledges that in the course of discussion, debate, and classroom lectures, individuals may find certain topics disagreeable or uncomfortable. These circumstances are an inevitable component of the learning process and should not be considered detrimental when conducted with respect and courtesy.

Staff Training. All employees will be provided with training in how to deal with workplace-related threats and acts of violence. That training will focus on threat awareness; identifying, preventing, and de-escalating violence; appropriate responses to threats and acts of violence, and identification of resources which are available for use once a potential problem has been identified or an incident has occurred. Assessment of additional training needs for employees will be made upon request by the area supervisor, and appropriate training programs will be developed and presented. Other training and information that foster a positive work environment, such as stress reduction, conflict management, and confronting and dealing with unacceptable behavior, will be made available.

Employee Counseling and Assistance. Rochester Community and Technical College will encourage use of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), an assessment, short-term, counseling and referral agency. While supervisors, union representatives, or family members may encourage employees to seek help from EAP, the decision to use the services is voluntary. 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.

Safety Promotion. Information and instruction will be provided and/or posted for employees, students, and visitors regarding appropriate responses to potential safety threats, e.g., evacuation routes in the event of fire or other emergency.

Valuing and Respecting Diversity. It is Rochester Community and Technical College's policy and practice to value and respect individual differences among people. Harassment of any person in the workplace is strictly prohibited. Harassment can be any behavior which is unwelcome, personally offensive, insulting, or demeaning, when (a) submission to such conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of an individual's employment, (b) submission to, or rejection of, such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such an individual, or (c) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. Harassment and discrimination are serious concerns, incidents of which may, if not corrected, result in workplace violence. The Administration will treat reports of harassment and discrimination seriously; complaints will be promptly investigated, and, if necessary, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

Supervisory Responsibilities. Supervisors have a primary responsibility for ensuring a safe work environment. They are to specifically take immediate action to resolve or stabilize violent situations in the workplace, and to protect people from harm. Supervisors will ensure appropriate incident response resources are notified immediately when a threat is made or a violent incident occurs. They will also ensure appropriate disciplinary responses to workplace violence and aggression are made.

Incident Response. Rochester Community and Technical College's Director of Institutional Services will be responsible for coordinating a response to violent or threatening situations in the workplace. The Director will (a) assist supervisors in the development of applicable training programs, (b) serve as a resource referral agent and information source for supervisors and others with regard to workplace violence concerns, and (c) respond as needed to incidents involving threats or acts of workplace-related violence. To perform these duties will require the Director (a) perform situation assessments and evaluations, (b) assist with attempts to de-escalate and properly manage potentially violent situations, (c) facilitate and coordinate response actions of appropriate resources, both internal and external, and (d) ensure appropriate follow-up action is taken, e.g., investigation, victim assistance, preventive and corrective actions.

Incident Reporting. All incidents of threats or acts of violence are to be immediately reported to the area supervisor and the Director of Institutional Services. Reports must fully detail the specific incident and identify all persons involved, including witnesses. All reports will be fully investigated by the Director of Institutional Services, who will provide a full report to the Rochester Community and Technical College President, including a follow-up on the response action taken. Media inquiries regarding incidents of workplace violence will be channeled through the RCTC Director of Communications and will be handled in accordance with the Rochester Community and Technical College Crisis Response Plan.

As warranted, local law enforcement agencies or emergency medical personnel should immediately be contacted by dialing 9-911.

Dangerous Weapon Prohibition. The possession of a dangerous weapon at Rochester Community and Technical College by any person, other than official firearms carried by a law enforcement officer, is strictly prohibited. Employees, students, and visitors are prohibited from possessing any dangerous weapon while on campus or at Rochester Community and Technical College off-campus events. The category "dangerous weapon" includes, but is not limited to: 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 Minnesota Statute 609.713; knives, and other similar instruments (with a blade length of more than three inches) other than those normally 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; "throwing stars," "numchucks," clubs, saps, and any other item commonly used, 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; or any other item commonly used, or primarily intended for use as, or has been employed as, a dangerous weapon; or any other item considered in the professional judgment of the Director of Institutional Services to be, or have the potential to be, a dangerous weapon.

Welcoming Environment. Rochester Community and Technical College will endeavor to create and maintain a work environment that is caring and supportive, and will attempt to assist employees in positively resolving problems, losses, and/or other stressors that arise in their lives.

Workplace Stress. Rochester Community and Technical College will continue to seek ways to reduce workplace stress.

Workplace Safety. Rochester Community and Technical College will continue to promote safety for employees, students, and visitors, at the College.

Violence Risk Reduction. Rochester Community and Technical College will strive to increase awareness about general issues of violence, and to prepare employees to identify risk factors and to take action to reduce risks. Steps will also be developed and implemented to screen employees prior to hiring, and training will be provided to help recognize signs of trouble in employee situations.

Critical Incidents Stress Debriefing

Critical incidents are defined as any incident:

- (1) involving an employee which results in death, great bodily harm, or substantial bodily harm to an employee, student, or visitor.
- (2) in which deadly force, as defined in M.S. 609.066, Subd. 1, is used by an employee or against an employee. Examples include use of weapons, physical assault, bombs, etc.
- (3) deemed serious enough by the circumstances to warrant investigation and review. Examples include: hostage situations, pursuits, sudden death or serious injury to a child, a difficult rescue effort, a victim with overwhelming traumatic injuries, natural disasters or mass casualty incidents, threats of violence to an employee or group of employees, suicides, death or injury of a person known by employees, extremely hostile encounters, several difficult incidents within a short period of time.

All critical incidents are to be reported immediately to the supervisor and Director of Institutional Services. The supervisor or Director of Institutional Services shall prepare a complete written report of the incident.

Responses to a critical incident can include the following as appropriate: provide paid administrative leave time if deemed appropriate, encourage professional counseling (psychologist, psychiatrist, member of the clergy, organized peer counseling group), referral to the Employee Assistance Program, relocating employees on a temporary basis if a facility is inhabitable or reassigning employees to different work sites.

