



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

Operating Policy and Procedure

HSC OP: 76.08, **Violence and Workplace Threats**

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Health Sciences Center Operating Policy and Procedure (HSC OP) is to establish a policy for providing a safe and secure workplace, free from threats and violence, for all members of the TTUHSC.

REVIEW: This OP will be reviewed by April 1 of each odd-numbered year by the Vice President of Human Resources and the Texas Tech Chief of Police, with recommendations for revision forwarded to the Executive Vice President of Finance and Operations (EVPFO).

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

1. **General Policy.** Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) recognizes the high cost of violent incidents and their disruptive effect on employees and productivity. Personal harassment (including stalking), abusive behavior, and violence are not tolerated in the workplace.

a. Threats (including those made by mail, over the telephone, cell phone, fax, or by e-mail), intimidation, and acts of violence, with or without the presence of a weapon, will not be tolerated at TTUHSC. Reported violations of this policy will be investigated and documented and may result in disciplinary actions, up to and including immediate suspension and/or dismissal, and the filing of appropriate criminal charges.

b. All employees, regardless of position, are responsible for immediately reporting any threats received, witnessed, or communicated to them. Employees should also report unusual or threatening behavior, even though it may not be in the form of a direct threat, when such behavior makes the employee(s) fearful for their continued safety or the safety of others.

Reportable threats include those made by co-workers, students, or outsiders entering the workplace, such as spouses, job applicants, patients, or any other visitors. Employees must make such reports regardless of the relationship of the employee to the person who initiated the threat or behavior. Reports should be made immediately, without fear of retaliation, to a supervisor, Texas Tech Police, or any TTUHSC management member. TTUHSC management must immediately report all incidents of threatening behavior to the Chief of Police or designee or the Vice President for Human Resources or designee.

c. Nothing in this policy relieves a supervisor or manager from taking immediate action when the safety or security of employees is threatened and time is crucial. Such action may include a call to the Texas Tech Police, suspension, or the temporary separation of employees in the workplace. This policy does not replace routine management actions such as counseling, reprimands, or changes in work assignments, as applicable. This policy is intended for those cases of immediate and/or continuing inappropriate action(s) or threat(s), including those where normal management and personnel actions have been ineffective and the possibility of violence is such that the Texas Tech Police and others need to be involved.

- d. Following a serious threat or an act of violence in the workplace, employees, witnesses, and families often suffer from stress-related ailments such as depression, anger, headaches, and continued fear. TTUHSC, through a group of administrators identified as the Crisis Management Team, will provide debriefing teams, counseling, and support as needed to those affected. These actions, provided within a 24- to 72-hour period following the traumatic event, will help to minimize the impact of an incident and prevent further violence.
2. **Procedure.** The Threat Assessment Team will follow the following procedures in the event of workplace threats or violence:
- a. The Chief of Police or designee should be called immediately when a potentially threatening event is suspected and/or occurs.
 - b. A Threat Assessment Team consisting of the Chief of Texas Tech Police or designee, the Vice President for Human Resources or designee, the Director of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or designee, the Director of Equal Employment Opportunity or designee, the Managing Director of Communications and Marketing or designee, a member of TTUHSC Executive Management (i.e., vice president level or above) and a representative from the Office of the General Counsel will review all reports generated relative to this policy. This core team may name additional members as warranted.
 - c. Team members will gather additional information as needed and develop a plan of action, which may include specific suggestions to the immediate supervisor, directed counseling, EAP intervention, and police action. Team members and the department head or designee of the affected work area will follow-up to ensure the implementation of suggestions and that protective measures are in place as needed. Employment decisions that directly affect an accused employee must be made in concert with the Vice President for Human Resources or designee with consideration of existing laws, policies, procedures, etc.
 - d. TTUHSC understands the sensitivity of the information provided and/or alleged in such reports as it pertains to employees' rights to privacy and confidentiality. Appropriate procedures will be followed to limit the dissemination of reports to a need-to-know basis. Should a report prove to be false or actions misinterpreted as threats of violence, all reasonable steps should be taken to ensure the continued acceptance and effectiveness of the accused employee. The Threat Assessment Team's goal in this regard is to balance the safety and security of students, faculty, and employees against the need for information to be kept confidential. Where appropriate, legal guidance will be requested.
 - e. All levels of management at TTUHSC must be familiar with and abide by this policy and procedure. All reports of possible violent behavior, intimidation, or threats should be forwarded to a member of the Threat Assessment Team.
 - f. TTUHSC will make available training directed at violence in the workplace for all levels of employees.

NOTE: Managed Health Care, or other employees assigned to Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) facilities or similar facilities will follow TDCJ procedures for reporting incidents of violence in the workplace or threats of violence.

3. **The Crisis Management Team.** The Crisis Management Team provides support services during or after a traumatic event. The Team's services are not limited to violent acts.
 - a. Crisis Management Team members include the Chief of Texas Tech Police or designee, the Vice President for Human Resources or designee, the Director of the Employee Assistance Program or designee, the Managing Director of Communications and Marketing or designee, the Director of Equal Employment Opportunity or designee, a member of TTUHSC Executive Management (i.e., vice president level or above) and a representative from the Office of General Counsel. Depending upon circumstances in any particular event, the Crisis Management Team may name additional members.
 - b. Should an act of violence occur, the Crisis Management Team will consider the impact of the incident on the campus community and initiate appropriate debriefing, counseling, and support actions for the victims, co-workers, and families. An incident in this category may include serious or fatal injuries to one or more campus members in a manner that frightens or shocks segments of the community for a continuing period.
 - c. The Crisis Management Team will provide timely reports to the Chancellor, the President, Vice Presidents, and Deans.
4. **Right to Change Policy.** TTUHSC reserves the right to interpret, change, modify, amend, or rescind this policy in whole or in part at any time without the consent of employees. In the event of a contradiction between the terms of this policy and any statement made by a TTUHSC agent or employee, the terms of this policy shall control in all cases.