

APPENDIX L

WORKPLACE ANTI-VIOLENCE POLICY

Purpose

The Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency (“Agency”), in fulfilling its obligation to provide solid waste management services to the public, relies on its employees to carry out important daily activities in a conscientious manner. The Agency recognizes that workplace violence or the fear or threat of workplace violence can impair the safety and health of our employees as well as the safety of the public present at Agency Facilities where our employees work. This policy provides a program to address these important issues.

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency to support efforts to prevent workplace violence and to ensure that our employees are not subjected to fears and threats of workplace violence.

Scope

This policy has been developed in the interest of maintaining a safe working environment for all of our employees, and for the public. This policy will be applicable to all Agency employees during their work hours at all work sites of the Agency as well as at landfills, highways and other locations where bargaining unit and non-bargaining unit employees are functioning in their capacity as Agency employees.

Work Rules

This policy is in accordance with and is supported by the Agency’s previously established Agency Work Rules, including but not limited to:

- Work Rule No. 4 – Distracting or interfering with other employees or supervisors
- Work Rule No. 10 – Abusing, tampering with, defacing or unauthorized destruction of Agency property or records
- Work Rule No. 11 – Using profane or abusive language in an insulting manner towards fellow employees or making false or malicious statements concerning any employee, the Agency or its processes.
- Work Rule No. 14 – Threatening, intimidating, coercing or fighting with fellow employees or supervisors on Agency property at any time.
- Work Rule No. 25 – Discourteous treatment of the public or any other conduct which does not merit the public trust.
- Work Rule No. 34 – Unauthorized possession of firearms, weapons or explosives on persons and/or on Agency premises or vehicles; and
- Work Rule No. 36 – Inability to get along with fellow employees which adversely affects operational efficiency.

Prevention is the Key to Everyone's Safety

OCRRA supports all employees taking a proactive approach to the prevention of workplace violence. Some of the observable warning signs that employees and managers should pay special attention to are the following:

- "Strange" Behavior, e.g., becoming reclusive, deteriorating appearance/hygiene, erratic behavior
- Emotional Problems, e.g., possible indications of drug/alcohol abuse, under unusual stress, depression, inappropriate emotional display
- Performance Problems, including ongoing or increasing problems with attendance or tardiness
- Interpersonal Problems, e.g., numerous conflicts, hyper-sensitivity, resentment
- Violent and Threatening Behavior, hostility, approval of the use of violence
- "At the end of his rope", e.g., indicators of impending suicide, has a plan to "solve all problems."

Report Any Potential Problem

If an OCRRA employee is concerned that a fellow employee is demonstrating some of these traits and/or other traits that lead the employee to believe could lead to work place violence, the employee should:

- Report the concern to his/her supervisor, and/or
- Report the problem to the HR Director

What Triggers Workplace Violence

Managers should be especially careful to ensure that employees are treated with respect and should be careful to reduce tensions during potential triggering events. Common triggering events include:

- Being fired, laid off or suspended
- Being passed over for promotion
- Disciplinary actions, poor performance reviews, and/or criticism from boss or coworkers
- Bank or court action (e.g., foreclosure, restraining order, custody hearing)
- Benchmark date (e.g., company anniversary, chronological age)
- Failed or spurned romance; personal crisis (e.g., divorce, death in family)

Employees Should Utilize the Services of the Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EPA) is available to all Agency full-time employees and their dependants at no cost. The EPA offers assessment, short-term counseling and referral

services. For additional information see Appendix J of the employee handbook. **It is Important to Understand the Mindset of the Hostile or Potentially Violent Person**

This type of person (troubled) has a compelling need to communicate his grievance to someone now! Even if he/she is wrong, the individual is acting on perceptions that are real to him/her. In the overwhelming number of cases, the person just wants fairness.

Practice "Active Listening"

Stop what you are doing and give the troubled person your full attention. Listen to what is really being said. Use silence and paraphrasing. Ask clarifying, open-ended questions.

Build Trust and Provide Help. Avoid Confrontation

Be calm, courteous, respectful and patient; open and honest. Never belittle, embarrass or verbally attack a hostile or troubled person.

Allow a Total Airing of the Grievance Without Comment or Judgment

Make eye contact (but don't stare). Allow verbal venting of emotion. Let the person have his/her say (not necessarily his way). Ignore challenges and insults – don't take it personally; redirect attention to the real issue.

Allow the Aggrieved Party to Suggest a Solution

A troubled person will more readily agree to a resolution that he/she helped formulate. And it might surprise you that the person's suggestion may be very reasonable.

Move Toward a Win-Win Resolution

Preserve the individual's dignity. Switch the focus from what you can't do toward what you can. With the troubled person's permission, call in additional resources – e.g., supervisor, Human Resources, Employee Assistance Program, or, if necessary, Police.

Disciplinary Procedures

Employees are expected to perform in accordance with all Agency Work Rules, policies and directives as promulgated by the Executive Director and/or the unit director. A copy of the Work Rules is attached as Appendix C of the employee handbook.

Failure to observe such Rules will be considered misconduct. Disciplinary action for Work Rule violations will be taken in accordance with Civil Service Law Section 75, for non-represented employees, and in accordance with the Labor Agreement for represented employees.