

TOWN OF PHILIPSTOWN

Title: Town of Philipstown Workplace Anti-Violence Policy

A. Intent

The Town of Philipstown has a commitment to promoting a safe and secure work environment that promotes the achievement of its mission of serving the public. All elected officials, employees, volunteers, and appointed individuals (hereafter called employees) of the Town are expected to maintain a working environment free from violence, threats of harassment, threats of violence, intimidation, or coercion. Such acts that involve or affect the employees of the Town will not be tolerated. While these behaviors are not prevalent at the Town of Philipstown, the Town Board recognizes that no organization is immune.

The purpose of this policy is to address the issue of potential workplace violence in our Town, prevent workplace violence from occurring to the fullest extent possible, and set forth procedures to follow when such violence has occurred. The policy is written to meet the requirements of NYS Labor law, Section 27-b.

B. Policy

The Town of Philipstown prohibits workplace violence. Violence, threats of violence, intimidation, harassment, coercion, or other threatening behavior towards people or property will not be tolerated. Complaints involving workplace violence will not be ignored and will be given the serious attention they deserve. Individuals who violate this policy may be removed from Town property or work area and are subject to disciplinary and/or personal action up to and including termination, consistent with Town policies, rules and collective bargaining agreements, and/or referral to law enforcement authorities for criminal prosecution. Complaints of sexual harassment are covered separately under the Town's Policy against Sexual Harassment.

The Town, at the request of an employee or at its own discretion, may prohibit members of the public, including family members, from seeing an employee on Town Property or workplace unless necessary to transact Town-related business. This policy particularly applies in cases where the employee suspects that an act of violence will result from an encounter with said individual(s).

C. Scope of the Policy

All employees, appointed individuals, members of the public, vendors, contractors, consultants, and others who do business with the Town, whether in a Town facility or off-site location (workplace) where Town business is conducted, are covered by this policy. This policy also applies to other persons not affiliated with the Town, such as former employees and visitors. This policy includes violence between employees, employees and public, and employees and contractors.

D. Definitions

1. Workplace Violence is any behavior that is violent, threatens violence, coerces, harasses, or intimidates others, interferes with an individual's legal rights of movement or expression, or disrupts the workplace, the work environment, or the Town's ability to provide services to the public. Examples of workplace violence include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Disruptive behavior intended to disturb, interfere with or prevent normal work activities (such as yelling, using profanity, verbally abusing others, hand gestures, or waving arms and fists).
 - b. Intentional physical contact for the purpose of causing harm (such as slapping, jabbing, stabbing, punching, striking, shoving, or other physical attack).
 - c. Menacing or threatening behavior such as throwing objects, pounding on a desk or door, damaging property, stalking, or otherwise acting aggressively; or making oral or written statements specifically intended to frighten, coerce, or threaten. Behavior that creates a hostile work environment where a reasonable person would interpret such behavior as constituting evidence of intent to cause harm to individuals or property.
 - d. Possessing firearms, imitation firearms, BB guns, paint ball guns, pellet guns, knives with blades longer than four inches or other dangerous weapons, instruments, or materials. No one within the Town workplace, with the exception of a police agency, shall have in their possession a firearm or other dangerous weapon, instrument, or material that can be used to inflict bodily harm on an individual or damage to Town property without specific written authorization from the Town Supervisor regardless of whether the individual possesses a valid permit to carry the firearm or weapon. This restriction applies to firearms or weapons located in personal and commercial vehicles.
 - e. Harassing or threatening letters, phone calls, faxes, text messages, instant messages, web-postings, e-mails, and other forms of communication.
 - f. Threats or attempts to commit suicide.
 - g. Surveillance includes unapproved photos and video on cell phones, cameras, and/or camcorders.
2. Department Head is the person designated to supervise the activities and operation of departments in the Town of Philipstown Government. Department Heads are: Code Enforcement Officer, Town Clerk, two (2) Town Justices, Highway Superintendent, Assessor, Recreation Director, and Town Supervisor.

3. Chair is the appointed leader the for the following Boards and Committees: Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board, Board of Assessment Review, Recreation Commission, Conservation Advisory Committee, CV Water District, CV Park District.
4. Employee is any person involved in the Town of Philipstown government including: elected officials, paid employees, appointed individuals and volunteers appointed to various Boards and/or committees and are called employees herein.
5. Workplace includes any Town-owned property (building, park, or parking lots), work site (road construction and maintenance, tree and brush trimming and cutting, roadside mowing, culvert/bridge construction and maintenance, and snow and ice control operations), other similar locations and activities, and Town sponsored activities.

E. Risk Factors

Potential risk factors include but are not limited to:

1. Working in a public setting.
2. Exchanging money with the public.
3. Working alone or in small numbers.
4. Uncontrolled access to the workplace.

F. Prevention Actions

The methods the Town of Philipstown will use to prevent incidents of occupational assaults and homicides in the workplace include but are not limited to the following:

1. Installing good external lighting.
2. Using safes and daily deposits to minimize cash on hand.
3. Posting signs stating that limited cash is on hand.
4. Establishing and implementing reporting systems for incidents of aggressive behavior.

Reporting of Incidents

General Reporting Responsibilities

1. Incidents of workplace violence, threats of workplace violence, or observations of workplace violence are not to be ignored by any employee of the Town. Workplace violence should promptly be reported to the appropriate Town official. (see H Responsibilities.) Additionally, employees are encouraged to report behavior that they reasonably believe poses a potential for workplace violence as defined in D. Definitions. It is important that all employees of the Town take this responsibility seriously to effectively maintain a safe working and learning environment.

2. Imminent or Actual Violence

Any employee experiencing or witnessing imminent danger or actual violence involving weapons or personal injury must immediately call 911 and then notify their supervisor.

3. Acts of violence not Involving Weapons or Injuries to Persons

Any employee who is the subject of a suspected violation of this policy involving violence without weapons or personal injury, or is a witness to such suspected violation, must report the incident to their supervisor, or in lieu thereof, to the Town Supervisor.

4. Commission of a Crime

All employees who believe a crime has been committed against them have the right and are encouraged to report the incident to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

5. False Reports

Employees who make false and malicious complaints of workplace violence, as opposed to complaints which, even is erroneous, are made in good faith, will be subject to disciplinary action and/or referral to civil authorities as appropriate.

6. Incident Reports

The Town Supervisor will maintain an incident report file for the Town.

H. Responsibilities

1. Town Supervisor

The Town Supervisor shall be responsible for the implementation of this policy for all Town non-highway employees. The responsibility includes dissemination of this policy to all non-highway Town employees, ensuring appropriate investigation and follow-up of all alleged incidents of workplace violence, and ensuring that all department heads are aware of their responsibilities under this policy through internal communications and training.

The Town Supervisor is responsible for responding to, intervening, and documenting all incidents of violence in the workplace for Town non-highway employees. The Town Supervisor will immediately log all incidents of workplace violence.

2. Highway Superintendent

The Highway Superintendent shall be responsible for the implementation of this policy for all Town highway employees. The responsibility includes dissemination of this policy

to all Town Highway employees, ensuring appropriate investigation and follow-up of all alleged incidents of workplace violence, and ensuring that the Town Supervisor is notified of all matters relating to the investigation and follow-up of all alleged incidents of workplace violence.

The Highway Superintendent is responsible for responding to, intervening, and documenting all incidents of violence in the workplace for Town highway employees. The Highway Superintendent will immediately log all incidents of workplace violence and notify the Town Supervisor of the alleged incident.

3. Department Heads/Chair

All department heads should be knowledgeable of when law enforcement action may be appropriate. Department Heads and Chairs will be trained in workplace violence awareness and prevention, non-violent crises intervention, conflict management, and dispute resolution. The Town Supervisor will work closely with Department Heads and Chairs when the possibility of workplace violence is heightened, as well as on the appropriate response to workplace violence incidents consistent with Town policies, rule, procedures, New York State laws, rules, and regulations, Federal laws, rules, and regulations, and applicable labor agreements, including appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Department Heads and Chairs are required to contact the police immediately calling 911 in the event of imminent or actual violence involving weapons or potential physical injuries.

4. Employees

Employees must report workplace violence, as defined above, to their Department Head or Chair. Recurring or persistent workplace violence that an employee believes is not being addressed satisfactorily, or violence that is, or has been engaged in by the employee's Department Head or Chair should be brought directly to the attention of the Town Supervisor.

Employees who have obtained Orders of Protection are expected to notify their Department Head, Chair, and the Town Supervisor of any orders that list Town locations as protected areas.

Victims of domestic violence, who believe that domestic or other personal matters may result in their being subject to violence extending into the workplace, are encouraged to notify their Department Head, Chair, or the Town Supervisor. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

Upon hiring, employees will receive copies of this policy from the Safety Coordinator. Additionally, the policy will be posted throughout the Town and be placed on the Town website as appropriate.

5. Town Supervisor/Safety Coordinator Responsibility

The Town Supervisor is responsible for responding to workplace violence; facilitating appropriate responses to reported incidents of workplace violence; and consulting with, as necessary, counseling services to secure professional intervention. The Town Supervisor shall insure that employees receive appropriate training.

The Safety Coordinator is responsible for providing new employees with a copy of the Workplace Anti-Violence Policy and Procedures as well as posting the policy throughout the Town's properties and on the Town's website, as appropriate. The Safety Coordinator will distribute a copy of the Anti-Violence Workplace Policy and request a certification of receipt of the policy.

I. Education

The Town Supervisor is responsible for the dissemination and enforcement of this policy as described herein, as well as for providing opportunities for training in the prevention and awareness of workplace violence. Additionally, annual training in conflict resolution and nonviolent self-defense responses will be provided along with measures employees can take to protect themselves from such risks, such as appropriate work practices, emergency procedures, use of security alarms, and other devices. Literature and a video will be available when desired from the Town Supervisor for employees' self training and refreshing. The Town Supervisor shall disseminate the policy to the Highway Superintendent who is then responsible to enforce the policy, as described herein to the Town Highway employees.

J. Confidentiality

The Town shall maintain the confidentiality of investigations of workplace violence to the extent possible. The Town will act on the basis of anonymous complaints where it has a reasonable basis to believe that there has been a violation of this policy and that the safety and well being of employees of the Town would be served by such action.

K. Retaliation

Retaliation against anyone who has made a complaint of workplace violence, who has reported witnessing workplace violence, or who had been involved in reporting, investigating, or responding to workplace violence is a violation of this policy. Those found responsible for retaliatory action will be subject to discipline as provided in appropriate laws, rule, regulations, and policies up to and including termination.

L. Employee Security Survey

Employees will be encouraged periodically to complete the attached Employee Security Survey. The information obtained from the survey will be used to improve the security of the workplace for the employees and to make appropriate revisions to this policy. The Town supervisor and/or the Town Highway Superintendent will be responsible to conduct the survey when desired, to analyze the information, and to take appropriate corrective action.

M. Workplace Violence Incident Report

Workplace violence should not be ignored and employees are encouraged to report incidents of violent behavior. Reporting of incidents will enable the Town to maintain a safe working environment. The attached Workplace Violence Incident Report shall be used to document specific incidents and should be kept in the incident report file with the Town Supervisor.

N. Currently, public employers are required to record and report workplace violence incidents in accordance with New York State Labor Law, Section 27-a (Public Employer Safety and Health Act). NYCRR Part 801 of that Law, Recording and Reporting Public Employees' Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, specifies conditions for employer recordkeeping and reporting requirements. Specifically, an employer is required to record an employee workplace violence injury if it results in death, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, medical treatment beyond first aid and loss of consciousness. Additionally, employees should utilize accident and illness recordkeeping information to ensure that their written workplace violence prevention plan is as effective as possible. Employers are also required to report employee workplace violence related fatalities and multiple hospitalizations to the Department's Public Employee Safety and Health (PESH) Bureau within 8 hours of the incident by calling the Albany office: 1-518-457-5508. (Refer to NYCRR Part 801 for complete information pertaining to employee record keeping and PESH reporting requirements).

