POLICY
MEMORANDUM

MISSISSIPPI STATE PERSONNEL BOARD

Policy Memorandum No. 8 - FY 2006

TO: Elected Officials, Agency Directors and Personnel Officers
State Government Agencies

FROM: Robert E. Bass, Jr.
State Personnel Director

DATE: May 26, 2005

SUBJECT: GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING A WORKPLACE VIOLENCE POLICY

A. INTRODUCTION

Each appointing authority shall provide a work place for employees that is free from violence. Agencies are strongly encouraged to publish a written policy prohibiting all forms of violence in the workplace. An effective policy will provide preventative measures, guidelines for holding perpetrators of violence accountable and guidelines for providing assistance and support to victims and their families, when applicable.

No employee shall be allowed to harass any other employee or a member of the general public by exhibiting behavior including, but not limited to the following: **harassment, intimidation, threats, physical attacks, domestic related violence, or property damage.**

Each agency shall file a copy of their Workplace Violence Policy with the State Personnel Board's Office of Policy upon the policy's implementation.

The following is information and guidance which may be considered in developing and implementing a Workplace Violence Policy. The development and implementation of a workplace violence policy should help ensure that all employees are provided a work environment free from violence.

B. PURPOSE OF POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines to assist agencies in establishing a violence-free workplace and in responding to incidents or potential incidents of workplace violence; to encourage and foster a work environment that is characterized by respect and healthy conflict resolution; and to reduce the potential for violence in and around the workplace.

C. DEVELOPING A POLICY

A written workplace violence policy will indicate that the agency has adopted a proactive stance to deter and prevent violence and threats of violence and will provide an avenue of communication for employees who are experiencing violence or threats of violence emanating from a personal relationship, co-workers, or from external customers or clients. The policy should accomplish the following:

- Provide training and/or educational materials for managers, supervisors and employees on how to recognize potentially violent individuals and situations. Educate all employees on how to report violent incidents, including verbal harassment.
- Identify the person or persons responsible for responding to a report of violence.
- Provide steps on how to report and follow up on all reported threats or purported situations.
- Create a plan for dealing with an immediate threat - who calls emergency numbers? What are the emergency numbers? Where should employees go? Can they leave the premises?
- Create a plan for addressing the aftermath of a violent episode. Include a list of resources for counseling including available Employee Assistance Program (EAP) information, community health professionals, and/or local mental health agencies.
- Identify the responsibilities of employees, supervisors, and the agency.

D. DEFINITIONS

Workplace violence includes, but is not limited to, intimidation, threats, physical attacks, domestic violence or property damage. It includes acts of violence committed in the workplace by state employees, contractual workers, clients, customers, relatives of state employees, acquaintances of state employees, or others.

Harassment is engaging in actions that include but are not limited to abusive conduct, verbal abuse and/or behavior intended to frighten, coerce, or induce duress.

Intimidation is behavior or communication designed or intended to intimidate, menace, or frighten another person.

A **Threat** is the expression of an intent to cause physical or mental harm. An expression constitutes a threat without regard to whether the party communicating the threat has the present ability to carry it out and without regard to whether the expression is contingent, conditional, future or verbal.

A **Physical Attack** is hostile physical contact or attempted physical contact such as hitting, fighting, pushing, shoving or throwing objects.

Domestic Related Violence is the use of abusive or violent behavior, including threats and intimidation, between people who have an ongoing or prior intimate relationship. This could include people who are married, live together or date or who have been married, lived together or dated.

Stalking is conduct that places a person in fear for their safety and includes any unwanted contact or actions which directly or indirectly communicates a threat or places the individual in fear for their safety.

Property Damage is intentional damage to property and includes property owned by the State, employees, visitors or vendors.

The **Workplace Environment** consists of the building(s), grounds, lighting, space planning, and other considerations. It also includes the attitude the employees have about management, their perception of fair and equal treatment, and their belief that they will be safe at work.

E. REPORTING PROCEDURES

Any indicators of potential violence in the workplace must be immediately brought to the attention of appropriate supervisors, human resources personnel, security, Capitol Police, or appropriate law enforcement agency.

Employees who have experienced any form of harassment or threats from another employee, supervisor, customer, or client, or have witnessed any behavior that indicates a potential for violence, should report the incident as soon as possible to management. It is within the rights of the employee making the report to request confidentiality concerning the report to management; however, agencies may not be able to ensure confidentiality in all cases.

If an employee is victimized in the workplace, they are encouraged to report the crime to local law enforcement authorities. The choice about whether or not to report belongs to the victim, however, statistics show that crimes reported immediately have a higher arrest rate.

If an employee has become involved in a non-criminal dispute with family members or neighbors and the employee has obtained an "Order of Protection" or an "Injunction Against Harassment" or a similar court order (Restraining Order), the employee should be instructed to include the employee's work location as well as place of residence in the order. The employee should notify his or her supervisor of the issuance of such an order and provide a

description of the individual cited in the order.

F. RESPONSIBILITIES OF AGENCIES

Each agency should create and maintain a workplace designed to prevent and manage workplace violence. This should be done by developing a comprehensive workplace violence prevention and management program. Suggested components of a workplace violence program may include:

- A policy statement establishing that workplace violence is prohibited;

- A coordinator to be responsible for the overall implementation of a workplace violence prevention and management program. The coordinator may choose to establish a crisis management team approach or develop an alternative system that identifies and mobilizes appropriate consultative resources;

- A written workplace violence prevention and management plan including;
  - A process for disseminating the agency's workplace violence policy to new and existing employees;
  - A procedure for employees and supervisors to report violations of the agency's workplace violence policy;
  - A procedure for investigating a report of a violation of this policy including a description of agency preparedness and precautionary measures to be taken in responding to acts or threats of violence;
  - A procedure for providing instruction to all employees regarding proper response to acts or threats of violence;
  - A procedure for reporting, collecting and maintaining information regarding incidents of workplace violence; and
  - A procedure for facilitating critical incident stress debriefings for employees and their families who have been affected by an event related to trauma and victimization.

- A plan for training and/or providing educational materials to supervisors and managers so that they can foster a safe and healthy environment by learning to:
  - Recognize signs and symptoms of the potential for workplace violence;
  - Prevent, diffuse, and manage workplace violence by utilizing all management and employee resources;
  - Establish and communicate a procedure for reporting violations;
  - Offer support for trauma and/or victimization as well as provide consequences to perpetrators of workplace violence; and

- Understand their legal obligation to act.

- Work to ensure that no employee is retaliated against by the agency or co-workers for reporting violence, threats, or harassment.

- Post emergency telephone numbers.

G. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

- The worksite manager or designated person in charge shall immediately assess what level of intervention by management is appropriate or if law enforcement authorities should be notified.

- Intervention by the worksite manager or other trained employee shall include actions to:
  * Diffuse the situation (if law enforcement intervention is not needed);
  * Ensure the safety of employees; and
  * Seek medical attention if necessary.

- If law enforcement intervention is necessary, the worksite manager will notify the appropriate law enforcement authorities and the Human Resources Director or other appropriate personnel specified in the workplace violence prevention and management plan.

H. RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES

- Make certain you know the location of emergency alarms in your offices, and make certain you know how to use them.
- Do not allow visitors into secure areas if you are "uncomfortable" with the purpose of their visits or there appears to be any problem. Call Capitol Police, security personnel, or the appropriate law enforcement agency immediately.
- Do not allow persons visiting one secure office area to have access to other secure offices or areas.
- Keep all security doors locked at all times.
- Keep all valuables in locked drawers or cabinets. Never leave wallets, handbags, cash, or credit cards on your desk or unsecured in other parts of your work area.
- Office money for coffee, gift, and flower funds should always be kept in locked cabinets. Place coat racks in the center of work areas and not next to doors leading to hallways. Never leave items of value in pockets of garments on coat racks.
- Employees should not bring personal items of substantial value to the office.

- If your purse or wallet is stolen, provide PIN numbers only to those banking, credit companies or officials you have directly contacted.
- If working after hours, keep all doors locked-even in secure areas. Never "advertise" you will be working alone. Assailants often hide in restrooms. Look into corners before fully entering the restroom. Check stalls if possible. After hours, employees should go to restrooms in pairs, if possible.
- Be alert for strange objects and packages, which can be discovered more easily if offices are kept neat and orderly.
- If an employee should become the victim of stalking, the employee should notify his or her supervisor of this as soon as possible following filing a report with local law enforcement authorities.
- Never touch or disturb a strange package or briefcase found in your work area. Call Capitol Police, security personnel, or the appropriate law enforcement agency at once.

I. RISK FACTORS

There are many signs that can point to a person with violent tendencies. In some cases these individuals can often be identified and provided assistance before they contribute to a violent incident. Some of the potential behaviors that should place employees on alert are:

- A past history of violent or threatening behavior;
- Co-worker fear of an employee;
- Extreme stress in an individual's personal or job life;
- Evidence of chemical dependency;
- An obsession with weapons;
- Observations of threatening behavior;
- Routine violations of agency policy or rules;
- Sexual and other harassment of co-workers;
- Destructive behavior;
- Obsession with retaliation after being disciplined - not receptive to criticism;
- Showing little involvement with co-workers – a "loner" unwilling to adjust to agency policies and/or culture;
- Significant changes in behavior or beliefs;
- Deteriorating physical appearance;
- Showing excessive interest in recently publicized violent acts or violent entertainment; and
- Exhibiting paranoid behavior.

J. REMOVING MOTIVATIONS FOR VIOLENCE

When an employee is confronted by a person who seems capable of violent behavior, the employee may reduce the potential for violence by practicing the following:

- Appear calm;
- Listen and allow the person to vent;
- Lower your voice, tone and pitch;
- Don't be defensive;
- Don't talk over the person when they are yelling; wait until a breath is taken and use quiet assertive language to redirect;
- Be respectful;
- Try to clear up misunderstandings and acknowledge valid complaints;
- Ask what they would like done;
- Allow for physical space; don't crowd or touch them;
- If things aren't progressing positively, terminate the meeting and/or call for backup or security;
- Don't turn your back;
- Call Capitol Police, security personnel, or the appropriate law enforcement agency if necessary.

K. POLICY CONCERNING WEAPONS IN THE WORKPLACE

The unauthorized possession of a deadly weapon while on state property or in state owned vehicles is prohibited. Any individual possessing a deadly weapon without appropriate authorization may be removed from or denied access to state offices, facilities, work sites or vehicles, and may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination, criminal penalties, or both. As used in this policy, deadly weapons are defined by Section 97-37-1, Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated.

L. BOMBS AND SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES AND LETTERS

Here are easy recognition points for possible letter and parcel bombs:

- Oily stains or discolorations.
- No return address.
- Excessive weight.
- An envelope that is rigid.
- An envelope that is lopsided or uneven.
- Wires or tinfoil protruding from package or envelope.
- Excessive masking tape, string, or other wrappings. Foreign mail, air mail, and

special delivery. Restrictive markings such as "Confidential" or "Personal".

- Excessive postage.
- Addresses that are handwritten or poorly typed.
- Titles that are incorrect.
- A title but no name.
- Misspellings of common words.
- Visual distractions on letters and parcels.

If you see a suspicious object, call Capitol Police, security personnel, or the local police department at once. Never touch or disturb a suspicious package or object.

M. TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Termination of employment is a very stressful event for all parties involved. Many employees react angrily to what they perceive is an unfair action by management to end their employment. To alleviate some of the pressure on employees being terminated, managers and human resources professionals should consider the following:

- Prior to termination, assess the employee's potential for violence in deciding how and when to terminate. Pre-termination conferences may be held either off site or by telephone.
- Handle the exit interview in a professional but compassionate manner; try to understand the impact of the action on the employee. Document as a part of the exit interview whether or not the employee showed signs of a potential for violence.
- Clearly explain the reasons for termination.
- Provide the employee an opportunity to discuss any disagreement with the termination.
- Provide placement or counseling services whenever possible.

N. TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

All employees, including managers and supervisors, should have training and instruction or, at a minimum, be provided educational materials on general and job-specific workplace security practices. Training and instruction or educational materials should be provided when an agency's Workplace Violence Prevention and Management Program is first established and periodically thereafter. Training and/or educational materials should be provided to all new employees and to other employees for whom training has not previously been provided. It should also be provided to all employees, supervisors, and managers given new job assignments for which specific workplace security training for the job assignment has not previously been provided. Additional training and instruction or educational

materials should be provided to all personnel whenever the employer is made aware of new or previously unrecognized security hazards.
Training and/or educational materials on Risk Factors should be mandatory for all agency employees.

General workplace violence and security training and instruction may include the following:

- Explanation of the Workplace Violence Prevention and Management Program including measures for reporting any violent acts or threats of violence;
- Recognition of workplace security hazards including the risk factors associated with violence;
- Measures to prevent workplace violence, including procedures for reporting workplace security hazards or threats to managers and supervisors;
- Ways to defuse hostile or threatening situations;
- Measures to summon others for assistance;
- Employee routes of escape;
- Notification of law enforcement authorities when a criminal act may have occurred;
- Emergency medical care provided in the event of any violent act upon an employee;
- Post-event trauma counseling for those employees desiring such assistance.
- Location and operation of alarm systems, panic buttons and other protective devices;
- Dealing with angry, hostile or threatening individuals;
- Employee assistance programs (EAP) (Agencies are not required to have an EAP, however, it is recommended that agencies provide their employees with an EAP as funding levels allow);
- Awareness regarding warning signs of a potentially violent person or situation;
- First Aid and CPR training (at least for a representative group of employees);
- Information on hostage situations and what to expect.

O. INCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Procedures for investigating incidents of workplace violence – threats and physical injury – should include:

- Review all previous incidents;
- Visit the scene of an incident as soon as possible;
- Interview threatened or injured employees and witnesses;
- Examine the workplace for security risk factors associated with the incident, including any previous reports of inappropriate behavior by the perpetrator;
- Determine the cause of the incident;
- Take corrective action to prevent the incident from recurring; and

- Record the findings and corrective actions taken.

Consistent with the necessity of prevention and investigation of violence in the workplace, personal information obtained in the course of an investigation should be considered confidential, and not subject to public disclosure except as may be necessary as part of the disciplinary process or as otherwise provided by law.

Retaliation against a person for having made a good faith complaint or report of violence in the workplace, or participating in or aiding in an investigation of violence in the workplace, is prohibited.

P. POST-TRAUMA CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Long-term problems can develop if posttraumatic consequences are not managed. It is important to address these as soon as possible following an act of violence. Some suggested considerations are:

- Contact family members as soon as possible.
- Demonstrate concern and caring for those who have been harmed by the trauma.
- Report on the condition of the injured through agency communications methods.
- Hold meetings on a regular basis with those who are affected to debrief them on issues related to the event.
- Open up communication channels and control rumors.
- Utilize available Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) and/or local mental health agencies to provide counseling to affected employees.

If you have any questions regarding Policy Memorandum No. 8, please contact the Office of Policy at (601) 359-2727.

APM 0806

TELEPHONE THREAT CHECKLIST

Immediate Actions:

- Inform (without alerting the caller) a supervisor or other employee of the call and have them notify law enforcement.
- Remain calm and speak slowly and distinctly.
- Do not hang up the receiver or place the caller on hold.
- Write down the caller's exact words.

Questions to Ask the Caller:

- Who is calling?
- When is the bomb scheduled to explode?
- What type of bomb is it?
- How will the bomb go off?
- Where is the bomb located and what does it look like?
- Why is this threat/action being taken?

Impression of Caller: **(Check appropriate response)**

[ ]	**Adult**	[ ]	**Child**
[ ]	**Male**	[ ]	**Female**
[ ]	**Calm**	[ ]	**Nervous**

Accent (Type): _____

[ ]	**Stutter**	[ ]	**Lisp**	[ ]	**Loud**
[ ]	**Nasal**	[ ]	**Clear**	[ ]	**Soft**
[ ]	**Intoxicated**	[ ]	**Well Spoken**	[ ]	**Slow**
[ ]	**Vulgar**	[ ]	**Coarse**	[ ]	**Fast**
[ ]	**Disguised**	[ ]	**Normal**		

Background Noises:_____

_____

Text of Conversation: _____

_____

CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL, AND RADIOLOGICAL THREAT RESPONSE PROCEDURES

Release inside the building:

____ Notify local law enforcement, utilizing local emergency numbers such as 911, and appropriate agency personnel.

____ Immediately alert others in immediate area.

____ Secure and evacuate the area; close doors, shut off air handling equipment, put up warning sign if available. Do not disturb the area.

____ Contain employees and visitors at pre-determined assembly location and restrict access to the building to limit exposure.

____ Develop a roster of individuals that may have been exposed to the hazard.

____ Follow instructions of emergency responders as to decontamination requirements.

Release Outside the building:

____ Notify local law enforcement, utilizing local emergency numbers such as 911, and appropriate agency personnel.

____ Shut off all air handling equipment to limit outside air penetration.

____ Shelter all personnel and visitors in a pre-designated location. Location should afford the maximum number of barriers to the outside environment. An area without external ventilation would be optimal.

____ Require all employees and visitors to remain in the facility until released by the appropriate authorities.

____ Follow instructions of emergency responders regarding any decontamination requirements.

NOTE: EVACUATION SHOULD BE UPWIND OF AFFECTED FACILITY.

APM 0806

ASSAULT INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Date of Incident (MM/DD/YY): _____

Day of Week: _____

Location of Incident: _____

_____

Name of Complainant: _____

Gender: **Male** _____ **Female** ____

Complainant Description: _____ **Employee (Job Title** _____**)**

_____ **Contract Worker** _____ **Client** _____ **Visitor**

Supervisor:_____

Has Supervisor been notified? _____ **Yes** _____ **No**

Describe the assault incident: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

List any witnesses to the incident (name and telephone number): _____

_____

_____

Did the assault involve a firearm? _____ **Yes** _____ **No**

If so, describe: _____

_____

_____

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ASSAULT INCIDENT REPORT FORM (Page 2)

Did the assault involve a weapon other than a firearm? _____ Yes _____ No

If so, describe: _____

_____

_____

Was the complainant injured? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please describe: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Who committed the assault (name, if known)? _____

_____

What is his/her status to the victim?

_____ Stranger _____ Co-worker

_____ Personal Relation _____ Supervisor

_____ Client/Patient/Customer _____ Other (describe:_____)

What was the gender of the person(s) who committed the assault? _____ Male _____ Female

Please check any risk factors applicable to this incident:

_____ Working with money _____ Working with drugs

_____ Working in a high-crime area _____ Working late at night

_____ Poor lighting outside of worksite

_____ Other risk factor: _____

ASSAULT INCIDENT REPORT FORM (Page 3)

Name/Position of Person filling out this form:

Explain any action taken:

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE DIRECTORY

This directory is designed to provide a means to quickly contact key personnel, agencies and resources in times of emergency.

CATEGORY OF SERVICE TELEPHONE	ORGANIZATION
Law Enforcement	
_____	**Capitol Police**
_____	**Police Department**
_____	**Sheriff's Department**
_____	**MS Highway Patrol**
_____	**FBI**
Fire/Rescue	
_____	**Local Fire Department**
Health/Medical	
_____	**Local EMS/Ambulance Service**
_____	**Hospital Emergency Rooms**
_____	**Crisis Intervention/Counseling**
Agency	
_____	**Facilities/Maintenance**
_____	**Human Resources**
_____	**Agency Emergency Representative**
Miscellaneous	
_____	_____