HOW TO RESPOND TO DISRUPTIVE, THREATENING, OR VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

STEP 1: General response to disruptive behavior (no threats or weapons)

1. **Respond quietly and calmly.** Try to defuse the situation.
2. **Do not take the behavior personally.** Usually, the behavior has little to do with you, but you are used as a target in the situation.
3. **Ask questions.** Respectful concern and interest may demonstrate that aggression is not necessary.
4. **Consider offering an apology.** Even if you've done nothing wrong, an apology may calm the individual and encourage cooperation. "I'm sorry that happened. What can we do now that will solve the problem?"
5. **Summarize what you hear the individual saying.** Make sure you are communicating clearly. In crisis, a person feels humiliated and wants respect and attention. Your summary of the individual's concerns reflects your attention. **Focus on areas of agreement** to help resolve the concern.

If this approach does not stop the disruption, assess whether the individual seems dangerous. If in your best judgment he/she is upset but not a threat, set limits and seek assistance as necessary.

**STEP 2: Step 1 response ineffective, individual DOES NOT seem dangerous**

1. **Calmly and firmly set limits.** "Please lower your voice. There will be no disruptions in this office." "Please be patient so that I can understand what you need and try to help you."
2. **Ask the individual to stop the behavior and warn that official action may be taken.** "Disruption is subject to University action. Stop or you may be reported."
3. **If the disruption continues despite a warning,** tell the individual that he/she may be disciplined or prosecuted, state that the discussion is over, and direct them to leave the office. "Please leave now. If you do not leave, we will call the Police."
4. **If the individual refuses to leave after being directed to do so,** state that this refusal is also a violation subject to discipline, exclusion from work, or arrest.

**STEP 3: Step 1 response ineffective and the individual SEEMS DANGEROUS**

1. **If possible, find a quiet, safe place to talk,** but do not isolate yourself with an individual you believe may be dangerous. Maintain a safe distance, do not turn your back, and stay seated if possible. Leave the
door open or open a closed door, and sit near the door. Be sure a co-worker is near to help if needed.

2. **Use a calm, non-confrontational approach to defuse the situation.** Indicate your desire to listen and understand the problem. Allow the person to describe the problem.

3. **NEVER touch the individual yourself to try to remove him/her from the area.** Even a gentle push or holding the person's arm may be interpreted as an assault by an agitated individual who may respond with violence towards you or file a lawsuit later.

4. **Set limits to indicate the behavior needed to deal with the concern.** "Please lower your voice." "Please stop shouting (or using profanity) or I'll have to ask you to leave."

5. **Signal for assistance.** The individual may be antagonized if you call for assistance so use a prearranged 'distress' signal to have another staff member check on you to determine how you are. If you need help, the co-worker should alert your supervisor and/or the police.

6. **Do not mention discipline or the police if you fear an angry or violent response.**

7. **If the situation escalates, find a way to excuse yourself, leave the room/area and get help.** "You've raised some tough questions. I'll consult my supervisor to see what we can do."

**IN AN EMERGENCY**

For crimes in progress, violent incidents or specific threats of imminent violence, call 911

Immediately contact your agency security officer, or have someone call for you, if an individual

- makes threats of physical harm toward you, others, or him/herself;
- has a weapon; or
- behaves in a manner that causes you to fear for your own or another's safety

Use a phone out of sight/hearing of the individual. The police will respond and take appropriate action.

1. **Do not attempt to intervene physically** or deal with the situation yourself. It is critical that the police take charge of any incident that can or does involve physical harm.

2. **Get yourself and others to safety** as quickly as possible.

3. **If possible, keep a line open to police until they arrive.** If you cannot stay on the line, call 911 and the dispatcher will direct the police to you. The more information the police receive, the more likely they can bring a potentially violent situation to a safe conclusion.
Post Incident Response

When a violent incident occurs, many are affected: the victim, witnesses, bystanders, as well as friends, relatives, and co-workers of those involved in or witnessing the event.

To avoid long-term difficulties following a violent event (often called post-traumatic stress syndrome) certain follow-up responses and interventions must take place. For post-event counseling and intervention, contact your agency HR office.

Information from the HR - UC Davis “Violence Prevention Brochure: Maintaining a Safe Workplace” Used with permission.