



Workplace Violence Prevention Plan

Introduction

The Minnesota State Retirement System (MSRS) forbids workplace violence and promotes actions to facilitate and maximize a work environment free from threats and acts of violence. This plan presents strategies and tools to anticipate, prevent, and review conditions and incidents that may result in workplace violence at our agency.

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1.0 Rationale

The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 mandates that employers provide their employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards to safety and health.

Essential elements of safety and health programs also apply to the prevention and management of potential or actual workplace violence. These elements include:

- Management commitment to workplace health and safety
- Employee involvement in workplace health and safety determinations
- Analysis of workplace health and safety conditions
- Workplace hazard prevention and control
- Training for management and employees

Workplace violence prevention is a value of MSRS.

2.0 Plan Goals

This plan is initiated to ready MSRS for the possibility of physical harm to individuals or property by:

- Promoting a low-risk work environment
- Developing awareness about threats
- Highlighting sources for assistance
- Planning for incident management
- Including employee input in health and safety decision making
- Providing assistance in
 - Reporting of violence or a threat of violence
 - Accessing Employee Assistance Program (EAP) resources
 - Requesting help for a co-worker or staff member who is threatened or who is threatening others

3.0 Definitions

MERLIN

The MSRS intranet site.

Workplace

A location where state agency employees perform job duties.

The location need not be a permanent location or a physical building, but can be anywhere public service is provided.

Telework locations are outside the scope of this plan.

3.0 Definitions – continued

Workplace Violence

Behavior that results in the actual or reasonably-perceived threat of physical harm to an individual or property.

The harm threatened or reasonably perceived by an individual may include emotional harm.

Third party

Individuals who are not state agency employees, but who have business interactions with MSRS employees and are included in this plan, such as:

- Applicants for MSRS employment
- Vendors
- Contractors
- Participants
- Business partners
- Other individuals with whom MSRS employees interact in the course of their work, such as individuals acting on behalf of a participant or entities conducting business matters involving MSRS

Threatening Behavior

Any verbal or physical conduct that would reasonably cause fear of physical harm to individuals or property.

Violent Behavior

The use of physical force that causes or is intended to cause physical harm to individuals or to property.

Warning signs of violent behavior: Observable behavior that leads to a reasonable belief that an individual may engage in violent behavior.

Warning signs of violent behavior may include, but are not limited to:

- Intensely angry demeanor
- Significant loss of temper
- Articulated plan to commit violence
- Oral or written remarks about violent behavior
- Discussing the use of weapons of any kind in a harmful manner toward others
- Bringing weapons into the workplace
- Repeated aggressive movements such as pounding, banging, or slamming items.

These warning signs may be unrelated to an intent to engage in workplace violence.

4.0 Plan Communication Strategies

MSRS will foster awareness among employees about violence in the workplace and its prevention as presented in this plan.

Communication methods will include:

- Partnering with the following groups to provide information about personal security and violence prevention:
 - Human Resources
 - The Safety and Wellness Committee
 - Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
 - The MSRS Security Team
- Developing, delivering, or obtaining and distributing violence-prevention training modules for employees.
- Providing violence-prevention training:
 - During the onboarding of new staff
 - Annually to all staff
 - As developing situations may warrant

Role-specific training will include:

- The agency's violence prevention plan
- The effects of workplace violence
- The prevention of workplace violence
- Supervisory/managerial responsibilities to identify and reduce the risks of workplace violence
- Employee responsibilities in identifying and reporting threats of violence
- Incident response processes

5.0 Common Forms of Workplace Violence

Workplace violence may take on varied forms:

1. A violent act or threat by a current employee, former employee, or someone who has some involvement with a current or former employee, such as an employee's spouse, significant other, relative, or another person who has had a dispute with an employee.
2. A violent act or threat by a participant or someone receiving service from MSRS.
3. A violent act by someone totally unrelated to the work environment. For example, someone who enters an office with no business reason for their visit, though there may or may not be a connection to a staff member.

5.0 Common Forms of Workplace Violence – continued

- Behaviors in interpersonal relationships where someone's safety may not be immediately threatened (e.g. veiled threats, stalking, intimidation, or aggression). These behaviors may be important warning signs of future violence and can offer MSRS an opportunity for proactive intervention. However, these behaviors do not predict that an act of workplace violence will follow.

6.0 Supporting Documentation

MSRS policies and guidance documents

(published or linked in MERLIN)

- Emergency Response Plan
- Alcohol and Drug Use
- Background Checks
- Respectful Workplace
- Sexual Harassment Prohibited (MMB Policy #1329; see below)
- Code of Ethical Conduct

Statewide policies and guidance documents

- Minnesota Management and Budget HR/LR Policy #1329 – Sexual Harassment Prohibited - <https://mn.gov/mmb-stat/policies/1329-sexualharassmentprohibited.pdf>
- Minnesota Management and Budget HR/LR Policy #1418 – Drug and Alcohol Use - <https://mn.gov/mmb-stat/policies/1418-DrugAndAlcoholPolicy.pdf>
- Minnesota Management and Budget HR/LR Policy #1432 – Respectful Workplace - <https://mn.gov/mmb-stat/policies/1432-respectful-workplace-policy.pdf>
- Minnesota Management and Budget HR/LR Policy #1436 – Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited - <https://mn.gov/mmb-stat/policies/1436-harassmentdiscriminationprohibited.pdf>
- Minnesota Management and Budget HR/LR Policy #1445 – <https://mn.gov/mmb-stat/policies/1445-codeofethicalconduct.pdf>

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities for Promoting a Low-risk Workplace

The groups listed below will perform tasks as designated to promote a low-risk work environment at MSRS:

Capitol Security

- Serves as the primary responder to all emergencies and events at the Retirement Systems Building (RSB).
- Provides safety and security to state employees and members of the public on the Capitol complex.
- Provides a quarterly update for the RSB Security Team.

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities for Promoting a Low-risk Workplace – continued

MSRS Employees

- Act in accord with and promote the MSRS standard of zero tolerance of violence in all contacts with coworkers, supervisors, contractors, and participants.
- Understand and follow workplace violence-prevention procedures, including how to report a threat of workplace violence.
- Report to their supervisor or manager if they are subject to or witness threatening or violent behavior, or warning signs of violent behavior, in the workplace, that affects the workplace, or that may affect the workplace. If a supervisor or manager is not immediately available, employees may contact the MSRS Executive Director. When a situation warrants, employees should call 9-1-1 (8-9-1-1 in the MSRS St. Paul Office). See Section 10 of this document.
- Employees who engage in threatening or violent behavior in the workplace, or threatening or violent behavior that affects the workplace, will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge.

Third Parties

- Third parties who engage in threatening or violent behavior in the workplace, or that affects the workplace, will be subject to appropriate action.
- Third parties are encouraged to report if they are subject to or witness threatening or violent behavior, or if they sense warning signs of violent behavior.

MSRS Managers and Supervisors

- Lead by example in the courteous and professional treatment of employees and participants.
- Create a workplace where established standards of conduct are clear, communicated, consistently enforced, and where corrective action, including discipline, is used fairly and appropriately to deal with instances of unacceptable behavior.
- Understand that knowingly participating in or tolerating workplace violence are subject to discipline up to and including discharge.
- Understand that retaliating against employees or participants making a report of workplace violence is subject to discipline up to and including discharge.
Retaliation includes conduct or communication designed to prevent a person from opposing or reporting workplace violence.
- Use team and individual check-ins to obtain an understanding of and gauge how their employees are doing; look for signs of an employee needing help.
- Schedule employee check-ins on an increased frequency when unusual behavior and/or threats surface.
- Encourage any employee that may be experiencing work- or non-work-related issues to contact EAP.

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities for Promoting a Low-risk Workplace – MSRS Managers and Supervisors – continued

- Treat all reports of violence or threats of violence seriously, regardless of the individual or behavior involved.
- Take immediate action to resolve or stabilize violent workplace situations and protect people from harm.
- Report perceived threats of violence to the MSRS Executive Director.
- Call 9-1-1 when a situation warrants.

MSRS Security Team

- Holds quarterly meetings to promote the physical security of the RSB.
- Reviews and evaluates the risk of reported internal threats.
- Reviews and evaluates the risk of potential external threats reported by Capitol Security or other partners.
- Recommends procedures to prevent and respond to threats of violence.
- Reviews and updates this plan and incident-management procedures related to this plan.
- Evaluates suggestions for plan improvements.
- Coordinates violence-prevention activity with standing Safety and Wellness Committee initiatives.
- Provides input and feedback on incident-management plans, as requested by the Executive Director, in response to a threat of violence; follows up on any security-specific concerns as directed.

MSRS Senior Leadership

- Models the importance of proactive workplace violence prevention and response.
- Provides executive support for workplace violence prevention.
- Develops workplace violence prevention and response plans and internal reporting procedures.
- Identifies and remedies gaps in violence prevention readiness.
- Updates this plan and guides the development of relevant policies and procedures, including work rules, standards of conduct, sources for assistance, dealing with difficult calls, etc.
- Administers supervision of the MSRS Security Team.
- Facilitates training enabling employees to increase their awareness of workplace violence concerns.
- Participates in the development of incident-management plans, as requested by the Executive Director, in response to a threat of violence.

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities for Promoting a Low-risk Workplace – continued

RSB Safety and Wellness Committee

Represents employees of MSRS, PERA, and TRA in addressing safety concerns and encourages health and wellness.

The committee consists of human resources staff, management, and employee representatives from each of the unions.

MSRS Human Resources

- Ensures that MSRS has an agency-specific violence-prevention plan.
- Provides a copy of this plan, with a brief summary, to new MSRS employees during onboarding.
- Leads the MSRS Safety and Wellness Committee.
- Recommends training materials to advance employee awareness of violence-in-the-workplace issues.
- When requested by the MSRS Executive Director, responds to threats of violence from an HR perspective by providing input and feedback on incident-management plans.

8.0 Time Allowance for Threat Management Planning

For threats where there is perceived to be time to plan, the Executive Director or delegate will call the following to prepare an incident-specific management plan:

- Capitol Security
- The applicable parties
- An HR representative
- The MSRS Security Team
- MSRS managers

As this plan is further developed, it will include actions taken after the resolution or occurrence of an incident, including referral to EAP, temporary relocation of an employee(s), approved time off, etc.

9.0 Firearm and Concealed Weapons Threat

In general, Minnesota law prohibits individuals from carrying firearms in public unless the individual has a valid permit to carry the weapon (Minn. Stat. §§624.714; 624.7181; 97B.045).

Minnesota's permit-to-carry law (Minn. Stat. §624.714) allows operators of private establishments that are generally open to the public to ban all firearms from their establishments, even when the firearm owner has a valid permit. Public entities do not have this legal flexibility and cannot ban firearms from their facilities.

9.0 Firearm and Concealed Weapons Threat – continued

- Minnesota’s permit-to-carry law specifically allows an employer, private or public, to “establish policies that restrict the carry or possession of firearms by its employees while acting in the course and scope of employment” (Minn. Stat. §624.714, subd. 18(a).
- MSRS prohibits any employee from carrying firearms within the workplace.

10.0 Appendix A: Reporting Guide

- If there are direct threats of physical violence, remain calm, move to a safe place, and immediately follow the guidelines in this plan for contacting supervisors, managers, or 9-1-1.
- Follow reporting procedures given in this plan during or after the incident, when it is safe to do so.
- Do not physically engage a hostile or threatening person unless to protect yourself or, if the situation allows, protect another other individual against an immediate threat of physical injury.

END OF PLAN