



Career Opportunity Development, Inc.

Violence Prevention Plan

Revised: March 2023

Approved by Linda L. Carney, President/CEO

Violence In The Workplace

Violence in the workplace can be characterized as any threatening behavior, assault, or physical attack that can happen to anyone. Violence may take the form of harassing or intimidating behavior, inappropriate or unwanted sexual conduct, or possessing a weapon. Physical gestures, spoken words, and written remarks, including inappropriate or unwanted sexual advances, can also be considered forms of workplace violence.

Violence Prevention Policy

Organizations with Violence Prevention Plans are better prepared and equipped to identify and avert potential problems. CODI shall routinely promote a work environment where safety and security of individuals served and employed is a top priority. Given the degree of violence in society today, populations served, and environments in which we provide services, we further recognize the need to be aware of the possibility of violent occurrences. Additionally, we may encounter persons who may demonstrate intimidating, aggressive, or impulsive behavior, creating a dangerous or volatile environment. Due to the nature of those we serve outcomes are often unpredictable therefore, staff should consistently be aware of their environment, surroundings, and situations. The following information provides staff with practices to minimize risk.

Conduct that violates this policy may lead to disciplinary action, ranging from a written warning to staff termination.

1. **Zero Tolerance** - CODI shall not tolerate threatening, violent, or assaultive behavior, including:
 - Sexual assault, stalking, unwanted touching, exhibitionism, verbal harassment, or abuse
 - Inappropriate physical contact, disorderly conduct, or fighting
 - Acting aggressively, bullying, intimidating, or scaring others
 - Talking or joking about violent activities, such as causing harm to someone, something, or self
2. **No Weapons** - Regardless of obtaining a permit to carry a registered firearm, CODI prohibits and has zero tolerance for weapons on property owned, leased, or rented by the organization, including vehicles. Weapons such as knives or any other items considered dangerous are also prohibited.

Warning Signs of Violent Behavior

Each of us has an equally important role in workplace violence prevention. It is essential to be aware of warning signs of a potentially violent situation.

Warning signs of violent behavior may include:

- Sudden change in disposition, quality of work, habits, dress, or overall appearance or demeanor
 - Little tolerance of others
 - Verbally or physically intimidating others
 - Threatening to harm self or others
 - Displaying destructive behaviors
 - Blaming others for failures or disappointments
 - Sullen or withdrawn
 - Obsessing over violence or weapons
 - Recent job loss with no viable options
 - Feeling persecuted by others
 - Holding grudges or having poor relations with coworkers
 - Experiencing a domestic problem
 - Using statements indicating desperation (over family, financial, and other personal issues) to the point of suicide
 - Suicide ideations
 - History of violence or erratic behavior
3. **Report All Incidents** - Staff must immediately report witnessed or suspected concerns by submitting a Critical/Unusual Incident Report (CIR/UIR).

If during the provision of services in the workplace or community staff, consumer, volunteer, or stakeholder experiences sexual violence (including stalking, unwanted touching, exhibitionism, verbal harassment/abuse, or physically threatened by another individual) as soon as possible, the individual should remove themselves from the situation. Call for help (vocally or by phone), and tell another staff or bystander to call 911 if unable to do so.

Even if the situation has been addressed and resolved, staff must report workplace violence to their supervisor. Supervisor shall inform President/CEO or Director of Risk Management (DRM) promptly of complaints, acts, or threats of violence. After reporting any complaint or incident, all parties shall make every effort to maintain confidentiality.

General Safety Precautions

To maximize safety in the workplace, staff must adhere to the following safety precautions:

- Do not permit unauthorized person access to unauthorized areas.
- Employees suspended, removed from duties pending investigation, or terminated, are not allowed on CODI property.
- Keep entrance and exit doors locked when not in use. Do not prop doors open.
- Be aware of your position in your office. Arrange furniture to prevent employee entrapment.
- Remove items such as scissors, letter openers, knives, etc., that could be used as weapons from view.
- Do not close any interior door if there is a question concerning behavior or ability to tolerate such a setting.
- Notify supervisor as soon as possible of potential problems or if you see the potential for an incident escalating into a crisis.
- Do not attempt to approach the individual.
- Remain calm and composed.
- If a consumer or staff threatens to harm another verbally or with a weapon, 911 shall immediately be called to perform a psychiatric evaluation.
- If it is believed there is an impending threat, pictures of Senior Leadership Team and Board of Directors will be temporarily removed from website for two weeks or until threat resolves.

901 Location

- Doors to front and rear entrances are locked and equipped with a camera and intercom system. Staff reporting to 901 location are issued a mobile pass or sledge card.

- Interior doors are equipped with an access code keypad. Staff reporting to 901 are given the access code. Access code is not to be given to unauthorized persons. Keypad is to be covered while entering code. Do not allow anyone to enter with you unless positive they are a current employee.
- Door must lock behind staff upon entering.
- Unauthorized guests are not allowed to enter. All visitors must sign in at the front reception area, obtain a visitor's badge, and enter facility via reception area.
- Visitors must be screened by applicable staff before entering building.
- Visitors, including consumers, shall be escorted to and from appointments or meetings throughout facility.
- Outsource Center doors are to remain locked at all times. Outsource Center guests and visitors must use the main entrance and follow sign-in procedures.
- Doors are numbered. In an emergency, staff shall provide door number to which emergency responder should report.

Residences

Direct care staff shall:

- Develop a rapport with consumer(s), when possible, before a crisis occurs.
- Practice active listening. Restate what consumer said so consumer is aware of staff understanding.
- Ignore questions that may trigger an emotional response.
- Encourage consumers to write a crisis plan with their Caseworker before crisis.
- Allow visitors in common areas only.
- Keep cordless phone and facility keys on person at all times. *Please refer to CODI's Key Security Policy for further information.*
- If two staff members are present during an emergency, one staff shall contact 911 while the other maintains consumers' safety. Staff should ask other consumers for assistance while managing the emergency if one staff member is present.

- If staff office has a door, the door shall be kept closed and locked when staff is not in the office.
- Allow consumer(s) to pace or vent. Respect personal space. Do not attempt to physically stop consumer from leaving the premises.
- Follow Residential On-Call Support and Crisis Intervention Universal SOP to know when and whom to call for assistance.
- **Call 911** if feeling threatened or fearful.

Responsibilities

DRM is responsible for implementing this plan. DRM shall ensure appropriate investigation and follow-up of alleged incidents of violence.

Director of Quality Improvement (DQI) is responsible for investigating allegations of workplace-related incidents, including sexual violence. DQI shall follow procedures outlined in Investigation Policy. All staff must cooperate with investigation. Additional actions may be taken up to and including termination of staff if the investigation finds staff to have committed an act of workplace or sexual violence.

New hires are required to review Violence Prevention Plan. Also, all direct care staff shall review Violence Prevention Plan through Relias annually.

Coping With Threats and Violence

In a hostile or violent occurrence, immediately call 911; notify President/CEO or DRM. If neither of these individuals is available, contact a Leadership Team member. Provide police with a description of the threatening individual, exact location, and as many details as possible. Unaffected persons are advised to remain in a safe area with doors locked if possible unless staff believes they can safely exit the premises.

For an angry or hostile situation

- If you feel there is a threat of imminent danger, call 911.
- Stay calm and listen attentively. Speak slowly, softly, and deliberately.
- Keep talking, and if you believe it is safe to do so, follow instructions from the person.

- Scan affected area for a possible escape route.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Be courteous and patient.
- Avoid commands, contradictions, directing, or teaching behavior.
- Provide options and set clear boundaries.
- Ask others (consumers or fellow employees) to leave the area.
- Avoid physical movements or gestures.
- Ask permission to use the phone to contact supervisor.
- If in an agency facility, signal a supervisor or coworker that help is needed using the code word “MR. GREEN” and location of the perpetrator.
- 901 location is equipped with panic buttons in Outsource Center, Administrative, and PRI reception areas. If police intervention is needed, press both red buttons on the closest box. A silent alarm will sound in the accounting department, and 911 shall be called.
- CODI cell phones are preprogrammed to contact police. Press number 9, then send key and leave the line open (do not hang up). Phone will automatically dial 911.
- Stall for time.
- Do not risk harm to self or others.
- Wait for a safe chance to escape.
- Complete a CIR/UIR when out of crisis.

Telephone Threats

- Keep calm, and keep talking. Do not hang up.
- Ask caller to repeat message if necessary and write it down.
- Signal a coworker to call 911 and notify President/CEO or DRM in their absence. If neither is available, contact Leadership Team member.
- Complete a CIR/UIR when out of crisis.

Field Work

- If you feel there is a threat of imminent danger, call 911.
- Always clock in and out and notify supervisor of any unplanned change in schedule.
- If planning to return after 5 pm, move personal vehicle to the front of building near lighting and park CODI vehicle next to personal vehicle upon return.
- Wear CODI badge so it is visible to others.
- Stay alert; know exactly where you are going and how to get there.
- Travel on main roads and know the location of police stations and gas stations.
- Keep vehicle doors locked and windows rolled up.
- Do not pick up strangers, prior consumers, or individuals who look familiar, no matter how harmless they look.
- Do not go to vehicle if someone is “hanging around.”
- Look around vehicle and in back seat before getting in to ensure no one is hiding.
- If a violent or dangerous situation occurs while transporting a consumer, pull over as soon as it is safe and attempt to de-escalate the situation. Call 911 if necessary.
- Call supervisor from a safe spot to debrief them before driving after a difficult or upsetting situation.
- At any time you believe you are in danger, call 911.
- Complete CIR/UIR when out of crisis.

If staff suspects they are being followed while driving

- Stay calm.
- Do not drive directly home or to the office. (This prevents a possible assailant from learning where you live and work.) Instead, drive to the nearest police station or safe, well-lit, well-traveled area and call 911.
- Take time to observe and note the vehicle’s details, including color, make, model, license plate number, description of the occupant(s), and the direction the vehicle is traveling.
- Complete CIR/UIR when out of crisis.

Home Visits

- If warning signs of violent behavior are present, two staff members shall conduct safety assessment.
- In neighborhoods where violence is common, schedule home visits during daylight hours.
- Park as close as possible to destination.
- If at night, try to park under or near a street light.
- Park leaving enough room to pull out of space easily and, if possible, back into a space in a parking lot.
- Lock vehicle upon exiting.
- Do not park in front of a crowd, especially if they seem rowdy or gang-involved.
- Assess the situation - if the environment seems dangerous, leave and reschedule visit.
- Dress appropriately by wearing comfortable clothing, not tight-fitting or provocative. Wear flat shoes, not high heels. Do not wear expensive or flashy jewelry. Avoid bringing a purse or large sums of money.
- When approaching a resident's home, walk briskly with confidence and purpose. Do not run unless threatened. Pay attention to others who are ahead and behind when walking. Should you feel followed, cross the street. Stay alert, keep head up, and observe surroundings. Do not get "lost in thought."
- Be aware of potentially dangerous people and places. Make eye contact with strangers sparingly and avoid staring. Do not stop to give change and decline to answer questions politely while walking directly to your destination. It is a good idea to keep vehicle keys in hand. Leave valuables out of sight. Carry small bills as "give up" in case of robbery.
- Do not ask a group of people for directions. Leave immediately if you sense danger or feel unsafe; go to a police station or safe, well-lit, well-traveled area and call 911.
- Do not get into an empty elevator with a stranger. If uncomfortable for any reason, get off. Stand near the control panel. If attacked, ring the alarm and hit as many floor buttons as possible.
- Listen before knocking at residence for indications of agitation or violence. Do not enter home of someone who exhibits upset or agitated behavior.

- Always knock and announce yourself. Wait until resident opens the door and invites entry.
- Observe and notice the location of doors and exits and plan a possible escape route should this become necessary.
- Notice potential weapons, and remember almost anything may be a potential threat and used as a weapon.
- Respect resident's personal, physical, and emotional space. Do not "crowd" or touch resident, especially if they seem upset or agitated.
- Ask resident how they prefer to be addressed (Mr. or Mrs. or first name or nonbinary pronoun) and be respectful.
- Allow resident to set the pace of activity and ask permission for each activity. If conducting an interview or an assessment, "actively listen" to all statements.
- Be aware of physical cues signaling an escalation in agitated behavior. If present, remain standing to use a stance that supports a quick departure. Be aware of the resident's and your body language at all times.
- Complete CIR/UIR when out of crisis.

Victims of Domestic Violence

Victims of domestic violence or who have been threatened with violence and believe there is the slightest chance the violence may extend into the workplace must notify their supervisor, President/CEO or DRM. Confidentiality shall be maintained to the fullest extent possible. Notification shall include: copy of restraining order (if applicable) and accused person's picture (if available). If not available, staff shall provide a verbal description. Picture of accused or description shall be discretely posted near primary entryways (Outsource Center and Administration) to assist staff in identifying a possible threat. Police are to be notified immediately should an individual fitting the description be seen on or near company property. Unpaid leave is available for victims of domestic violence. *Please refer to CODI's NJ Safe Act Policy for further information.*

Protection Against Retaliation

CODI shall maintain confidentiality of workplace violence investigations to the fullest extent possible. Retaliation against anyone who made a complaint of workplace violence, has reported witnessing workplace violence, or has been involved in reporting or responding to workplace violence violates this policy and is subject to discipline. CODI will not retaliate against a survivor of an incident if they request leave, counseling, or reasonable accommodation.

Post Crisis Review

Within five days of crisis, Director of Quality Improvement (DQI) shall convene a team of applicable departmental personnel to review incident. *Please refer to CODI's Post-Crisis Review Policy for further information.*

Residential Clinical Assessments

To reduce the potential for violence, individuals referred for services shall be assessed to determine history of violence, mental status, and the likelihood of future violence. Histories, including records of hospitalization, psychiatric evaluations, etc., shall be reviewed by the Residential Admissions Team. Team shall identify individuals not eligible for enrollment or re-enrollment due to a history of serious acts of violence. Pre-placement visits shall be utilized as a means of supplementing assessment process.

With assistance from clinical staff, residential staff shall routinely assess residents to evaluate mental status. If there is a determined need for a resident to undergo a psychiatric evaluation or a medication assessment, staff shall assist consumer in linking with a psychiatric provider. If consumer exhibits behaviors indicating danger to self or others, staff shall contact 911.