

# UConn HEALTH

POLICY NUMBER 2017-02

June 13, 2017

## **POLICY: WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

**PURPOSE:** This policy communicates the meaning of “workplace violence”, defines prohibited conduct and establishes potential consequences for violations. Additionally, the policy provides direction on how to report incidents and offers sources of assistance and support to those impacted by workplace violence.

**BACKGROUND:** The safety and security of its workforce is of primary importance to UConn Health. Executive Order 16, issued by the Governor of the State of Connecticut in 1999 establishes a zero tolerance policy for workplace violence for all state agencies and universities. The entire policy is accessible at <http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/olr/wpv/exc16.pdf>.

Workplace Violence is defined as “any physical assault, threatening behavior or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting. It includes, but is not limited to, beatings, stabbings, suicides, rapes, near suicides, psychological traumas, such as threats, obscene phone calls, an intimidating presence, and harassment of any nature such as being followed, sworn, or shouted at”.<sup>1</sup>

**SCOPE:** This policy applies to all members of the UConn Health workforce, including but not limited to employees (faculty and staff), students, volunteers, vendors, contractors and persons permitted to work on UConn Health premises, satellite locations and during sponsored off-site activities. For purposes of this policy, premises are defined as any property or buildings owned by UConn Health, or any areas under its control or operation, which may include leased facilities, parking areas, garages, access roads and state vehicles.

**POLICY STATEMENT:** UConn Health takes any act of violence seriously and prohibits all conduct, either verbal or physical, that is abusive, threatening, intimidating or demeaning. The prevention of workplace violence is everyone’s responsibility. It is expected that UConn Health employees will maintain a workplace atmosphere of mutual respect and civility.

No person covered by this policy may engage in conduct intended to threaten, intimidate or harass any individual. No person covered by this policy may possess a weapon or dangerous instrument while at a UConn Health worksite unless required to do so as a component of their job. Any such weapon or dangerous instrument will be confiscated and turned over to the appropriate law enforcement authorities; there is no reasonable expectation of privacy with respect to these items. No person covered by this policy may use, attempt to use, or threaten to use a weapon or dangerous instrument. No person covered by this policy may cause or threaten to cause death or physical injury to any individual while at UConn Health premises. Consistent

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<sup>1</sup> National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

with state regulations <sup>2</sup> offensive or abusive conduct toward the public, co-workers, inmates, patients or clients of State institutions or facilities is forbidden and may be just cause for disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Additionally the [University Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Related Interpersonal Violence](#) defines and addresses prohibited conduct including sexual and gender-based harassment, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, intimate partner violence, stalking, complicity, retaliation and inappropriate amorous relationships.

## DEFINITIONS:

**Weapon:** any firearm including a BB gun, blackjack, metal or brass knuckles, or any dirk knife, or any switch knife, or any knife having an automatic spring release device having a blade of over one and one half inches in length, or stiletto, or any knife the edged portion of the blade of which is four inches or more in length, any police baton or nightstick or any martial arts weapon or electronic defense weapon.

**Dangerous instrument:** any instrument, article, or substance that, under the circumstances, is capable of causing death or serious physical injury.

## EMERGENCIES

**In the event of an EMERGENCY, police must be contacted immediately.** A situation is an “emergency” if an injury has occurred or there is an immediate threat of physical harm or injury.

- Farmington campus, call ext. 7777 or 911 from a cell phone.
- All off-campus locations and cell phones, call 911.

## REPORTING SUSPECTED VIOLATIONS

Any act or incident that fits the definition of workplace violence outlined in this policy must be reported immediately. The [Workplace Violence Incident Report Form](#) must be submitted for all incidents, regardless of whether any injury is sustained.

Even without a specific threat, all members of the workforce must report any behavior regarded as potentially threatening, violent or that could endanger the health and safety of others. The worker, a witness, or supervisor may report the incident, but ultimately it is the responsibility of the manager of that area to assure that the incident is reported.

Any supervisor or manager who receives a complaint, witnesses or becomes aware of potential workplace violence must report it to Human Resources. Ignoring such conduct is not acceptable and may subject the supervisor or manager to disciplinary action. Further, he/she must address any disruptive workplace behavior in an effort to prevent potential escalation of conduct.

## INVESTIGATION AND CORRECTIVE ACTION

- UConn Health will promptly investigate all reports of workplace violence allegations.
- All members of the workforce are expected to cooperate fully in all such investigations.

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<sup>2</sup> CGS Chapter 67-5-240 Appendix J

- Any worker suspected of violating this policy may be placed on administrative leave pending the results of the investigation.
- A worker may be immediately removed from the workplace for suspected violation of this policy.
- If claims are substantiated, or if it is found that an employee has otherwise violated this policy, the worker may be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal.
- Where the situation warrants, UConn Health will request that the UConn Health Police Department/local law enforcement become involved in the investigation of the matter, and may seek prosecution of conduct that violates the law.

## PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

### State Agency Responsibilities

The [State of CT Violence in the Workplace Policy and Procedures Manual](#) provides direction to state agencies in preventing and/or responding to incidents or threats of workplace violence.

In accordance with the manual, UConn Health has established a **Threat Assessment Team** to promote awareness of campus safety and security, evaluate the potential for violence, and respond to situations that may involve behavioral concerns, threats, intimidation, or acts of violence. The Team will meet at least twice per year to identify and analyze any apparent trends in incidents relating to particular units, jobs, activities, etc. and make recommendations as appropriate. The team will also assist Human Resources with record keeping and reporting requirements. Members may include:

- UConn Health Police Department –Chief of Police or designee
- Vice President of Human Resources or designee
- Psychiatrist or Psychologist (in advisory capacity)
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Legal Counsel
- Ad Hoc manager (the manager of the person reporting the incident or a designee)

### Protections for Health Care Employees

Connecticut law<sup>3</sup> establishes additional responsibilities for the protection of health care employees, including adjustments to patient care assignments and reporting. While the law narrowly applies to certain health care institutions, UConn Health extends protections to all health care employees to the extent practicable.

Consistent with the law, a “health care employee” is a person either directly or indirectly employed by or volunteering for the institution who:

- (1) Is involved in direct patient care; or
- (2) Has direct contact with a patient or the patient’s family when (a) collecting or processing information needed for patient forms or documentation or (b) escorting or directing a patient or the patient’s family on the facility’s premises.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap\\_368v.htm](https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_368v.htm)

To the extent practicable, managers will adjust patient care assignments when requested, so that no health care employee is required to care for a patient who has intentionally physically abused or threatened him/her.

- Patient behavior that is a direct manifestation of the patient's condition or disability is not considered intentional physical abuse or threatening of an employee.
- If reassignment is not practicable, the health care employee may request that a second employee be present when caring for such patient(s). When requested, the manager will assign a second employee to be present.

UConn Health has formed a **Workplace Violence Prevention Committee** to address the health and safety of health care employees, specifically at John Dempsey Hospital. The Committee is comprised of representatives from administration, physicians, nursing, police and other direct patient care staff. At least fifty percent (50%) of the members will be non-management employees. Committee responsibilities include:

- Quarterly meetings with minutes made available through Clinical Operations Administration and the Nursing Supervisor's Office.
- Annual security risk assessment and a written workplace violence prevention and response plan by January 1 of each year.

#### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Employees will be apprised of this policy, how to report workplace violence incidents and the resources available to respond to concerns. Through employee and student orientation programs and materials, the UConn Health website, system-wide emails and communication with contractors, the widest possible distribution will be undertaken.

#### RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING

Human Resources will maintain completed Workplace Violence Incident Report Forms.

UConn Health shall provide information, on a biannual basis, the frequency, character, and resolution of workplace violence incidents to the Department of Administrative Services and Statewide Security Management Council.

UConn Health will report annually to the Department of Public Health, the number and location of workplace violence incidents occurring in its licensed health care facilities, which include John Dempsey Hospital and the School of Dental Medicine Outpatient Clinics.

Violations of this policy should be reported to Human Resources. Human Resources will maintain completed copies of the Workplace Violence Incident Report Forms.

#### Related References and Resources

- [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)
- [Executive Order 16, August 1999](#)
- [State of Connecticut Violence in the Workplace Policy and Procedures Manual \(Rev. April 2012\)](#)
- [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#)

- [University Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Related Interpersonal Violence](#)
- [UConn Health Work life](#)
- [Connecticut General Statutes §19a-490q\(b\)](#)

Andrew Agwunobi (Signed)

6/30/17

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**Andrew Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A.**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Executive Vice President for Health Affairs**

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**Date**

**New Policy:** 6/13/2017

Significant portions of this policy taken from the following policies which are now retired:

- UConn Health policy 2004-07 Workplace Violence Prevention 9/98. Revised 1/99, 10/04, 9/29/08, 3/11/14.
- JDH Hospital Administrative Manual policy 02-029 Healthcare Worker Workplace Violence and the Prevention of Workplace Violence Committee 10/11. Reviewed 7/14.