

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
SITE SPECIFIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION PLAN

Preamble

This plan was developed as part of the University of Saskatchewan's commitment to reducing opportunities for workplace violence. The definition of violence in the workplace is "the attempted, threatened, or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause injury, and includes any threatening statement or behavior that gives the worker reasonable cause to believe that the worker is at risk of injury." In order to develop this plan, faculty members and staff of the Department of Psychology were surveyed to determine their perception or experience of violent behaviour in the Department.

Assessment of Degree of Risk

On the basis of responses to the survey, the overall assessment is that members of the Department of Psychology are exposed to a Low Degree of Risk on a day-to-day basis.

The risks in the Department are linked to interactions among faculty members, between staff members and co-workers, faculty members and students, between students and instructors, and, on occasion, between members of the department and persons from the public. The primary workplace behaviours that respondents reported having been subjected to included acts such as being treated in a hostile manner, being given the "silent treatment," being treated in a rude and disrespectful manner, and being prevented from expressing oneself (e.g., interrupted when speaking). It appears as though the behaviors that have been experienced are mainly a result of lack of respect for individuals, and poor communication between co-workers and students. For handling of non-violent but rude, insensitive behaviour, members of the department should consult the "Department of Psychology Policy Concerning Complaints of Sexual Harassment, Abuse of Power, Disrespectful Treatment, and Discrimination" (<http://www.usask.ca/psychology/gradhdbk/app.htm>).

Violence Prevention Plan

(1) The Department will make known to its employees the safety resources and initiatives available at the University of Saskatchewan (Appendix 1 attached to this document). In addition, it will provide employees with information on how to deal with difficult people/situations (Appendix 2 attached to this document).

(2) The Department will follow the policies and procedures that are in place within the University. All complaints or reports of incidents of violence will be handled in an appropriate manner using common sense and the University procedures in place. Within

the Department, incidents should be reported, if possible, to the immediate supervisor and the Department Head. If uncomfortable with reporting the incident internally, any employee is encouraged to report an incident through the appropriate channels in their union or through the University Resources listed below. Incidents will be handled with reference to the appropriate collective agreements or academic procedures.

(3) The Department encourages incidents of violence to be reported with the assurance that there will be no reprisals against employees who make legitimate complaints. If any suspicious or violent activity is observed at any time of day, Security Services should be called at 5555.

(4) The Department will encourage employees to attend training programs focused on violence prevention and safety protocols.

(5) The following information will be available in the Main Office (Arts 154) of the Department of Psychology: University of Saskatchewan Violence Policy, Department of Psychology Violence Prevention Plan, DHSE Guide to developing a workplace Violence Prevention Plan, incident report forms.

(6) The Department will re-evaluate the Violence Prevention Plan periodically.

(7) A copy of this document will be available on the Department website. The Department will adhere to the principles of the University of Saskatchewan Violence Policy (www.usask.ca/policies/3_09.htm).

Draft produced 4 October 2004

**Safety Resources & Initiatives
(Appendix 1, Violence Prevention Guide)**

Community Safety Office (CSO)

966-1957

The Community Safety Office receives and acts on concerns of personal safety, administers the Violence Policy and Prevention Programs, and provides assistance to the U of S community including:

- assessing the potential for violence in the workplace assessing threats or perceived threats of violence and their impact on the safety of the University community
- developing risk abatement strategies to reduce the potential for, and the impact of violent incidents
- training in personal safety related programs, such as Street Smart From 9-5 and First-Aid/CPR
- providing workshops and presentations on violence prevention

Visit: www.usask.ca/dhse/communitysafety

Department of Health, Safety & Environment (DHSE)

966-8493

The Department of Health, Safety and Environment provides leadership and quality services for the creation and maintenance of a safe, healthy and enjoyable environment to complement the University's mandate for excellence in teaching and research. DHSE is a resource centre providing services, education, consultation and maintaining regulatory compliance.

Visit: www.usask.ca/dhse

Department of Security Services (DSS)

966-5555

Patrol members of Security Services patrol on foot, vehicle and bicycle and provide the initial response to all calls for service from assaults to lockouts. They attend medical emergencies, fire alarm and intrusion alarms on campus, and are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for lockouts, Safewalks, or information calls.

Visit: www.usask.ca/security

Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services (DHPS)

966-4936

DHPS provides assistance with issues of harassment (including sexual harassment) and other forms of discrimination. Services are available to all students and employees and include:

- confidential consultation
- information and advice on the options available to resolve a problem
- assistance with a resolution
- helping persons in authority resolve issues in their area
- providing workshops and presentations on discrimination and harassment

Visit: www.usask.ca/dhps

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

966-4300

When life's challenges affect your personal well-being, EAP is available to assist you and members of your family. EAP services are confidential, voluntary, accessible, and responsive to your needs.

Visit: www.usask.ca/eap

Occupational Health Committee (OHC)

The University of Saskatchewan Occupational Health Committee has been established to provide a forum for consultation between the University of Saskatchewan and representatives of its employees concerning health, safety and environmental issues in the University workplace.

The obligation to maintain a safe workplace rests on the University as employer under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, S.S. 1993, c. O-11, and it is the purpose of the Occupational Health Committee to assist the University of Saskatchewan in meeting this obligation.

Visit: www.usask.ca/ohc

President's Advisory Council on the Status of Women (PACSW)

The mission of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women is to achieve equity for women at the University of Saskatchewan by providing the President with advice on relevant policies, practices, and programs.

Visit: www.usask.ca/pacsw

[Responding to Sensitive Issues: A Guide to University Resources](#)

A “sensitive issue” is any situation that, if left unattended, has the potential to develop into a serious problem. However, if identified early and managed effectively through a coordinated effort, the impact of a sensitive issue can be minimized. If left unattended, the issue might result in significant negative impacts on individual(s), department(s), and the University. If you are faced with a serious issue and you are unsure of how to handle it, check out this guide to help you identify the appropriate University resource/s to assist you. Copies of the guide can be obtained through Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services.

Visit: www.usask.ca/dhse/pdf/Sensitive_Issues.pdf

Safewalk

966-2240

Safewalk is an initiative of the University of Saskatchewan Students Union. Faculty, staff, students and visitors can receive an escort to and from their car or place of residence in close proximity to the campus. Safe Walk volunteers are equipped with two way radios, safety vests, identifying jackets, and flashlights. Contact Safewalk **966-SAFE (7233) Sunday to Thursday 8:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.** After hours contact Security Services at 966-5555.

[Sexual Assault Awareness Committee](#)

966-2339

This committee, which is coordinated by Student and Enrolment Services Division, works to generate an awareness of sexual assault in the campus community, and promote the resources that are available both on and off campus for victims of sexual assault.

Visit: www.usask.ca/sas/retention/assault.html

[Student and Enrolment Services Division \(SESD\)](#)

966-2339

Combining the previous functions of the Office of the Registrar and Student Affairs & Services, SESD focuses on providing developmental and support services and programs to students and the University community.

Visit: www.usask.ca/sesd

Student Counselling

966-4920

Student Counselling offers a wide range of mental health services to registered students at the University of Saskatchewan.

Visit: <http://students.usask.ca/wellness/counselling/scs/>

Student Health

966-5768

The Student Health Centre provides health care and health education services to all registered University of Saskatchewan students, their spouses or partners and their dependents. They provide walk-in medical services for minor emergencies and problems that cannot wait for an appointment.

Visit: <http://students.usask.ca/wellness/health/shc/>

Emergency Safety Phones

Emergency Safety Phones are installed throughout the campus grounds. These emergency phones enable an immediate connection to Security Services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The locations of the telephones have been distributed throughout each student lot (Lots Z, Y, P and E), the three main staff parking lots (Lots G, F, and V), as well as two locations in the bowl area.

The telephones are easily identified by their blue strobe light on top of the unit, which will light up and remain lit until response is achieved. **These telephones are for emergency use only**, similar to the 9-1-1 system.

SaskTel Safety Phones

All payphones on the University of Saskatchewan campus are equipped with five emergency buttons. These buttons will automatically connect the caller to one of the following services:

- Security Services
- University of Saskatchewan Students Union
- Safewalk (after hours the phone is forwarded to Security Services)
- Place Riel Information Centre

- SaskTel Customer Service

Phone calls from any of the payphones to Security Services will appear on Call Display. As a result, if the caller is unable to stay on the line or is unable to speak, the call can be traced, the location can be determined quickly, and officers dispatched immediately.

Dealing With Difficult People/Situations (Appendix 2, Violence Prevention Guide)

Pre-Incident Indicators

Don't ignore warning signs. If you are concerned about an employee who is exhibiting some of the following behaviors, contact the Community Safety Manager, Department of Health, Safety & Environment for assistance with threat assessment.

➤ Behavioral indicators

The employee:

- Often makes jokes or talks about weapons, often in terms of power or revenge; has obtained weapons recently or has access to weapons.
- Uses threats, intimidation and/or manipulates/escalates situations. Co-workers are afraid of the employee even though they may have a difficult time explaining exactly why.
- Has a history of encounters with police including assaultive or behavioral offenses.
- Is fascinated with acts of violence and identifies with perpetrators of workplace violence.
- Feels others are conspiring against them, nobody listens to them or is on their side.
- Refuses to accept criticism.
- Socially isolated, a loner, with an unstable or non-existent family life
- Low self-esteem
- Strongly identifies with their job; what they do is who they are
- Exhibits a continually negative attitude regarding problems in the workplace without resolving them
- Increased need for supervision, a sudden or sustained drop in productivity or performance, inconsistent work habits, inability to concentrate
- Displays a disregard for the health and safety of themselves and/or others
- Exhibits self-destructive behavior such as alcohol or drug abuse
- Sudden changes in personality/behavior
- Obsessive behavior
- Self-predicts a loss of control
- Refuses to acknowledge job performance problems, or accept responsibility for his/her own actions, blames others
- Changes in health or hygiene
- Chronically disgruntled, with disdain for authority and contempt for the boss.
- Has recently had problems outside work, such as divorce or debt
- Makes threats of violence, either specific or veiled
- Depressed, sullen, angry, argumentative, uncooperative, easily frustrated
- Resists change and is unwilling to discuss ideas or methods contrary to their own.
- Makes hopeless or suicidal statements
- Has unreasonable or unrealistic expectations

- Has a history of workplace grievances or has a grievance pending
- Monitors the behavior and activities of others, often maintaining records
- Undertakes one-man crusades
- If fired, employee refuses to let go and focuses on the past rather than the future
- Recent media stories of workplace violence

Watch for:

Pattern: a change in the employee's behavior pattern. Beware of newly acquired negative traits.

Frequency: the behavior happens more and more often, too often to be acceptable

Intensity: the intensity of the behaviors is disruptive to the work environment

Number of behaviors: the employee exhibits many of the behaviors rather than just a few.

➤Physical Indicators

- Pacing
- Finger drumming, wringing of hands or other restless, repetitive movements
- Change in voice or subject matter
- Person might become unusually quiet or unusually loud
- Staring or avoiding eye contact
- Change in facial color and expression
- Trembling
- Clenched jaws or fists
- Person begins to direct their energy at others
- Evasive, threatening, challenging
- Shallow rapid breathing
- Abusive language

The workplace must be managed in such a way as to encourage a cooperative approach to identifying potential violence through the early recognition of behavioral warning signs. There must also be a consistent management commitment to intervention that benefits not only the workplace, but also the employee who is in crisis.

Tips for Managing Disruptive Behavior

- You are not obliged to put up with rudeness or aggression while performing your job. You have a right to civility and respect.
- Always remain in control of yourself and the situation, no matter how you are provoked.
- Do not react to rudeness, aggression, sarcasm or any other provocation. It will only escalate the situation. Remember that when a person becomes angry they become irrational. At this point, they hardly respond spoken words. Instead they respond more to the non-verbal messages that you are sending them. It's not what you say, its how you say it. Talk in a calm manner, softer and slower than the aggressor, but be careful not to talk down to them. Avoid using body language that can be perceived as threatening, such as hands on hips, crossed arms, pointing gestures, rolling your eyes.
- Be aware of what triggers your own anger as this awareness might help you maintain control. Avoid personal challenges.
- Respect the person's personal space. If you get too close it may escalate the situation.
- Try to isolate the individual. This removes their audience and also prevents conflict from developing with others in the area.
- Ask what is wrong. People will generally calm down if given a chance to talk about the triggering event. Be supportive. Listen attentively and maintain eye contact. Avoid being judgmental.
- Be aware of body language and gestures. 70-80% of the messages we send other people are non-verbal
- Ask the aggressor for solutions. Let that person try to solve the problem. This will help calm them down and just might give you a useful solution.
- If they don't calm down, always acknowledge that the person is upset e.g. "I understand that you are upset but I can not help you when you are shouting or swearing at me. If you would calm down we can look at the problem."
- Denounce the person's behavior, NOT the person. Helping that person save face and preserve their dignity may help defuse a potentially violent situation.

- If you want someone to change their behavior, state what the unwanted behavior is and how you want it to change, very explicitly. State clearly what the consequences will be if their behavior does not change. Allow a little time after you establish the consequences for the person to decide what they are going to do. Then follow through. You must be prepared to enforce any limit you have set. For example, if the disruptive person refuses to calm down, ask them to leave, but invite them to come back when they are calm. If they refuse indicate you will call Security to escort them out if they do not leave. If they refuse, follow through.

Plan Your Encounter With A Potentially Violent Person

- Don't assume everything will go safely!
- Ensure a thorough threat assessment is conducted BEFORE you deal with the person. (Contact DHSE Community Safety Manager @ 1957) Try to determine what kind of behavior you can expect. This will help you to plan appropriate security measures.
- Plan a prepared script and try to keep to it.
- Don't conduct the encounter alone. Have Security, EAP or the Community Safety Manager immediately available. If you have Security with you during the encounter, consider having them in plain clothes to avoid escalating the situation. Notify other staff if you anticipate trouble.
- Prepare your environment. Use an office near an exit to the building if possible. Don't allow yourself to get into a situation where you have no way out. Position your desk so that you can see who is coming into your office. Do not sit at your desk with your back to the door. Remove any items from the room that could be immediately dangerous (scissors, letter opener, heavy paper weight, etc.) or easily thrown. Make sure you are the one closest to the door, not the person you are meeting with.
- Consider your clothing. Don't wear items that could easily be used to choke you, such as a necktie, jewelry, scarf etc.
- If you have speed dial, program in the Security number or Police. Ensure you have a communication system in place.
- Establish a recognizable signal with other staff that indicates you need assistance. Plan ahead of time with other staff what the appropriate responses should be.

- Studies suggest Friday afternoon is the worst time to terminate/layoff/discipline an employee. Do this early in the week to give the person time during the week to follow up on options, receive assistance and get on with their lives.
- Mentally prepare yourself for blame, rage, personal insults and other verbal assaults.
- Treat the person with respect and sensitivity. Try to build up their dignity. Avoid raising your voice, arguing, questioning their integrity, staring, condescending tones. Insensitivity strips the last of their dignity at a time when they are already feeling unstable. If this happens, the person then can feel totally justified in attacking. They will do anything to try to get their dignity back.
- Prepare for the worst. Do not increase your own vulnerability by refusing to believe it will happen to you. Denial and under-preparation are common factors in violent situations. Think through all the “what ifs” and how you will respond. Recognize that the threat of violence is always present. Mentally rehearse the way you would respond to a violent incident.
- To prevent unauthorized access, collect keys, identification cards, or any other access devices. Make arrangements as to when personal effects can be collected.
- Trust your instincts. Listen to your internal warning signs.

If You Are Confronted With a Weapon

If you find yourself trapped in a situation involving weapons and you have no other options, consider these suggestions:

- Stay calm and remember if someone is confronting you with a weapon they probably haven't decided whether or not to use it. If they'd made that decision already, they wouldn't threaten, they would simply attack.
- The aggressor is quite likely as afraid as you are. Fear is often why they have the weapon in the first place.
- Avoid rushing or disarming. It is extremely dangerous!
- Consider the type of weapon. Visually plan your escape route and an alternate escape route ahead of time, in case you decide to use this course of action.
- Escape or negotiate.

- If you attempt to negotiate, try to get as many “yes” responses as you can. Ask simple questions that the attacker might say yes to, such as “May I sit down?” or “May I take a few steps back?” If the attacker is very close to you try to get them to agree to let you take a few steps back. This may reduce their anxiety as well as the accuracy of any weapon they have.
- The longer you can keep the individual talking to you, the less likely they are to use the weapon.

Personal Safety Tips

- Know your emergency exits and procedures.
- Familiarize yourself with policies and procedures for your department and for the University.
- Know locations for telephones and have emergency numbers readily available.
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Visualize ahead of time the appropriate responses to various situations that may arise.
- Trust your instincts. If you don’t feel comfortable with a situation, get out of it!
- If you feel you are being harassed, threatened, intimidated or are the victim of inappropriate behaviour :
 - Tell the person to stop.
 - Document the incident.
 - Inform your supervisor.
- If there is someone in your work area who you don’t recognize, ask them if you can help them. Try to find out why they are there.
- Do not get into an elevator with anyone who makes you feel uneasy, or get off the elevator as soon as possible, whether you are at your floor or not.
- If you are on campus late at night, use the buddy system. Study or work in pairs.

Try to stay in well-lit, higher traffic areas.
- Have your keys ready when approaching your vehicle and check the back seat prior to getting in.
- Always lock your office when you leave, even if you are only leaving for a minute.



Complete this form and return to the Department of Health, Safety and Environment
(Room 127, Toxicology Centre or fax to 966-8394, or email to community.safety@usask.ca)

1. A Violence Risk Assessment was conducted on the following date:

31 August 2004

2. List work sites assessed under the jurisdiction of this plan:

Department of Psychology, Arts Building

3. Issues identified in the assessment are the following:

Low risk.

Potential risk results from close interaction between students and instructors in teaching and research environments, and between staff members, faculty members, students and members of the public in non-teaching, non-research environments (e.g., in the Main Office, in everyday interactions, in meetings).

Verbal hostility is the most common problem. However, diligence is required with respect to potential for more violent confrontations as the Arts Building is open to the public.

4. In order to reduce the risk of workplace violence, a Violence Prevention Plan has been developed, implemented and communicated to employees. The following control measures have been recommended:

Emphasize to employees and students that the Department will follow the policies and procedures at the University appropriately. Ensure that employees and students are aware of available resources, that incidents are reported, and that they are aware that there will be no repercussions.

5. These changes were completed/implemented on the following date:

Employees notified October 4 2004, and resources available in the Main Office (Arts 154) on that day.

Supervisor's Name: Linda McMullen _____ **Phone:** 6666 _____

Department: Psychology _____ **Date:** 4 October 2004 _____

Administrative Unit/College: Psychology _____ **Building:** Arts _____

Head of Unit/College Name: Linda McMullen _____

Head of Unit/College Signature: _____