

University Policy: Campus Violence Prevention

Policy Category: Operational Policies: Public Safety and Environmental Health and Safety

Subject: Assessment of violent or threatening behavior on campus.

Office Responsible for Review of this Policy: Office of the President

Procedures: Risk Assessment Procedures

Related University Policies: Policy on Reporting Suspected Misconduct (Whistleblower Policy), Sexual Harassment Policy, Student Code of Conduct, and Emergency Management Policy

I. Scope

This policy applies to all faculty, staff, and students (collectively “AU Community Members”) and visitors.

II. Policy Statement

American University considers the safety and security of its students, faculty, staff, and campus community its highest priority. To ensure an atmosphere that fosters and promotes the University’s educational mission, AU is committed to maintaining a safe environment free of violence and threats of violence: on-campus, in AU work-sites, classrooms, off-site University locations, and other places where members of the community are engaged in University activities. **American University does not tolerate, condone, nor ignore any type of campus violence committed by or against members of the University community.** Faculty, staff, students, and visitors are prohibited from engaging in any violent or threatening behavior. Individuals who engage in violent or threatening behavior will be subject to discipline, expulsion from campus, and/or criminal prosecution. No person shall be retaliated against for reporting campus violence. Retaliation can be reported under the provisions of the American University Policy on Reporting Suspected Misconduct (Whistleblower Policy), which states that staff reports may be filed with: Employee Relations; faculty report may be filed with the Dean of Academic Affairs; and, student reports may be filed with the Dean of Students.

III. Definitions

Violent or Threatening Behavior:

- acts or threats which may cause an individual to fear for his/her or others' health or safety;
- acts or threats which may cause an individual to fear for the safety or security of property belonging to him or her, or the University;
- threatening, harassing, abusive or intimidating behavior;
- reckless conduct or intentional disregard for the physical safety or well being of others; and
- any other conduct, either physical or verbal, that a reasonable person would perceive as constituting a threat of violent behavior.

IV. Responsibilities

A. General. Safety and security at the University is the responsibility of each person on campus. Any AU Community Member or visitor who is subjected to, witnesses or has knowledge of actions that could be perceived as violent behavior or has reason to believe that such acts may occur, must report such actions to the appropriate office.

- i. For actual or imminent Violent or Threatening Behavior, immediately call Public Safety at extension 2527.**

Examples of actual or imminent violent behavior include but are not limited to:

- fighting, physical assault, battery
- stalking
- intentionally destroying property
- making statements about killing or harming self or others
- making hate statements
- making statements that they will go get a weapon
- sabotaging another's work or project
- possessing a gun, knife, or other instrument that could cause harm
- exhibiting rage, anger, or generally being out of control as exemplified by yelling, screaming, flailing arms, damaging property, or throwing dangerous objects.

- ii. For threats of Violent or Threatening Behavior or behavior short of actual or imminent Violent or Threatening Behavior, call:**

For staff – call Employee Relations at extension 2607

For faculty – call Dean of Academic Affairs at extension 2125
For students – call Dean of Students at extension 3300.
For visitors – call Public Safety extension 2527.

In all cases, the head of the department or unit where the prohibited behavior is occurring should also be informed. All criminal conduct must be immediately reported to the Public Safety Office.

B. Classroom Conduct and the Faculty. In the event that students in the classroom or academic setting display threatening behavior, faculty and teaching assistants have the authority to take appropriate action. These actions may include asking the individual to stop what he or she is doing, asking the student to leave the classroom or area, or dismissing the class. These situations should be reported immediately to the faculty member's academic unit dean and the Dean of Students. In situations where there is actual or imminent violent behavior, the faculty member should call Public Safety immediately.

C. Violence Prevention Team (VPT). There shall be a standing Violence Prevention Team appointed by the University President. Members are personnel from the following units: Risk Management Department, Public Safety Department, Office of the Provost, Office of Campus Life, Human Resources / Employee Relations, University Media Relations Office, and other relevant units. The VPT acts independently in accordance with this policy.

The VPT's main charge is to oversee the implementation of this policy. In addition, the VPT will:

- develop procedures for risk assessment of campus violence;
- respond to and manage actual or threatened campus violence incidents. The VPT will not respond to incidents that are appropriately managed at the departmental or unit level, however will meet in response to particularly serious acts or threats that are referred by unit or department heads. The VPT will be activated upon notice of an incident that may give rise to an occurrence of violence as described above by one of the core members of the team. The team will attempt to meet as soon as possible and begin taking appropriate steps. The VPT will consider all situational aspects including criminal, civil, health, and effects on working or academic conditions. The VPT will serve as a central point of communication and cooperate with appropriate department heads, administrators, and managers;
- monitor potential perpetrators of violence;
- conduct investigations as deemed appropriate;
- develop violence prevention education materials (such as guidelines, handbooks, or procedures) that will inform the University community and reduce campus violence risks;

- assist in the development of violence prevention training programs for faculty and staff in areas such as recognizing warning signs of violence, de-escalating conflict, and proactive violence prevention strategies that can be used by AU Community Members.

V. Effective Date:

December 15, 2008; Last revised October 2010

VI. SIGNATURE, DATE, AND APPROVAL

This policy needs to be signed by the appropriate officer (listed below) before it is considered approved

Approved:

This document was approved and signed by

**Cornelius Kerwin
President**

**Scott Bass
Provost**

**Donald Myers
Vice President of Finance and Treasurer**

**Gail Hanson
Vice President of Campus Life**