

Rensselaer County Workplace Violence Prevention Policy & Incident Reporting

Rensselaer County is committed to the safety and security of our employees. Workplace violence presents a serious occupational safety hazard to our agency, staff, and clients. Threats, threatening behavior, or acts of violence against employees, visitors, guests, or other individuals by anyone on Rensselaer County property will be thoroughly investigated and appropriate action will be taken, including summoning criminal justice authorities when warranted. All employees are responsible for helping to create an environment of mutual respect for each other as well as clients, following all policies, procedures and program requirements, and for assisting in maintaining a safe and secure work environment.

This policy is designed to meet the requirements of NYS Labor Law 27b and highlights some of the elements that are found within our Workplace Violence Prevention Program. The process involved in complying with this law included a workplace evaluation that was designed to identify the workplace violence hazards our employees could be exposed to. Other tools that were utilized during this process included establishing a committee made up of management and Authorized Employee Representatives who will have an ongoing role of participation in the evaluation process, recommending methods to reduce or eliminate the hazards identified during the process and investigating workplace violence incidents or allegations. All employees will participate in the annual Workplace Violence Prevention Training Program.

The goal of this policy is to promote the safety and well-being of all people in our workplace. All incidents of violence or threatening behavior will be responded to immediately upon notification. The County of Rensselaer identified response personnel that include a member of management and an employee representative. If appropriate, the County of Rensselaer will provide counseling services or referrals for employees.

All Rensselaer County personnel are responsible for notifying the contact person designated below of any violent incidents, threatening behavior, including threats they have witnessed, received, or have been told that another person has witnessed or received.

Designated Contact person:

Name: Jason Kippen
Title: Director of Human Resources
Department: Bureau of Human Resources
Phone: 270-2944
Location: Ned Pattison Government Center

Rensselaer County is committed to provide a work environment free from the hazards of workplace or any physical assault, threatening behavior or verbal abuse. This program establishes a zero tolerance to violence in the work place. It also establishes responsibilities for employees and visitors to County buildings.

Any acts of violence occurring where an employee performs any work-related duty in the course of his or her employment will not be tolerated. Offenders may be removed from the premises and be subject to appropriate disciplinary actions as further described in applicable policies, collective bargaining agreements and Civil Service laws, rules and regulations.

The program is intended to ensure that all County employees including supervisors and department heads comply with work practices that are designed to make the workplace more secure. Management will demonstrate a clear commitment during the implementation and enforcement of this Workplace Violence Prevention Program. This program has been developed and implemented with the assistance of authorized employee representatives. The authorized employee representatives have participated in the site surveys and will be involved in the annual program review. Authorized employee representatives are encouraged to provide input with regard to the content of this program.

A copy of Rensselaer County's Workplace Violence Prevention Policy may be obtained by contacting the Bureau of Human Resources or Rensselaer County's Intranet.

What is Workplace Violence?

New York State Public Employer Workplace Violence Prevention Code Rule 827 defines Workplace Violence as any physical assault, threatening behavior, verbal abuse occurring where a public employee performs any work-related duty in the course of his or her employment.

A reportable workplace violence incident is defined as one or more of the following:

- a) An attempt or threat whether verbal or physical to inflict injury upon a person.
- b) Any intentional display of force which would give a person reason or fear to expect bodily harm.
- c) Intentional and wrongful physical contact with a person without his or her consent that entails some injury or offensive touching.
- d) Harassment of a nature that would give a person reason to fear escalation or make it difficult to pursue a normal work life or private life when harassment arises out of or in the course of employment.
- e) Stalking a person with the intent of causing fear when such stalking has arisen through or in the course of employment. An incident may be committed without one person actually touching or striking or doing bodily harm to another person.

Risk Evaluation Survey

As an initial component of the Workplace Violence Prevention Program a risk evaluation survey was conducted with the assistance of authorized employee representatives. Where risk factors were identified at each work site corrective action will be implemented to prevent or minimize the risk of work place violence. Work site safety evaluation has been and is an ongoing process in Rensselaer County. Risk factors and recommended mitigation is attached.

Communication and Employer Commitment

At Rensselaer County, we recognize that to maintain a safe, healthy, and secure workplace we must have open, two-way communication between all employees, including supervisors and department heads, on all workplace safety, health and security issues.

Rensselaer County has a communication system designed to encourage a continuous flow of safety, health and security information between management and our employees without fear of reprisal and in a form that is readily understandable. Examples of our communication methods include:

- Initial Training of New Hires and Per Diem employees along with annual training.
- Reinforcing a Zero Tolerance approach to Workplace Violence through the use of training, signs, and posters.
- Informing employees, supervisors and department heads of our program for workplace security.
- Develop an evaluation of the performances of all employees in complying with established security measures.
- Recognition of employees who perform work practices which promote security in the workplace.
- Ensure annual training is provided to all employees to increase their understanding and compliance with methods of reporting incidents.
- A progressive discipline procedure per bargaining unit contracts for employees to comply with workplace security practices.

Employee Training

The cornerstone of an effective workplace violence prevention plan is appropriate training of all employees, supervisors and department heads. Rensselaer County will educate its employees about the risk factors associated with the various types of workplace violence and provide appropriate training in crime awareness, assault, and rape prevention and defusing hostile situations.

The mandatory training will be provided during the general new employee orientation, reassignments, and annually for all employees. The following topics will be discussed during the initial and annual training.

- What is Workplace Violence
- Management's commitment to Zero Tolerance of Workplace Violence
- Techniques on how to recognize and avoid Workplace Violence situations
- What are high risk occupations
- How to report a Workplace Violence Incident
- The importance of reporting all incidents
- How and when incidents will be investigated by the employer
- Where employees can go for assistance
- Where to obtain post incident crisis counseling

Incident Reporting

The goal of this policy is to promote the safety and well being of all people in our workplace. Employees are often in the best position in the workplace to observe behavior that may indicate that an individual is being threatened.

Employees are encouraged to report any incidents that may involve a violation of any County policy that is designed to provide a safe working environment. Concerns may be reported to your supervisor or department head.

Any imminent threat or act of violence that is considered by the employee to be an immediate danger to life and health should be reported to law enforcement by dialing 911.

Any potentially dangerous situations must be reported immediately to a supervisor or department head in the absence of a supervisor. When reporting a threat of violence, the employee should be as specific and detailed as possible. The supervisor will conduct swift and thorough investigation of all workplace violence complaints.

An employee may be required to make a written report of an incident. Reports or incidents warranting confidentiality will be handled appropriately and information will be disclosed to others on a need to know basis in the judgment of the County. All parties involved in a situation will be counseled and the results of investigations will be discussed with them. Rensselaer County will actively intervene at any indication of a possible hostile or violent situation. Employees are expected to exercise sound judgment and to inform a supervisor or department head if any employee exhibits behavior, which could be a sign of a potentially dangerous situation.

This includes threats by employees, as well as threats by clients, vendors, solicitors or other members of the public. Such behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Discussing weapons or bringing them to the workplace.
- Displaying overt signs of extreme stress, resentment, hostility, or anger.

- Making threatening remarks.
- Sudden or significant deterioration of performance.
- Displaying irrational or inappropriate behavior.

All department heads and supervisors are responsible for implementing and maintaining this program in their work areas. They should be familiar with the contents of this program and be able to answer questions relating to Rensselaer County Workplace Violence Prevention Policy.

Employees or employee representatives who believe that a serious violation of the Workplace Violence Prevention Policy exists should follow the proper chain of command by reporting their concern immediately in writing to their supervisor, in the absence of the supervisor the department head.

Post-Incident Response

Post-incident response and evaluation are important parts of an effective Workplace Violence Prevention Program. Rensselaer County is committed to the following:

- Assuring that all injured employees receive prompt and appropriate medical care;
- Securing the premises to safeguard evidence and reduce distractions during the post incident;
- Reporting the incident to the appropriate authorities as required by applicable laws and regulations;
- Prepare an incident report immediately after the incident utilizing the Incident Report form.
- Conducting post-incident debriefings and counseling.
- After the occurrence of a workplace violence incident conduct a review of the workplace violence prevention plans.

Responsibilities of Employees & Supervisors

Employee

- Be familiar with Rensselaer County Workplace Violence Prevention Policy & Program
- Do not carry any weapons to work
- Advise supervisor of any orders of protection or other necessary precautions that apply to the workplace.
- **Emergency situation** (act of violence or imminent threat)
 - Immediately contact Local Law Enforcement at 911
 - Use any available panic buttons
 - Get away from the situation
 - Promptly notify your supervisor
- **Non-Emergency Situation**
 - Promptly report all violence, threats, intimidation, or other disruptive behavior to your supervisor.
 - Notify supervisor of any safety or security concerns at the worksite or in the field

Supervisor

- Be familiar with Rensselaer County Workplace Violence Policy & Program.
- Do not carry any weapons to work.
- Advise department head of any orders of protection or other necessary precautions that apply to the workplace.
- **Emergency situation** (act of violence or imminent threat)
 - Immediately contact Local Law Enforcement at 911
 - Use any available panic buttons
 - Get away from the situation
 - Promptly notify your supervisor
- **Non-Emergency Situation**
 - Promptly report all violence, threats, intimidation, or other disruptive behavior to your supervisor.
 - Notify your Department Head of any safety or security concerns at the Workplace or in the field.
- Insure new hires receive Workplace Violence Training

Record Keeping

It is important to the success of the Workplace Violence Prevention Program that all employees understand the importance of reporting all incidents to the employer. Rensselaer County will use records of injuries, illnesses, incidents, hazards, corrective actions, and training to help identify problems and solution for a safe and helpful workplace.

The outline in 12 NYCRR Part 801, Recording and Reporting Public Employees Occupational Injuries will be utilized for logging employee injuries or illnesses relating to workplace violence. A report must be made if two or more employees are hospitalized. Any employee fatality must be reported to the nearest PESH Office.

No Retaliation

The County of Rensselaer as the employer will not retaliate against any employee who has (1) reported an alleged serious violation to a supervisor; (2) requested an inspection by the NYS Department of Labor officials; or (3) accompanied the NYS Department of Labor official during an inspection. In addition, it is the responsibility of the County of Rensselaer to take appropriate disciplinary action against any employee whose actions are retaliatory in nature.

**Rensselaer County Workplace Violence Prevention
Incident Report**

Employee
Name: _____ **Title:** _____

Date of Incident: _____ **Time of incident:** _____ **AM/PM**

Date Reported to Supervisor: _____ **Supervisor:** _____

Location of Incident: _____

Type of Violence which occurred:

- Type I-Violence by a stranger Type II-Violence by employee to client
- Type III-Violence by a client to employee Type IV-Violence by personal relationship
- Type V-Violence by employee to employee

Was trauma counseling requested? Yes No

Was law enforcement contacted? Yes No Not Needed

What was the employee doing just prior to the incident?

Incident Description (Names of individuals involved, describe physical and verbal violent behavior or actions, extent of injuries, names or witnesses).

Print Name of Individual Completing the report: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Risk Factors Identified

Raddock Building-Social Services

- Risk of unauthorized access to work areas.

Court House Annex

- Risk of harm from a member of the public
- Risk of theft

Hoosick Falls-Mental Health

- Potentially dangerous situation with one employee and mental health clients (s)
- Receptionist is unable to see entire waiting room

Rensselaer-Mental Health

- Potential for an unruly client to push over the protective glass.
- Potential of failure of the untested panic button

Highway Patrol-Public Safety Building

- Potential for a detainee to get out of holding cell

Van Rensselaer Manor

- Potentially dangerous situation in parking lot due to poor lighting

Highway Department Garages

- Risk of unauthorized building access

Troy Senior Center-Aging

- Risk of unauthorized building access
- In a potential emergency, employees and visitors may not know evacuation route

Rensselaer Senior Center- Aging

- Potential for theft and/or harm to employees due to the transfer of money

Probation

- Risk for harm to employees and clients due to multiple factors

County Office Building

- Risk to employees and visitors due to unauthorized access
- Employees and visitors may not be aware of the evacuation route in case of emergency

Public Safety

- Risk to employees well being due to breakroom location

Multiple Locations

- Risk that employees would not be aware of how to respond to an occurrence of workplace violence

Suggested Risk Mitigation

Raddock Building-Social Services

- Evaluation floor plan should be posted conspicuously.
- Workplace Violence Prevention Policy Statement should be posted conspicuously.
- Reception areas should be evaluated for better security. (doors locked, ect.)
- Doors should be locked from public access.

Court House Annex

- Workplace Violence Prevention Policy Statement should be posted conspicuously.
- Installation of a panic button for employees to use in case of emergency.
- The safe should be kept locked and secure during public hours.

Hoosick Falls-Mental Health

- Workplace Violence Prevention Policy Statement should be posted conspicuously.
- Modifications should be made so that an employees is not alone in the building with a client(s) after hours.
- Reception area could be modified to allow for better sight line for the receptionist.

Rensselaer-Mental Health

- Glass in reception area could be stronger and more protective.
- Panic buttons should be regularly tested with local police.

Highway Patrol-Public Safety Building

- Locks in holding room doors should be reversed. Currently a key must be used to get in, but person in holding room can get out.

Van Rensselaer Manor

- Consider increased lighting in the parking lot areas.

Highway Department Garages

- Workplace Violence Prevention Policy Statement should be posted conspicuously.

Troy Senior Center-Aging

- Update sign to call "In case of emergency".
- Insure that all windows and doors are locked while the building is closed.
- Evacuation floor plan should be posted conspicuously.

Rensselaer Senior Center- Aging

- Evaluate and review the process of transferring money from the center to the bank.

Suggested Risk Mitigation-Continued

Probation

- Windows should be installed on the interview room doors.
- It was noted that the metal detector does not always function properly.
- Evacuation floor plan should be posted conspicuously.
- Reception area should be evaluated to provide a more secure environment.

County Office Building

- Evacuation floor plans should be posted conspicuously.
- Guests to the building should be required to sign in at the security desk and be screened by security personnel.
- Security desk should be manned at all times the public has access to the building.

Public Safety

- Consideration should be given to a different location for the employee break room, due to high concentration of public traffic.

Multiple Locations

- Workplace Violence Policy Statement should be posted conspicuously.