



Workplace Violence Policy

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1. **Purpose**

Buncombe County Government (County) is committed to establishing and promoting a safe and secure working environment for all staff and members of the public, free of workplace violence, intimidation, and harassment. It is further committed to proactively identifying circumstances and threats that may pose risks to the security of staff and clients within the community and safeguarding them and the physical resources of the County. The purpose of this policy is to codify and standardize efforts to help employees identify, report, assess, and mitigate security incidents and threats that impact the security of County staff.

2. **Applicability**

This policy applies to all Buncombe County departments and employees unless there is a conflict with GS 153A-103 related to hiring, discharging, and supervising employees. Such exclusion is noted at the end of this policy. Otherwise, departments may adopt and enforce policies that are more restrictive than County Policy.

3. **Policy**

3.1. **Zero Tolerance**

- 3.1.1. The County will not tolerate threats, intimidation, coercion, or acts of violence committed by or against County employees, or members of the public, while on Buncombe County property or while performing County business at other locations.
- 3.1.2. County resources may not be used to threaten, stalk, or harass anyone at the workplace or outside of the workplace.
- 3.1.3. Any employee found to be responsible for threats, actual violence, or other conduct that is in violation of these guidelines may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment in accordance with the County's disciplinary policy and procedures.

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3.2. Identification of Security Incidents

- 3.2.1. The appraisal of risk is done through the County's Threat Assessment Program (TAP), which focuses on actions, behaviors, communications, and specific circumstances that might suggest an individual's intent to or likelihood to engage in disruptive, destructive, or violent behavior. The TAP is dependent upon unbiased facts, evidence of behavior, and anticipated behavior relevant to specific situations.
- 3.2.2. The first component of the TAP is properly identifying and classifying a Security Incident. Significant disruptions of a workspace, anticipated points of escalation and direct or implied threats should all be reported as security incidents. The following is a list of warning signs, red flags, and threats that should automatically prompt staff to submit a Security Incident Report (SIR).
 - Excessive Yelling or disruption of a workspace
 - Threatening Body Language
 - Suspicious Activity
 - Death Threats
 - Direct and Implied Threats (both first-hand and second-hand)
 - Any reference to violence
 - Any display of a weapon, or allusion to a weapon
 - Hate Speech or prejudicial language
 - Stalking, both direct and virtual
 - Aggressive actions with a motor vehicle
 - Harassment via phone, email, or social media

3.3. Reporting of Security Incidents

- 3.3.1. If an employee witnesses or made aware of indirect or direct threats of violence, incidents of actual violence, or suspicious individuals or activities, the incident should be reported immediately to a supervisor and the Security Incident Report must be completed as soon as it is possible.
- 3.3.2. If there is reasonable suspicion that an employee, member of the public, or visitor is carrying a weapon or physically assaulting another individual, the employees should immediately call or text 911 and notify a supervisor. Only once the immediate threat has been addressed should staff contact the Buncombe County Security and Safety Team and complete an SIR.
- 3.3.3. De-escalation with or without the help of a supervisor or manager is permissible based on good judgement of the situation. Employees should not attempt to restrain the individual except to protect themselves or others from a life-threatening situation.
- 3.3.4. If an employee feels uncertain whether a situation should be reported, the incident should be reported out of an abundance of caution. There will be no penalty or retaliation against employees for making good-faith reports.
- 3.3.5. If an employee has a protective or restraining order that lists the workplace as a protected area, they are strongly encouraged to inform the Buncombe County Security and Safety Team as well as their supervisor as soon as possible.

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- 3.3.6. Employees are encouraged to report safety concerns regarding partner violence to law enforcement, their supervisor, Human Resources, and/or the Security and Safety Team. The County treats threats coming from personal relationships as it does other forms of violence.
- 3.3.7. Buncombe County encourages employees to bring any disputes to the attention of their supervisor, Human Resources, or the Buncombe County Security and Safety Team before the situation escalates.
- 3.3.8. When reporting a threat or incident of violence, employees should be as specific and detailed as possible and use the Security Incident Report form.
- 3.3.9. Buncombe County will not discipline or retaliate against employees making good-faith reports of violence, threats or suspicious individuals, or activities.
- 3.3.10. In instances where an employee is alleged to have engaged indirectly threatening, intimidating, or directing violent behavior towards another individual, an SIR should be completed, and the Buncombe County Security and Safety Team will consult with Legal and Human Resources prior to progressing with the investigation. Employee Relations will be consulted in these instances.

3.4. Investigation

- 3.4.1. Buncombe County will promptly and thoroughly investigate all reports of threats of violence or incidents of actual violence and of suspicious individuals or activities.
- 3.4.2. Upon submission of a SIR, the Buncombe County Security and Safety Team will decide whether it is necessary to convene a Threat Assessment Team (TAT) and what priority to give the TAT based upon the severity and urgency of the threat.
- 3.4.3. The objective of each TAT is to assess the threat, implement security restrictions and develop a comprehensive mitigation strategy. Team composition of a TAT will change for each incident. A TAT should be comprised of the following representatives, as deemed necessary by the Buncombe County Security and Safety Team:

- Public Safety Training and Security Manager
- Staff directly impacted
- Supervisor of staff directly impacted
- Law Enforcement Representative
- Legal and/or Risk Staff

The following representatives are not required in a TAT, but may be assigned to support the Threat Assessment Program by County leadership and be available for referral or consultation to the Buncombe County Security and Safety Team:

- County Human Resources representative
- County Resiliency Staff
- Appointed Departmental Security Liaison
- Equity and Human Right Office representative
- Communications and Public Engagement representative

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- 3.4.4. The identity of the individual making the report will be protected as much as possible.
- 3.4.5. To maintain workplace safety and the integrity of its investigation, Buncombe County may place employees on Administrative Paid Leave in accordance with the County's Leave policy and procedures.

3.5. Threat Mitigation and Management

- 3.5.1. A summary of the threat assessment team's narrative, with a classification of the threat, security restrictions, and mitigation strategy will be compiled and sent out by the Buncombe County Security and Safety Team to necessary individuals involved in a threat assessment.
- 3.5.2. The impacted staff and supervisor are responsible for distributing the summary information as soon as possible, but no later than 5 business days, to other staff who have a legitimate business need to know/awareness as well as ensuring the information is entered into any relevant case management systems. All employees are required to treat such information as confidential and protect the privacy of those involved.

4. Policy Non-Compliance

Employees willfully violating the terms and conditions of this policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

5. Audit

All policies for Buncombe County may be subject to audit or review as outlined in the [Internal Auditor's Statement](#).

6. Definitions

- 6.1. Buncombe County Security and Safety Team – this refers to the following list of job titles: The Public Safety Training and Security Manager, the Safety, Preparedness, and Recovery Manager, and the Safety Officer.
- 6.2. Harassment/Intimidation – includes but is not limited to, stalking, or engaging in actions intended to frighten or coerce.
- 6.3. Threat – an expression or action showing intent to inflict harm. This includes the giving of signs or warnings of violence.
- 6.4. Workplace Violence – includes but is not limited to, verbal abuse, harassment, intimidation, threats, physical attack, possession of a prohibited weapon or inflicting property damage as a result of an intentional act that occurs in a location where County work is being conducted.

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7. Approval and Revision History

Policy Origination Date:	May 20, 2025
Requires Board Approval:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Board Approval Date:	Click or tap to enter a date.
Policy Exclusions:	Buncombe County Sheriff's Office
Revision History:	Enter Dates and changes

8. Background

Prior to May 2025, the Workplace Violence policy existed as an appendix in the Buncombe County Personnel Ordinance. That appendix has now been removed and the content lives within this policy document.

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