

**HIDALGO COUNTY, TEXAS
PERSONNEL POLICY MANUAL**

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Supersedes:	N/A

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION POLICY

I. PURPOSE

It is the policy of Hidalgo County to provide a safe workplace for its employees. To this end, all areas, agencies and departments of the County are expected to implement a program to prevent and respond to violence in the workplace.

II. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this Plan, violence is defined as the deliberate and wrongful violation, damage, or abuse of other persons, self, or property and includes threats of violence. This includes the prevention and reduction of the incidence and effects of domestic violence in the workplace.

Acts of violence and threats of violence include, but may not be limited to the following:

- A. Verbal (such as threats, harassment, abuse, and intimidation)
- B. Non-verbal (such as gestures and intimidation)
- C. Physical (such as hitting, pushing, shoving, kicking, touching, and assault)
- D. Other acts (such as arson, sabotage, vandalism, and stalking).

Supervisor shall mean the employee's immediate supervisor, department head and/or elected official.

III. POLICY

All County of Hidalgo departments and agencies, to the fullest extent possible without violating any existing rules, regulations or statutory requirements, contractual obligations and collective bargaining agreements, shall designate and direct County employees to follow these guidelines.

The County of Hidalgo will not tolerate acts of violence perpetrated by or against any employee while in County offices, facilities, work sites, vehicles or while conducting County business.

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Supervisors shall receive workplace violence training and will provide it to all existing County employees as practicable. New County employees will receive workplace violence training at the time of hiring.

It is important that all threats should be taken seriously. The threat should not be ignored in the hope that it will resolve itself or out of fear of triggering an outburst from the person who lodged the threat. If someone poses a danger to himself or others, appropriate authorities should be notified and action be taken. It is the County's policy to notify the police if any employee is threatened by anyone. Threats and reports of violence should be made to Supervisors, department heads and/or elected officials. Supervisors should be the persons who notify the appropriate authorities. Supervisors and employees should refer to each department's respective Emergency Action Plan in the event an actual emergency arises.

IV. RESPONSE AND ASSISTANCE

Any person concerned about his or her safety at work should speak to his or her Supervisor so that the appropriate authorities may be contacted, as necessary.

If domestic violence is occurring at the workplace, is affecting the performance of the victim or the victim's co-worker's, or if the victim otherwise requests, the Supervisor can be asked for a referral for further assistance. The County recognizes all persons' right to privacy, autonomy and safety, and the corresponding need to control the process following disclosure. To the extent that disclosures do not implicate issues of workplace safety and performance, and to the extent permitted by law and this policy, the County's response will be guided by the expressed wishes of the victim, and may include the following:

- a. Referring individuals to appropriate agencies and services, including legal, medical and counseling services;
- b. Assessment of the victim's need to be absent from work;
- c. Providing information regarding employment benefits, including processes for changing insurance benefits, requesting paid and unpaid leave, and changing pay arrangements (such as direct deposit of paychecks)
- d. Developing an individual workplace safety plan in conjunction with appropriate agencies and services.

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Victims are further encouraged to disclose the existence of (and provide copies if necessary) Temporary and Permanent Orders for Protection to their Supervisor and/or the officer discharged with safety of the County building they are working in, including but not limited to the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office, the Hidalgo County Constable Department, and/or the appropriate local law enforcement agency with jurisdiction for the facility at issue.

V. WORK PERFORMANCE

In instances where the Supervisor and/or County is aware that a County employee who is a victim of workplace violence has a performance or conduct problem as a result of the workplace violence issue (as defined in this policy), assistance will be provided as outlined herein, as well as an opportunity to correct any reported performance or conduct problems. Supervisors may develop a work plan with the employee to assist and support the employee in meeting performance expectations.

Nothing in this policy alters the authority of the County to establish performance expectations, counsel employees, impose discipline, reassign duties, place an employee on leave, or take other action as deemed appropriate and in line with the County code of conduct as expressed in the civil service policy and personnel policy guidelines.