

Recognizing Workplace Violence

Workplace violence refers to any physical assault, threatening behavior or verbal abuse in an office, campus or work area. The workplace is any location, permanent or temporary, where employees perform work-related activities. This includes parking areas, annexes and field locations and classrooms at all UNT System locations.

Workplace incidents can result in lost productivity, damage to reputation, property damage, legal expenses and psychological trauma to faculty, staff and students. Sadly, workplace violence also can result in physical injuries and loss of life.

- Workplace violence includes:
- Violence by strangers who enter the workplace to commit a criminal act.
- Violence by customers or clients, such as students and others using UNT (or any UNT System entity) facilities.
- Violence by co-workers, supervisors, managers.
- Violence by employees' relations - spouses, significant others, family members.

Incidents may include:

- Harassment of any type.
- Intimidation or threats in person, by phone, in writing, by email or social media.
- Physical or sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence or stalking.
- Suicide, attempted suicide.
- Shootings, stabbings, beatings.
- Damage to data, computers, equipment and facilities.
- Destruction of research materials.

What You Can Do

As a supervisor, you should review your workplace and create a proactive guide that will help address problem behavior and possibly prevent an incident or conflict in your area. Here's what to do:

- Contact Police departments at UNT, UNTHSC and UNT Dallas and schedule a workplace security survey.
- Consider your workplace: location, hours of operation and risk factors such as the presence of money, confidential information, research documents or other records.
- Limit workplace access, when possible, by non-employees.
- Follow data storage and computer security guidelines provided by ITSS.
- Discuss workplace safety at department meetings; ask Human Resources for information.
- Be sure employees know how to safely respond to situations involving hostile individuals. Human Resources (and the UNT [Dean of Students](#)) can provide assistance and resources.
- Establish a departmental procedure for reporting unusual behavior, harassment, threats or acts of violence.
- Ensure that no employee faces reprisal for reporting a potential or real incident.
- Contact the UNT [Dean of Students](#) for issues involving students at the Denton campus.

Prepare for a “what if” situation by taking these steps:

- Be aware of potential conflicts between employees and take action to resolve them. Human Resources can provide assistance.
- Use available resources such as the free, confidential [Employee Assistance Program](#) to help individuals and possibly prevent and reconcile conflicts.
- Never ignore threats; encourage employees to promptly report incidents.
- If there is a threat, consider temporarily relocating the threatened employee's workstation to a more secure area, screening incoming phone calls or emails and providing an escort.
- Consult with individuals involved in potentially volatile incidents, and document these interactions. Retain voice mails, emails, social media posts and other written messages perceived to be threatening. Consult with Human Resources if you notice any evidence of domestic violence.
- Follow policy for disciplinary or dismissal actions; ask Human Resources for guidance.

When an Incident Occurs

Take immediate steps to address problem behavior and ensure the safety of employees. Do not ignore or downplay threats or hostile comments or actions, and do not assume that conflicts will go away.

- If there is an immediate threat, dial 911.
- When a situation involves faculty, staff and/or students, contact the UNT Police Department, 940-565-3000.
- When a situation involves primarily staff behavior: Human Resources, 940-565-2281.
- When a situation involves primarily student behavior, contact the Dean of Students, 940-565-2039.
- Find a [UNT Workplace Violence Incident Report](#) form.

Some Warning Signs

Managers and supervisors are urged to respond each time there is a threat, intimidating act and/or violence. When actions are ambiguous, ask yourself: *Does this behavior or situation scare me?*

Managers and supervisors should be aware of individual behaviors which may predict violence. Pay attention when an employee:

- Exhibits unusual or dramatic behavior changes.
- Becomes uncooperative or argumentative with a supervisor or coworkers.
- Writes or draws notes that reference violent acts or sexual aggression.
- Verbalizes threats of harm to employees or managers.
- Damages or steals property.
- Disregards policies.
- Changes work patterns – becomes tardy, absent, misses meetings, performance changes.
- Discusses alcohol or drug use.
- Expresses anger or frustration about family members, financial or personal issues.
- Appears to be depressed or despondent.

UNT Campus Human Resources will respond to reports of incidents, and can provide information and support to managers who want to understand workplace violence issues.

The UNT Police Department also offers presentations to faculty, staff and students to help understand potentially dangerous situations, personal awareness, identity theft and active shooter response.

- Learn more about [UNT Police safety programs](#).
- Find a [UNT Workplace Violence Incident Report](#) form.

UNT faculty and staff who believe an incident has occurred should complete the UNT Workplace Violence Incident Report and forward it to their immediate supervisor or to UNT Campus Human Resources.

Information also is available from the [UNT Dallas Police Department](#) and [UNTHSC Police](#).