



444 Green Street, Gardner, MA 01440-1000

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## **Campus/Workplace Violence Policy Statement**

Mount Wachusett Community College is committed to maintaining a workplace and learning environment that is reasonably safe and secure. We conduct our institution in a manner designed to protect the safety and health of our employees and customers. Consequently, the following policy has been constructed to support a respectful, cooperative environment and to address abusive, obscene or disrespectful behavior.

Mount Wachusett Community College will not tolerate any threatening or hostile behavior and will take immediate and appropriate action against offenders, up to and including termination of employment or enrollment and criminal prosecution. We must not allow any assaults, hostile physical contact or intimidation, fighting, verbal threats of physical harm or violence, or any other actions that are threatening, hostile or abusive in nature while on college property or while conducting college business. Also, we must not damage, destroy or otherwise harm college property, its employees, students, guests, business partners or others.

Employees must refer incidents of this nature immediately to their supervisor, other appropriate management, or directly to the Campus Police who will initiate an investigation of the incident. Failure to report incidents of this nature may be regarded as a breach of employee responsibility.

Students must refer any incidents to Campus Police or the Student Service Office.

Any person who threatens or engages in a violent act on college property will be removed from the premises as soon as safety allows.

### **Acts or Threats of Violence Defined**

Threats or acts of violence include actions conducted against any person(s) or property that is sufficiently severe, offensive, intimidating and /or otherwise inappropriate so as to create a hostile, abusive, intimidating work or learning environment.

### **General Examples of Campus Violence:**

- Threats or acts of violence occurring on college property, regardless of the relationship between the college and the parties involved in the incident.
- Threats or acts of violence not occurring on college property but involving someone who is acting in the capacity of a representative of the college.
- Threats or acts of violence not occurring on college property involving a college employee, if the threats or acts of violence affect the legitimate interest of the college.
- Threats or acts of violence resulting in the criminal arrest of an employee or agent of the college, or of an individual performing services on the college's behalf on a contract or temporary basis, under any criminal code provision relating to threats or acts of violence that adversely affect the legitimate interest and goals of the college.

- Violent incidents caused by visitors in the workplace, for example a domestic violence incident that spills into the workplace, or retaliation from an employee who has been suspended or dismissed from the college.

Specific Examples of Prohibited Conduct: (may be physical and/or verbal and include but not limited to, the following while on college property or while conducting business for the college)

- Hitting or shoving any individual;
- Threatening to harm an individual or his/her family, friends, associates, or their property;
- The intentional damage or destruction or threat of it to property owned, operated, or controlled by the college or any other individual;
- Making harassing or threatening telephone calls, letters or other forms of written or electronic communications;
- Intimidating or attempting to coerce an employee or any other individual to commit any wrongful acts that would adversely affect the interest of the college;
- Harassment and/or stalking, including willful, malicious and repeated following of another person and/or making a credible threat with intent to place the other person in reasonable fear of his or her safety;
- Possession, display or any use of firearms, weapons, or other dangerous devices (as defined in applicable state statutes) on college property or while working for the college even if the employee is authorized by law to possess, own or carry such instruments. The exception would be law enforcement officials acting in an official capacity.

### **Employee Obligations**

Employees are expected to set an example of proper workplace behavior for others to see and to treat others with respect. Employees are expected to use non-violent responses and practice alternate dispute conflict resolution to reduce the risk of situations that could escalate to violence.

- Every person who is on college property is encouraged to report incidents of threats or acts of physical violence.
- In all cases where there is a threat of immediate harm, the report should first be made to Campus Police.
- In cases where there is no threat of immediate harm, or after a report has been made to a college staff member and/or management, staff must promptly report the workplace incident to Campus Police.
- Management should document the events, as they occurred, to include names of witnesses and witness statements since the information may be needed at a later time.
- The college is committed to assuring that there will be no reprisals against employees or students who truthfully report violence or threatening behavior.

### **Crisis Avoidance and Prevention**

Early Intervention- Employees and their families should seek counseling and referral services to help address personal problems, family and/or financial issues, feelings of depression and anxiety, drug and alcohol dependency, domestic violence matters, and any other issue that may influence one's behavior

and/or performance. Early intervention is an effective means to help an individual who appears troubled or to correct a condition in the workplace that is creating a problem. Employees seeking assistance for themselves, or for someone else, should contact either the Division of Human Resources and Payroll/Affirmative Action or Campus Health Services. The contact numbers for each are:

Division of Human Resources and Payroll/Affirmative Action	(978) 630-9160
Campus Health Services	(978) 630-9136
Campus Counseling Services	(978) 630-9292

*Awareness*- the most important aspect of crisis avoidance is awareness and communication. Managers should encourage staff to be observant and to report unusual changes in a co-work's behavior because rarely does violence occur without warning signals. Individuals may encounter external stress-related problems totally unrelated to the job. These anxieties, like job related stress, often may become evident only in close working relationships with peers.

*Notifications*- Managers and supervisors should be aware of the early warning signals that may be indicative of violent behavior. Managers should encourage employees to talk to them if they believe that a situation may potentially become a workplace violence issue. Many employees are reluctant to share with their supervisors any concerns about a potentially violent situation. Managers should encourage employees to notify the Division of Human Resources and Payroll/Affirmative Action or contact Campus Police (978) 630-9150 when they become aware of a potentially violent situation or when they witness any type of violent behavior.

*Training/Presentations*- Campus Police staff offer presentations to management that detail the risk factors associated with workplace violence. Campus Police explains procedures used in handling emergencies that may help minimize the risk of violent incidents.

### **Management Verification and Assessment of Threats or Acts of Violence**

When management becomes aware of a workplace violence incident, the incident must immediately be documented. If an employee is suspected of making the threat, management should fill out the attached form with the person reporting the threat. Any report of threats or violence will be evaluated confidentially and as quickly as practical. Appropriate action will be taken, where possible, in order to protect the employee from further violent or threatening acts. Managers and supervisors should immediately notify Campus Police upon becoming aware of any workplace violence situation.

Threat assessment and the college response should be a multi-discipline approach and will be tailored to the needs of each incident. The Counseling, Assistance, Referral and Education (CARE) Team brings together the appropriate individuals who can best address the specific situation. These individuals may be from various departments, but the core group includes the Vice President of Student Services, the Coordinator of Health Services, the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities, a mental health counselor and the Chief of Campus Police. The intent is to create a humane, unified and proactive stance to dangerous or potentially dangerous situations. Other personnel who may join the CARE Team are additional representatives from Campus Police, Human Resources and Affirmative Action, labor relations personnel, Legal, President's designee, and/or Health or Counseling Services, depending upon the nature of the incident. Management will assess the situation and make judgments regarding the appropriate response to diffuse the situation.

If all of the facts are not evident then in-depth interviews must be conducted. The investigation will be conducted by Campus Police unless factual circumstances preclude such an approach.

Once the threat has been verified and understood the CARE Team will assess the seriousness of the threat so that a suitable response can be initiated.

If all of the facts are evident and there is no need for further investigation, the investigator may recommend that management mediate the issue and/or administer appropriate disciplinary action. After consultation, management may take immediate corrective action to lessen the potential of future confrontation.

If a workplace violence incident is caused or initiated by someone other than an employee, other actions, which may be taken by Campus Police to fully develop an assessment of the seriousness of a threat, are:

- Notifying local law enforcement and/or State Police;
- Attempting to determine if the individual making the threat has a history of physical violence;
- Maintaining direct lines of communication between local law enforcement and Campus Police;
- Initiating Student Disciplinary Procedures as described in the MWCC Student Handbook.

*Protection Strategies-* Threats must be considered serious until proven otherwise and appropriate action must be taken to protect college personnel and property. Particular attention must be given to those individuals who are directly threatened. Local law enforcement and/or State Police should be notified in cases of serious threats or acts of violence.

*Post-Incident Actions-* Post-incident actions are required to insure follow through with management, Labor Relations, Campus Police, Health or Counseling Services, and other appropriate legal and/or medical decisions. Lastly, the CARE Team will review the entire incident.

*Follow-up-* When a substantiated threat is made, or a college employee commits a violent act, a judgment should be made as to what actions are appropriate in accordance with applicable collective bargaining agreements and the personnel policies handbook. In addition external health care professionals may play a role in continued evaluation or monitoring.

A decision to deal administratively with the employee and/or to have the employee consult with external health care professionals should be made as promptly as possible by the CARE Team and management should continue an on-going review. Management should keep Campus Police apprised of the status of the incident to insure that the incident is properly documented and that available civil and criminal justice remedies are known and understood by the victim and the college.

When necessary, Campus Police will initiate an investigation and determine the facts of the case. If the complaint is substantiated, Campus Police will prepare and submit a formal report to the appropriate disciplinary forum. The appropriate disciplinary forum will review each case and recommend appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination or expulsion.

### **Initial Response and Crisis Management re: Incidents Involving Severe or Fatal Injury**

Campus Police will assist at the college in containing and minimizing the impact of a workplace violent incident in which severe injury or loss of life has occurred. Campus Police will designate an Incident Coordinator who will immediately notify appropriate emergency response agencies (police, ambulance, etc.) Departmental managers should be familiar with contact information of emergency response personnel in their respective areas.

## **Dissemination of Policy**

The Division of Human Resources and Payroll/Affirmative Action will provide a copy of this policy statement to new employees. Employees can also find this policy on the intranet and in hard copy in the Division of Human Resources and Payroll/Affirmative Action, Administrative Services, and Campus Police. The policy will also be referenced in the MWCC Student Handbook.

### **Summary**

This policy provides the general guidelines to enable employees and management to respond to the three most common phases of a workplace violence situation:

- **Early Intervention Phase** – occurs before a serious threat or action is committed, when an employee is starting to manifest indications of escalating anger or threatening behavior;
- **Verification and Assessment Phase** – occurs after a threat or minor act occurs; and
- **Crisis Intervention Management Phase** – occurs after actual serious injury has occurred.

This policy is designed to strengthen the manager's role, realizing that it is not an exclusive one. This document has been broadly designed to aid those involved in the effective management of violent incidents.

This policy provides a broad range of information and guidance about handling workplace violence and business conduct that employees are to understand and follow. It does not address every situation or set forth every rule or policy, nor is it a substitute for each employee's responsibility and accountability to exercise good judgment and obtain guidance when required.

This policy is not a contract of employment between any employee and the college, and does not give any employee, consultant, vendor, customer, or any other person doing business with the college or on the behalf of college rights of any kind. This policy and its contents may be changed or eliminated at any time by the college.

### **Disclaimer Notice**

These Guidelines are not an employment contract in any form, although adherence to these standards is a condition of employment. They do not give you rights of any kind, and may be changed by the college at any time without notice.

Employees can terminate their employment whenever they wish and for whatever reason they might have, just as the college can terminate their employment or change the terms and conditions of their employment at any time and for any legal reason or no reason, with or without cause, and with or without notice, unless the employment is covered by a collective bargaining agreement. This is known as employment-at-will. This at-will employment relationship may not be modified except in a written agreement signed by the employee and an authorized representative of the college that employs the employee, and with concurrence from the Community College Counsel.

## Incident Report

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This form is designed to enable members of the college community to voluntarily report incidents or behaviors that may raise concerns about student or others conduct at Mount Wachusett Community College. An incident or behavior, in this context, is an event or situation that does not warrant immediate intervention or disciplinary action. For those instances that involve an employee of the College who is exhibiting disconcerting/unusual behavior please contact the Vice President of Human Resources and Payroll/Affirmative Action Officer, Peter Sennett, immediately at extension 9160.

While this form is not a vehicle for enacting disciplinary measures, its use will provide a mechanism for revealing and/or establishing patterns of disruptive behavior of specific individuals, and it will provide aggregate data on the nature and frequency of disruptions at MWCC. This report provides a standardized method for recording observations of troublesome behaviors and for alerting staff of potential concerns. Thus, the information in this form *may* not be used to take specific action against a student/person. This form is not to be used in lieu of a making a formal complaint or police report.

**Student(s)/Person(s) Involved in Incident:** *(Please enter as much information as you are able to provide.)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID#: \_\_\_\_\_ Student Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Incident Information:**

Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Form Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Incident (approx.): \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Title of Person Reporting Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of Others Involved \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a detailed description of the incident/behavior, paying particular attention to the behaviors of the student/person. Concrete, specific observations are most useful: avoid providing judgments, assessments, and opinions. Include writings or other materials that might provide insight on the situation:

Please indicate any action taken: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please submit completed forms to the**  
Student Services Office  
Room H128  
Mount Wachusett Community College  
Gardner, Massachusetts 01440

***For Office Use Only:***

*CARE Team Meeting Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Action Taken:*

*Response to Reporter:*