



## **ZERO TOLERANCE FOR WORKPLACE VIOLENCE**

The City of Providence (“City”) is committed to preventing workplace violence and to maintaining a safe, productive and harmonious work environment for its employees and citizens. The City has zero tolerance for any and all forms of violence and threats or overtures of violence, express or implied. Accordingly, the City adopts the following guidelines and policies to deal with intimidation, harassment or other threats of actual violence that may occur onsite or offsite and which bear a reasonable nexus to employment with the City and the City’s workplace environment.

### **Applicability**

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All full- and part-time, active employees, elected officials and volunteers are covered under this policy.

### **Prohibited Conduct**

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All employees, elected officials, volunteers, customers, visitors, vendors and business associates should be treated with courtesy and respect at all times. Employees will refrain from fighting, “road rage,” “horseplay” or other conduct that may be dangerous to others. Conduct that threatens, intimidates or coerces another employee, elected official, volunteer, visitor, customer, vendor or business associate will not be tolerated. The City resources may not be used to threaten, stalk or harass anyone at or outside the workplace. The City treats threats coming from an abusive personal relationship as it does other forms of violence.

Indirect or direct threats or other expressions of violence, any overtures of violence, incidents of actual violence and suspicious activities are strictly prohibited, and shall be reported as soon as possible to a supervisor, the City’s police department, security personnel, human resources (HR), or any member of management. When so reporting, the employee should be as specific and detailed as possible. Employees should not place themselves in peril, nor should they attempt to intercede during an incident.

Employees shall promptly inform the HR department of any protective or restraining order that they have obtained that lists the workplace as a protected area. Employees are encouraged to report safety concerns with regard to intimate partner violence. The City will not retaliate against employees making good-faith reports. The City is committed to supporting victims of intimate partner violence by providing referrals to the City’s employee assistance program and community resources and providing time off for reasons related to intimate partner violence.

### **\*Definitions of Prohibited Behaviors (\*intended to be general and not exclusive)**

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**Workplace violence** includes, but is not limited to: intimidation, bullying, stalking, explicit and implicit threats, physical attack, property damage, or domestic and family violence. This includes acts of violence committed by or against City employees, citizens, volunteers, visitors, or vendors.

**Bullying** is unwanted offensive and malicious behavior that undermines an individual or group through persistently negative attacks. The behavior may include an element of vindictiveness, and may be intended or unintended to have the effect to undermine, patronize, humiliate, intimidate or demean the recipient.

**Intimidation** includes but is not limited to unwarranted behavior intended to frighten, coerce, or induce duress in others or having the effect thereof.

**Physical attack** is unwanted or hostile physical contact including but not limited to touching, hitting, fighting, shoving, restraining, or throwing objects.

**Property damage** is intentional damage to property and includes property owned by the City or by employees, elected officials, volunteers, visitors or vendors.

**Stalking** involves harassing or pestering an individual in person, in writing, by telephone or by electronic format. Stalking also involves following an individual, spying on them, alarming the recipient, or causing them distress and may involve physical violence or the fear of physical violence. Stalking may also include any elements set forth in the Rhode Island criminal law prohibiting such behavior.

**Threat** is verbal or non-verbal behavior, whether intended or unintended, conveying the infliction of physical or mental harm to an employee or an employee's family, friends or property. A behavior constitutes a threat without regard to whether the party communicating or expressing the threat has the present ability to carry out the threat, and without regard to whether the behavior, communication or expression is contingent, conditional, or future.

**Domestic and Family Violence** is the use of abusive or violent behavior, including threats and intimidation, between people who have an ongoing or a prior intimate relationship (including people who are married, live together or date, or who have been married, lived together or dated) or between family members.

**Weapons** are any objects that may be used to intimidate, attack, or injure another person or to damage property. Objects understood to have a primary function as a weapon are not allowed on City property unless expressly authorized under this policy or under state law.

**Road rage** is aggressive or angry behavior by a driver of an automobile or other road vehicle. Such behavior might include rude gestures, verbal insults, deliberately driving in an unsafe or threatening manner, or making threats.

### **Investigations and Enforcement**

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The City will promptly and thoroughly investigate all reports of threats of violence or incidents of actual violence and of suspicious activities. The identity of the individual making a report will be protected as much as possible. The City will not retaliate against employees making good-faith reports of violence, threats or suspicious individuals or activities. To maintain workplace safety and the integrity of its investigation, the City may immediately suspend employees suspected of workplace violence or threats of violence, either with or without pay, pending investigation. Any delay in the suspension of an employee shall not be construed to vitiate the zero tolerance nature of this policy.

It is a violation of this policy to:

- Engage in workplace violence as defined by this policy;
- Possess, use, or threaten to use an unauthorized weapon as defined by this policy;
- Misuse authority vested to any employee of the City in such a way that it violates this policy;
- Engage in off-duty violent conduct that has a potential or actual adverse impact on the City and its citizens, employees, elected officials, volunteers, visitors, or vendors.

A violation of this policy shall be considered unacceptable personal conduct as provided in the disciplinary policies applicable to the employee's appointment type. Acts of violence, as defined herein or

as commonly understood by reasonably prudent people, shall be deemed just cause for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

The City encourages employees to bring their disputes to the attention of their supervisors or the HR department before the situation escalates. The City will not discipline employees for raising such concerns. An act of off-duty violent conduct may be covered by this policy and may also be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

### **Employee Responsibilities**

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- Refrain from making threats or committing any acts of violence against any person in any City work place.
- Learn to recognize and respond to behaviors by potential perpetrators that may indicate a risk of violence.
- Report to supervisor any violent or threatening behavior whether witnessed, received or told, by another person.
- Provide the supervisor and HR with a copy of a protective or restraining order, which lists City premises as a protected area which such an order is received.
- Seek counseling from the City's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or other health care providers when appropriate to address any personal problems that could elicit violent thoughts or behavior.
- Comply with all treatment recommendations made by the EAP or other health care providers and all conditions of MOA's and Performance Improvement Plans.