

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
Columbia, South Carolina

OFFICE OF THE STATE DIRECTOR OF MENTAL HEALTH

DIRECTIVE NO. 859-06
(3-250)

TO: All Employees, Volunteers, and Operating Components

SUBJECT: Workplace Violence

THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT IS TO BE INTERPRETED CONSISTENT WITH SECTION 41-1-110, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA. NOTHING IN THIS DOCUMENT OR ANY SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH (SCDMH) DIRECTIVE, EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK, MANUAL, POLICY, PROCEDURE, OR RELATED DOCUMENT, CREATES AN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT OR CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS OR ENTITLEMENTS. SCDMH RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REVISE THIS DOCUMENT AND ANY SCDMH DIRECTIVE, HANDBOOK, MANUAL, POLICY, PROCEDURE, OR OTHER DOCUMENT. NO PROMISES OR ASSURANCES CONFLICTING WITH THIS STATEMENT CREATE AN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT.

I. Policy

The SCDMH has a zero tolerance policy regarding acts or threats of workplace violence (as described in III).

II. Purpose

The purpose of this Directive is to help SCDMH centers, facilities, and other operating components assess and improve workplace security and to develop and implement policies and procedures to address workplace violence.

III. Workplace Violence

All forms of workplace violence are prohibited, including: attack or use of force with intent to harm; physical or verbal threats to cause harm; harassment or other behavior intended to worry the victim; stalking; intentional damage to property owned by SCDMH, the State, employees, officials, visitors or vendors; or unauthorized possession or use of firearms, weapons or other dangerous devices or materials on property owned, leased or under other SCDMH control.

IV. Implementation

Directors of SCDMH centers, facilities, and other operating components must, within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this Directive and annually thereafter, assess workplace security and assure compliance with applicable policies and procedures to address workplace violence. These functions are to be performed by the operating component Workplace Violence Prevention Committee or other committee with the responsibility and authority to assess workplace security and address workplace violence (e.g.; Health, Safety, Environmental Care, Risk Management, Quality Management, or similar committee.) The operating component must designate a liaison to, as needed, confer and work with the operating component and SCDMH offices related to specific Workplace Violence Prevention functions (e.g.; Human Resources Services, Quality

Management, Community Care, General Counsel, Public Safety, etc.)

Applicable policies and procedures include those contained in this Directive as well as other SCDMH Directives and operating component policies and procedures pertaining to employee injury, emergency care, and workplace safety; harassment; post-trauma counseling and other assistance services; leave and other benefits; background checks; employment counseling and discipline; pre-termination conferences and exit interviews; risk management and incident reporting; as well as BEST and other safety-related education or training programs. Further development of this Directive or related policies and procedures must incorporate applicable provisions of the S.C. Budget and Control Board, Office of Human Resources, Workplace Violence Model Policy.

Each SCDMH operating component must post a copy of this Directive (and any operating component written policy supplementing this Directive) in a prominent location within its building or office. Each operating component must clearly communicate the content of this Directive, (and any operating component's written policy supplementing this Directive) to its employees and volunteers.

Employees, volunteers, and visitors must be advised that SCDMH will strictly enforce the applicable provisions of Section 16-23-420 and Section 16-23-460, Code of Laws of South Carolina, prohibiting firearms or concealed weapons in public buildings or adjacent areas. Operating components must post a sign to that effect at applicable entrances.

V. Workplace Environment

The workplace environment includes SCDMH buildings and grounds. Some points to consider in reviewing and making any needed changes to the workplace environment:

- A. Designate and train employee contact/key persons in a emergency (e.g. fire/safety officer).
- B. Provide a floor plan to key personnel and post a copy in conspicuous areas consistent with the fire/safety plans.
- C. Post internal and external telephone numbers in conspicuous areas consistent with fire/safety plans.
- D. Provide adequate lighting in parking areas and entrances and encourage employees to walk in groups to parking areas.
- E. Review landscaping (hedges, trees, etc.) where intruders could hide.
- F. Increase staff on duty during high-risk hours.
- G. Arrange peer or other escorts for employees who work late.
- H. If doors lock from the inside, post warning signs on the inside to remind employees to lock doors behind them.

The workplace environment also includes employee attitudes about SCDMH, employee perceptions of fair and equal treatment, and belief that they will be safe at work. Employees

must be encouraged to voice workplace concerns to their superiors or other designated staff (e.g., safety, risk management, human resource, or other staff.)

VI. Some Indicators of Potential Workplace Violence

In some cases, employees can be identified and provided assistance before they contribute to a violent incident. Some behaviors that should be considered are:

- A. Known history of violent or threatening behavior;
- B. Co-worker fear of an employee;
- C. Extreme stress in an individual's personal or job life;
- D. Chemical dependency;
- E. Obsession with weapons, recently publicized violent acts, or violent entertainment;
- F. Observations of threatening behavior;
- G. Routine violations of SCDMH Directives/operating component policy;
- H. Harassment of co-workers;
- I. Destructive behavior;
- J. Obsession with retaliation after being disciplined, not receptive to criticism;
- K. Little involvement with co-workers;
- L. Significant adverse changes in behavior or beliefs;
- M. Deteriorating physical appearance; or
- N. Paranoid behavior.

VII. Reporting

- A. Any employee who believes that there is a serious, imminent threat of violence in the workplace that requires immediate action must call 911 or law enforcement and notify his or her manager or supervisor. Employees should not attempt to take action themselves unless their life is threatened, but should follow safety and emergency procedures applicable to the operating component workplace.
- B. Any employee who is the victim of or witnesses workplace violence must immediately report the incident to his or her supervisor or human resource representative. Any manager or supervisor receiving such a report must immediately contact his or her human resource representative to evaluate and take appropriate personnel action. An employee reporting an incident may request that his or her identity not be disclosed. Any employee who is the victim of or witnesses workplace violence must be offered post-trauma counseling.

- C. Reports of workplace violence must be investigated by the operating component. If following the investigation the report is substantiated, appropriate action must be taken, including applicable disciplinary action, which may result in dismissal. Acts of workplace violence are also subject to civil and/or criminal prosecution.
- D. The reporting employee will be notified of the investigation outcome and advised of any corrective or preventive action taken. However, the employee will not be told if any or what type disciplinary action was taken against another employee.
- E. An employee reporting an incident in good faith will not be subject to retaliation by SCDMH. However, employees who knew of such incidents, but did not act consistent with this Directive or who knowingly made false reports are subject to appropriate discipline.

This is the first directive on this topic.



JOHN J. CONNERY, M.A.
INTERIM STATE DIRECTOR

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