

DEFENSE COMMISSARY AGENCY
Fort Lee, Virginia 23801-1800



***WORKPLACE VIOLENCE
INTERVENTION HANDBOOK***

FEBRUARY 1998

**SAFETY, SECURITY AND ADMINISTRATION
WORKPLACE VIOLENCE INTERVENTION HANDBOOK**

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MANAGEMENT CONTROL SYSTEM: This handbook does not contain Management Control provisions that are subject to evaluations, testing, and other requirements of DeCAD 70-2 and as specified by the Federal Manager's Financial Integrity Act.

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APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE: This directive applies to all Defense Commissary Agency activities.

HOW TO ORDER COPIES: Commissary activities needing additional copies will submit requirements on DeCA Form 30-21 to Region/IM. Regions will consolidate requirements and order per published schedule.

SUMMARY: This handbook provides a broad general perspective of workplace violence and measures to prevent, intervene, and react to workplace violence events. This handbook is non-directive in nature.



BY ORDER OF THE DIRECTOR

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WORKPLACE VIOLENCE INTERVENTION

1-1. INTRODUCTION.

a. Violence in the workplace is a problem of national importance. In recent years, there have been numerous well-publicized incidents of workplace violence within the United States. Stories of individuals injured or killed while at their workplaces appear on the news almost daily. Within DeCA we are not immune to the threat of workplace violence. There have been sporadic instances of workplace violence which have occurred in DeCA facilities, where DeCA employees have been the victims. As a "retail" type establishment, our DeCA commissary employees are subject to the same workplace violence risks as are the employees of most commercial establishments. The prevalent workplace violence threat posed to commercial business by outsiders is robbery. Threats from outside the workplace, such as robbery and terrorism, are addressed in DeCAD 30-18, DeCA Security Programs. For the purposes of this handbook, we will concentrate on the workplace violence threat posed between coworkers or other personnel working within stores as well as supervisors or management personnel. We will attempt to explain some of the causes, danger signals and present some prevention strategies. This handbook is general in nature to apply DeCA wide and thus will not address specific responses to workplace violence. Specific responses will depend in part on type of workplace violence event, local environmental issues and the level of support received from your host installation.

b. The Bureau of Labor Statistics offer some chilling information. Young white men are the most likely to die on the job; homicide has accounted for 12% of work-related deaths between 1980 and 1985; and homicide is the leading cause of death for women at work (42%). Though we may be used to reading about such occurrences in the private sector, more and more of these incidences of violence are occurring in the federal setting.

c. The Department of Defense has experienced an increased trend in violence in the workplace. Most fatalities occurring as a result of violence on military installations have been determined to be extensions of domestic disputes. These have occurred at the employee's work site or at public service offices (i.e., installation legal office). Largely, other occurrences consisted of shouting matches, sexual harassment, terroristic threats, bomb threats, sabotage, vandalism, stalking, and assaults with a deadly weapon.

d. Some of the causes for this increase in workplace violence include anxiety about the continuity of employment, anger over feeling mistreated, availability of weapons (75% of workplace homicides are committed with a firearm), and domestic violence spilling into the workplace. A person who is restrained by court order from coming near another person at home can still track him or her down at the office.

e. In a flat economy, many people with mounting bills, a pressured job, or the potential loss of a job see their supervisors and their organizations as the source of the problem. Most employees who have killed their managers or colleagues have been discharged or felt mistreated. We are living in a period of great change. Change produces discomfort that is stressful. Facing an uncertain economy, coupled with down-sizing our workforce and the threat of a possible job loss, indirectly translates into an undercurrent of anxiety, doubt, and even despair.

f. We all need to be aware of our actions and their impact on DeCA coworkers. Awareness and understanding will make us more sensitive to possible volatile situations. Recognizing the warning signs, knowing how or where to obtain assistance, and taking proactive steps will reduce incidents and make DeCA an even more effective, efficient, and caring place to serve our customers.

1-2. MANAGER'S ROLE IN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

a. Whatever the causes of workplace violence, managers and supervisors play a key role in preventing it. Clearly, workplace leadership impacts the problem, either positively or negatively; however, what is just as clear is the fact that no management action will totally eliminate the potential for workplace violence.

b. Managers should always expect changes in policies, procedures, and working conditions to cause stress; be aware of changes in people's attitudes, behaviors, and performance; be actively concerned and show sincere interest regarding impact on your employees and their families; communicate by listening; be knowledgeable of available resources; and be supportive of training and empowerment of subordinates. Know when discipline is necessary and take appropriate disciplinary action when necessary.

1-3. RESPONSIBILITY OF "PLAYERS"

a. Supervisor. The supervisor must maintain an environment which promotes good human resource relationships. Supervisors should be aware of the cultural, ethnic and religious diversities of their employees; create a work environment free from discrimination; keep personnel informed of rules and standards of conduct; and maintain conduct and discipline according to policy and established procedures.

b. Employees and Military Members Assigned to DeCA. Persons working for DeCA are expected to discharge their assigned duties conscientiously; respect the administrative authority of those directing their work; and observe laws, regulations, and policies governing their conduct.

c. Servicing Civilian Personnel Offices and DeCA Personnel Satellites. More commonly referred to as the Civilian Personnel Office, or CPO, this office provides advice and information on matters related to civilian employee's benefits, entitlements, and assistance programs. The Civilian Personnel Office may provide managers guidance on providing recognition and taking disciplinary or adverse actions. The Civilian Personnel Offices are able to provide or arrange for training in human relations skills, stress management, and effective supervisory methods which are of major importance in the reduction of potential workplace violence.

d. Military Personnel Offices. The Military Personnel Office provides advice and information on matters related to military member's benefits, entitlements, and assistance programs. The Military Personnel Office may provide managers guidance on matters related to recognition or taking appropriate administrative or disciplinary actions.

e. Medical Services. The supporting medical treatment facilities provide professional assistance in dealing with injuries or occupational illness. They also provide injured persons prompt medical treatment and necessary medical reports as required.

f. Installation Support Centers. These activities (e.g., Army Community Services, Family Support Center, etc.) provide information and referral services to assist clients in the proper identification and rectification of unfulfilled needs. These activities also provide transition, relocation, employment, volunteer, and financial services for active duty military personnel.

g. Chaplain. The chaplain provides spiritual and emotional assistance as well as counseling to victims, family, co-workers, and supervisors.

h. DeCA and Installation Public Affairs Office. The Office of Public Affairs is responsible for community and patron awareness, employee communications, media relations, and responds to media requests for information.

I. HQ DeCA/SA, Region and Area Security Offices. The security personnel assigned to these offices, provide technical advice and assistance in security protection standards and security administration. They may perform administrative investigations into allegations of Fraud, Waste and Abuse, and coordinate criminal investigations with appropriate law enforcement agencies.

j. Installation Social Actions Office. This office provides rehabilitative services, and trains supervisors and personnel on assistance programs.

k. DeCA General Counsel. The Office of the General Counsel provides legal advice and assistance to Directors, Staff Office Chiefs, Action Officers, Zone Managers, CDC Managers and Commissary Officers.

l. DeCA Inspector General (IG). The inspector general serves as a personal staff officer to the DeCA director and is responsible for inquiring into and reporting on matters affecting mission performance, efficiency, economy, discipline and employee morale. The office's Fraud, Waste and Abuse division manages a hot line, acts on fraud, waste and abuse disclosures and complaints, and maintains liaison with services and Defense Department criminal investigators.

m. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). The EEO office provides advice and information regarding civilian discrimination complaint processes. EEO may also provide mediation services.

n. Unions. The Unions work with management in support of safe working conditions for members.

o. Installation Fire/Rescue Department. The Fire/Rescue Department provides technical response and assistance when fire, rescue or HazMat services are required.

p. Military Criminal Investigative Organizations (MCIOs). The MCIOs (DCIS, AFOSI, CID, NCIS, etc.) provide criminal investigative services for DeCA worldwide.

q. Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD). EOD provides technical assistance in the detection, defusing, and removal of ordinance (explosive) items.

r. Installation Police and/or Security Organizations. The installation police provide first response to workplace violence events or threats, enforce laws and regulations, apprehend offenders, gather evidence and provide routine protective services.

1-4. FACTORS FOSTERING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE. Workplace violence on Department of Defense installations mirrors the increase of violent acts which occur in today's general society. Though it is very difficult to assess the culminating factor, that is "the straw that broke the camel's back," some precipitating employment-related events include the following:

- a. Change in working conditions
- b. Death of a family member
- c. Discharge for discipline or poor performance
- d. Discrimination
- e. Downsizing and restructuring
- f. Excessive temporary duty

- g. Romantic “crushes”
- h. Financial difficulties
- I. Inappropriate distribution of work tasks
- j. Long working hours
- k. Loss of employment benefits or entitlements
- l. Passed over for promotion
- m. Perception of supervisor being unjust
- n. Reduction in force
- o. Rejection, end of a relationship, divorce
- p. Retirement concerns
- q. Selective Early Retirement Bonus determination
- r. Unemployment

1-5. PROFILE OF THE POTENTIALLY VIOLENT PERSON

a. Of primary concern is the profile of likely perpetrators of violence in the workplace and warning signs that indicate a likely increase in the potential for violence in the workplace. The profile of the potential perpetrator of violence is the product of statistical data. It is a composite of information and will not fit every person responsible for committing such acts of violence. It should be noted that a person may have some or all of the indicators and not perpetrate workplace violence. Profiles are tools used to make managers and supervisors more aware of the kind of person most often involved in workplace violence.

b. Symptoms of a potentially violent person include a person with a standing history of complaints, one who is becoming increasingly angry, one who communicates the controversy as seen through his or her eyes, and an individual who has threatened that some violent act or confrontation could happen.

c. Research suggests that an individual with the propensity to commit homicides in the workplace is typically a male in his 40's who is distrustful, paranoid, rigid, and does not take responsibility for his shortcomings. This person is generally seen as a loner, has an affinity for personal weapons, and has made threats or otherwise expressed an intention to use violence to solve a problem at work, but who, nevertheless, does not have a history of violent outbursts.

d. Those who commit assaults in the workplace, short of intent to inflict death, are younger males with a history of violence and who are possibly on drugs. The following are some general indicators of violence prone personalities:

- (1) 25 to 45 years of age
- (2) Accident prone/on-the-job injuries
- (3) Disgruntled employee

- (4) Drug and/or alcohol abuse problems
- (5) Fascinated with terrorist or mercenary type characters
- (6) Has said that they intend to do violence
- (7) Hatred for the opposite sex
- (8) History of grievances
- (9) History of violent behavior, regardless of sex or age
- (10) Low self-esteem
- (11) Mood swings
- (12) Not a member of management
- (13) On an actual or imaginary RIF list
- (14) Overly defensive
- (15) Purposely intimidates other team members
- (16) Self-image is crucially linked to his or her job
- (17) Sleep disorder
- (18) Tendency to be a loner
- (19) Thought of as a troublemaker
- (20) Work performance has changed drastically
- (21) Has trouble getting along with people
- (22) Behavior that is guarded, distant, secretive, devious, scheming, counter-productive, suspicious, jealous, or angry
- (23) Misinterprets good intentions
- (24) Inconsistent work performance
- (25) Overreaction to minor events
- (26) Benign situation/events turns into something serious
- (27) Questions loyalty of others
- (28) Immune to correction, defensive
- (29) Difficult, rigid, oppositional
- (30) Carping, hypercritical, fault finding

- (31) Arrogant, prideful, or overbearing

1-6. PROACTIVE STEPS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

a. **Physical Security Measures.** DeCA facilities are normally on military installations which generally provide an increased measure of physical security, thus protection from the threat of most public perpetrators. This protection may not extend to workplace violence. Too often the violence occurs without warning from individuals having been granted access to facilities that serve the public such as the commissary. Thus commissaries are more vulnerable and should exercise more security consciousness. DeCA Directive 30-18, DeCA Security Programs, provides general requirements for physical security within commissaries and other DeCA facilities. These principles are also effective in reducing some of the potential for workplace violence. In addition, some DeCA activities may wish to consider additional precautionary steps by ensuring employees have some level of protection by providing the following safeguards:

- (1) Reducing the number of exterior entrances
- (2) Enforcing entry control procedures
- (3) Providing duress alarm "Panic buttons," for senior management personnel and their secretaries, and receptionist
- (4) Conducting periodic physical security surveys
- (5) Creating internal rumor control "hot lines" to reduce stress
- (6) Using the knowledge, assistance and advice of DeCA security personnel

b. **Preassignment Screening.** Screening of prospective personnel resources should be accomplished within applicable guidelines. Quality control measures should include a review of prior assignments and discussions with previous supervisors; assessment of performance reports, unfavorable information file and disciplinary record; use of pre-employment interviews; and results of the background investigations conducted on all newly hired employees. Remember, one of the best ways to prevent violence in the workplace is by not hiring a violent-prone individual in the first place.

c. **Training.**

(1) Significant amounts of research have underscored the relationship between management and supervisor styles and the comfort level of the employees in the work center; however, this is not to say that there is a direct relationship between them. In fact, many things influence the workplace environment. Nonetheless, training for workplace leaders is essential to providing an environment in which violent outbursts may be less likely to occur. Such training should focus on interpersonal relations, interpersonal communication, leadership style development and intercultural relations, all of which affect the supervisor-employee relations.

(2) Stress management training is also a very useful tool to lower the level of anxiety for people facing unusual situations. Stress is a "perception of threat or expectation of future discomfort (demand) that arouses, alerts, or otherwise activates the organism," (Woolfolk and Richardson, 1978, Stress, Sanity and Survival). Information regarding stress management training may be available from your installation's Medical Services, Social Actions Office, or Family Support Center.

d. **Create a Positive Work Relationship.** Supervisors should develop a basic policy that provides a framework for management and employee communication and relationship. Establish a positive environment built on the concept of respect and dignity for every person. Practice the golden

rule of management: "treat your subordinates as you want to be treated." Consult appropriate professionals if an employee resembles profile characteristics.

e. Establish Communication Channels. Promote communication channels that keep an employee from feeling helpless. Allow these channels to be used to resolve conflict (where there is smoke, there is fire). An individual who knows he or she may, without fear of retaliation, approach his or her respective supervisor or use the many avenues of complaint resolution (discrimination complaint procedure, IG system, mediation, grievance process, etc.) will generally be confident that his or her side of the story will be respected.

f. Know your Installation Human Resource Agencies. Establish network with your human resource agencies, such as, family support, mental health, social actions, and family advocacy to develop operational instructions.

g. Reducing Risk When Taking Disciplinary Action.

(1) Discipline often becomes a trigger event to violence or retaliation. When considering taking constructive disciplinary action:

- (a) Avoid arguments over merits of the action
- (b) Don't make up reasons--be factual
- (c) Focus on the actual problem, not irrelevant issues
- (d) Put the responsibility on the subordinate--provide the person an opportunity to correct the problem
- (e) Supervisors must look and act comfortable with their role

(2) Management at all levels should consider opportunities for additional or new training for an employee to correct poor job performance or help in an attitude adjustment, or professional counseling if appropriate. When possible, this action should be taken prior to any disciplinary action.

(3) One of the major objectives in taking discipline is to be rehabilitative rather than punitive. The traditional disciplinary approach may not provide this objective in today's society. Consideration may be given to a more partnership or team approach concept. Key elements to discipline and the comparison characteristics of the traditional versus the nontraditional approaches are as follows:

<u>Element</u>	<u>Traditional Approach</u>	<u>Nontraditional Approach</u>
Goal	Compliance	Commitment
Focus	Employee	Problem
Responsibility	Supervisor	Employee
Time Frame	Past	Future
Communication	At the employee	With the employee
Mode	Parent to Child	Adult to Adult
Process	Punishment	Coaching
Climate	Authoritarian	Collaborative

(4) According to Dr. Michael R. Mantel, author of Ticking Bombs: Defusing Violence in the Workplace, the five processes of discipline are as follows:

- Identify:
 1. Determine desired behavior
 2. Determine actual behavior
 3. Focus on specifics

- Analyze:
 1. Determine the impact of the problem
 2. Determine the consequences the employee will face
 3. Determine the appropriate action

- Discuss:
 1. Gain the employee's agreement to change
 2. Discuss the alternative solutions
 3. Decide what action the employee will take

- Document:
 1. Describe the problem
 2. Describe the history
 3. Describe the discussion

- Follow-up:
 1. Determine if the problem has been solved
 2. Reinforce improvement
 3. Take required action (e.g., reduction in rank, change to lower grade, forfeiture of pay, suspension, reprimand, discharge, etc.)

h. Employment Termination Procedures. In light of the increasing threat of employment-related violence, consider suggest the following when dealing with employees being involuntarily separated:

- (1) Be sensitive to the fact that involuntary separation is highly stressful to most people.
- (2) Separation notices should be given at the end of the day.

- (3) Provide an escort from the location of the termination meeting to the exit of the installation, if appropriate.
- (4) Have the individual clean out their desk or locker in the presence of their supervisor.
- (5) Persons who have been terminated and who have a potential for violence may be restricted from the installation, by host installation authorities when "probable cause" has been shown.

1-7. RESPONDING TO VIOLENT ACTS IN THE WORKPLACE. One thing that you can do is create and publicize a local plan to identify and manage actions related to workplace violence, to include workplace threats. The plan should identify a focal point, as well as specific DeCA and installation contacts. Plan scope should include the following:

- a. Define behaviors to be identified, evaluated, managed, and monitored; e.g., a worker who bullies or intimidates coworkers, a worker who has threatened the supervisor, etc.
- b. Identify a multi-disciplinary team to review significant events to include the appropriate director, staff office chief, zone manager, CDC manager, commissary officer, DeCA security office, host installation police, mental health, civilian and military personnel offices, social actions, family support center, military criminal investigative organization, and family advocacy.
- c. Outline steps of the evaluation process.
 - (1) Determine the validity of the threat.
 - (2) Notify the appropriate management representative (See Appendix A - Letter on "Handling Difficult People.")
 - (3) Ensure safety of parties.
 - (4) Restrict the offenders from the facility.
 - (5) Determine appropriate disciplinary action.
 - (6) Seek acute care, stress debriefing, or trauma counseling for victims.

CO

Date_____

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL COMMISSARY PERSONNEL

SUBJECT: Handling Difficult People

In our daily contacts with customers and fellow employees, we can anticipate that at times we will be confronted with difficult situations. To keep such encounters from escalating, there are a number of actions we can take.

a. Be aware of what is going on around you. For example, if you overhear loud, angry, or abusive remarks directed at another employee, it may be helpful to distract the person making the remarks by asking a question or saying hello. Then, if possible, the person could be taken to a more private location to continue the conversation in a calmer atmosphere.

b. If you know you will be meeting with someone who may become upset or threatening, have your supervisor or a coworker sit in on the meeting (or remain within earshot). Otherwise, notify others in the area to get your supervisor or manager if they hear the person become--and remain--loud and angry.

c. If a person becomes abusive or threatens you while you are in your office or a closed room, get up and walk to the door while you continue to talk with the individual. Tell the person you need to get some information and walk out of your office. If you sincerely feel you face imminent harm, leave your work area, explaining that you'll be right back. Notify your supervisor or, if necessary, the host installation police.

d. If you have reason to believe an abusive person is intoxicated or under the influence of drugs, or may not be in touch with reality, notify the host installation police. Don't take chances that the person could become violent.

Most often, we can defuse unpleasant situations by simply listening to the individual's complaints. If we listen patiently, ask questions, avoid defensiveness, and truly attempt to assist the person, we can often reduce the potential for violence. Speaking slowly and softly may encourage the individual to turn down the volume also. However, if the situation does not improve, remember that you do not have to put up with abuse, whether verbal or physical, and you should try some of the suggestions listed above.

Notify your supervisor and/or manager immediately whenever you have called the host installation police for help. If you must call, ensure you tell the police why you are calling, your location, your name, and how the person is threatening you (e.g., verbally, fist, shoving, weapon, etc.).

I expect all managers and supervisors to be vigilant about potentially dangerous situations and act prudently in reducing conflicts.

Commissary Officer

RESOURCES

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