

For: FFAS Employees, except Overseas Employees

Workplace Violence Prevention and Response (WVP&R) Program

Approved by: Associate Administrator for Operations and Management



1 Overview

A Background

Workplace violence is a critical, complex problem facing Federal Agencies and the private sector. The risk of violence, and harm to others and/or self, can arise internally from any level of the workforce or externally from customers, contractors, vendors, and/or others. FFAS management, employees, unions, and employee associations, where applicable, can work to increase safety by recognizing and reporting acts or threats of violence, intimidation, harassment, bullying, and/or other behavior that causes fear for personal safety, physical violence, and/or disruption in the work environment. The goals of FFAS are early recognition, reporting, risk/threat assessment, and developing appropriate response plans, by the appropriate parties, to prevent or reduce and manage the risk of workplace violence. The FFAS WVP&R coordinator assists with conducting interviews, risk/threat assessments, developing appropriate response plans tailored to the specifics of a situation, presenting employee safety briefings, and other services.

B Purpose

This notice provides the following FFAS WVP&R Program information:

- web site for DR 4200-001, “USDA Workplace Violence Prevention Program”
- FFAS WVP&R Program policy
- OPM, USDA, and FFAS guidance and information on preventing or reducing the risk of workplace violence
- FFAS risk/threat assessment process and assistance
- sources of assistance for workplace violence emergencies and non-emergencies.

Disposal Date	Distribution
April 1, 2013	All FAS, FSA, and RMA employees, except overseas employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

Notice PM-2852

1 Overview (Continued)

C Contacts

Direct questions about this notice to either of the following:

- Irene Rubin Seastrum, FFAS WVP&R coordinator, by any of the following:
 - e-mail to irene.seastrum@wdc.usda.gov
 - telephone at 202-401-0641
 - FAX at 202-205-3781
- applicable Agency's emergency preparedness staff.

Note: Deaf and hard of hearing employees may reach all telephone numbers listed in this notice through their relay service.

2 Workplace Violence Regulation and FFAS Policy, Guidance, and Information

A USDA Regulation

DR 4200-001 may be accessed at www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4200-001.htm.

B FFAS Policy

This notice, together with DR 4200-001, should be posted throughout the workplace in conspicuous locations. The following is FFAS WVP&R Program policy:

- FFAS is committed to working with employees to maintain a safe, supportive, civil, and productive work environment
- employees at every level of FFAS are expected to treat all USDA and FFAS employees, customers, contractors, visitors, and others in the work environment, with dignity and respect

Note: The “work environment” includes all locations away from USDA Offices at which USDA official duties are performed.

- acts or threats of violence against persons or property will **not** be tolerated in the work environment, including acts of intimidation, harassment, bullying, or other inappropriate behavior that causes fear for personal safety and/or disruption in the work environment, or at any USDA-sponsored event on USDA-owned or leased property
- employees and supervisors shall promptly report, to management officials, any act or threat of workplace violence or other behavior that generates fear for personal safety and/or disruption in the work environment

2 Workplace Violence Regulation, Policy, Guidance and Information (Continued)

B FFAS Policy (Continued)

- supervisors and managers **must** seriously consider reports of such behavior and promptly seek assistance/guidance from appropriate sources to evaluate the specifics of each incident/situation, and properly address and monitor the behavior

Note: In cases involving employee behavior, based on the facts and context of an incident, there may be cause for disciplinary action and/or possible criminal charges.

- supervisors and managers are urged to promptly use the FFAS risk/threat assessment process for assistance in evaluating incidents/situations and to develop and implement appropriate response plans to prevent or reduce and manage the risk of violence

Note: See subparagraph 4 E for an explanation of the FFAS WVP&R Program risk/threat assessment process.

- in a workplace violence emergency, where a serious, direct, or implied threat of violence has been made and/or physical violence appears imminent or is in progress, employees are expected to do the following:
 - exercise their best judgment in taking steps to ensure their personal safety
 - contact local security and/or law enforcement personnel for assistance
 - notify management as soon as possible

Note: See Exhibits 1 and 2 for emergency contacts by location.

- it is prohibited for employees or other individuals to possess, use, or threaten using a firearm, explosive, or other dangerous weapon at a USDA Government-owned or -leased workplace and/or at any site at which a USDA-sponsored event is held.

Note: See DR 4200-001 for coverage and exemptions.

C Guidance and Information

OPM Government-wide guidance for WVP&R includes, but is **not** limited to, the following:

- “Dealing with Workplace Violence: A Guide for Agency Planners” at http://www.opm.gov/Employment_and_Benefits/WorkLife/OfficialDocuments/handbooksguides/WorkplaceViolence/index.asp
- “A Manager’s Guide: Handling Traumatic Events (February 2003)” at http://www.opm.gov/Employment_and_Benefits/WorkLife/OfficialDocuments/handbooksguides/Trauma/index.asp

2 Workplace Violence Regulation, Policy, Guidance and Information (Continued)

C Guidance and Information (Continued)

- “Responding to Domestic Violence: Where Federal Employees Can Find Help” at http://www.opm.gov/employment_and_benefits/worklife/officialdocuments/handbookguides/DomesticViolence_help/index.asp.

USDA guidance for WVP&R includes the following:

- “The USDA Handbook on Workplace Violence Prevention and Response” at <http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/violence/wpv.htm>
- “USDA Domestic Violence Awareness Handbook” at <http://www.usda.gov/da/shmd/aware.htm>
- this notice
- FFAS guidance at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=home&subject=wpsv&topic=vpr>.

3 FFAS WVP&R Program Briefings/Trainings

A Group Briefings/Trainings

The FFAS WVP&R coordinator is available to present group briefings/trainings as follows:

- in person, in the Washington, DC, area
- through Microsoft Live to a maximum of 50 participants at 1 time
- by teleconference, to a group at a location or to a number of offices at the same time, and in person, for example, at regional conferences.

B Briefing/Training Topics

Briefing/training topics include, but are **not** limited to the following:

- “FFAS Workplace Violence Prevention & Response Program: An Overview”
- “Understanding the Risk/Threat Assessment Process”
- “Workplace Violence Prevention & Response: With Emphasis on the Role Responsibilities of FFAS Supervisors and Managers”

Notice PM-2852

3 FFAS WVP&R Program Briefings/Trainings (Continued)

B Briefing/Training Topics (Continued)

- “Workplace Violence Prevention & Response: With Emphasis on the Role & Responsibilities of FSA State Executive Directors & Administrative Officers”
- “Workplace Violence Prevention & Response: With Emphasis on the Role & Responsibilities of FSA District Directors”
- “Dealing with External Customers”, a briefing for managers, supervisors, and employees that covers defusing techniques; and administrative and other options for dealing with threatening, aggressive, and/or disruptive customers, including customers who make suicidal statements or threats.

C Customized/Interactive Violence Prevention and Employee Safety Briefings Presented to Managers, Supervisors, and Employees

Examples of subjects covered during briefings by **teleconference** that are geared to the specifics of a particular incident/situation, and include, but are **not** limited to the following:

- range of safety measures and options for dealing with:
 - an external customer who exhibits angry, intimidating, or other aggressive behavior
 - an employee’s abusive spouse or partner making angry calls and/or visits to the office or exhibiting other aggressive behavior
 - and possibly defusing other situations that generate intimidation, fear for personal safety, and/or are disruptive to the work environment
- review of office emergency evacuation plan and recommendations for improvement.

Note: Depending on the circumstances, in situations in which external customers or other individuals exhibit aggressive and/or disruptive behavior in FSA offices located in USDA Service Centers, or towards employees conducting USDA business away from the office, supervisors/managers are encouraged to invite other tenants/stake holders to participate in the briefings; for example, NRCS and RD.

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

A Employee Awareness

The risk of workplace violence can be reduced and managed through employee and management awareness of the following:

- What is violence?
- What are the various levels and types and of threats?
- What are indicators of an increased possibility of violent behavior?
- What is a risk/threat assessment?
- What constitutes a violence emergency that requires immediate assistance?
- What may appear to be a non-emergency that should not be ignored?
- What steps can be taken by management and employees to prepare for an emergency?
- What assistance is available for dealing with incidents in the work environment involving non-FFAS employees?

B Recognizing Violence

Violence encompasses acts or threats of physical violence against persons or property. It also includes acts of intimidation, harassment, bullying, or other inappropriate behavior that causes fear for personal safety and/or disruption in the workplace.

Recognizing that violence is a process, as well as an act, can reduce the risk of becoming a victim. Violence is often the culmination of long developing and identifiable problems, failures, and conflicts. These include, but are **not** limited to, the following:

- the individual's behavior, personality, and thinking style; for an example of the latter, the belief that violence is the appropriate way to gain revenge
- life stressors impacting the individual
- a triggering event or condition that leads the individual to see violence as an option or solution

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

B Recognizing Violence (Continued)

- a setting that facilitates or permits the violence, or at least doesn't attempt to stop the violence, from occurring.

Important: The reactions and decisions of employees and managers to either ignore or use appropriate sources of assistance to deal with threatening, intimidating, bullying, and/or violent behavior can play a vital role in resolving the problem.

C Recognizing Types and Levels of Threats

A threat is an expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. It can be spoken or written, but many individuals who make a threat will never carry it out. Conversely, others who pose a real threat never make a threat first. There are a number of different types of threats and levels of risk. According to the FBI, these include the following.

- Direct threat identifies a specific act against a specific target and is delivered in a straightforward, clear, and explicit manner.

Example: "I promise you this, if you fire me, I'm going to make your house go up in flames with you and your family in it!"

- Indirect threat tends to be vague, unclear, and ambiguous. Violence is implied, but threat is phrased tentatively and suggests that a violent act **could** occur, not that it **will** occur.

Example: "If I wanted to, I could hurt everyone in this office."

- Veiled threat strongly implies, but does **not** explicitly threaten violence.

Example: "If you keep issuing me these warnings, something might happen to your family."

- Conditional threat warns that a violent act will happen unless certain demands are met.

Example: "If you don't approve my loan, I will get even with you!"

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

C Recognizing Types and Levels of Threats (Continued)

- Nonverbal, threatening, menacing gestures include nonverbal, menacing gestures and intimidating body language.

Example: Slashing a hand across the throat or using a finger pointed like a gun to signify that someone will be dead soon. Depending on the circumstances, this may also include displaying items related to weapons to instill fear; for example, empty shell casings or a paper target, such as a silhouette with an individual's name on it.

Levels of threat include the following.

- Low-level threats pose minimal risk to the victim and public safety; are vague and indirect; information is inconsistent, implausible, or lacks detail; lacks realism; and content suggests person is unlikely to carry out threat.
- Medium-level threats could be carried out, although it may not appear entirely realistic. More direct and more concrete than low-level threats; wording suggests the individual has given some thought to how the act will be carried out; includes a general indication of place and time, but signs still fall well short of a detailed plan. No strong indication that the individual has taken preparatory steps, but statements seek to convey that the threat is not empty; for example, "I'm serious!" or "I really mean this!"
- High-level threats are direct, specific, and plausible, and appear to pose imminent and serious danger to safety of others. Suggest concrete steps have been taken, for example, stalking or acquiring a weapon. Almost always requires bringing in law enforcement.

Important: Individuals utter threats for many reasons, only some of which involve the intention or capacity to commit a violent act. However, an individual can present a grave threat without articulating the threat. The following distinction between making and posing a threat is **important**:

- some persons who make threats ultimately pose threats
- many persons who make threats do not pose threats
- some persons who pose threats never make threats.

Note: Postponing action until a threat has been made can detract attention from the investigation of factors more relevant to the risk of violence.

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

D Recognizing Risk Factors

Risk factors are indicators that point to an increased possibility of violent behavior. However, a number of risk factors can be present without automatically indicating a potential for violence.

Note: Risk factors include past violent behavior. To plan and implement an appropriate response plan, risk factors **must** be evaluated on their own merits, within the context and totality of a situation.

Risk factors include, but are **not** limited to the following:

- intimidating, belligerent, harassing, bullying, or other inappropriate and aggressive behavior that causes fear for personal safety and/or disruption in the workplace
- coworkers fear talking about or reporting the individual's intimidating/bullying behavior because they fear retaliation by the individual

Note: One definition of bullying is, "Acts or verbal comments that could "mentally" hurt or isolate a person in the workplace. Sometimes bullying can involve negative physical contact as well. Bullying usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behavior that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade, or humiliate a particular person or group of people. It has also been described as the assertion of power through aggression".

- sudden, extreme changes in behavior
- irrational, bizarre comments
- paranoid behavior; perception that the whole world is against the individual
- repeated talk of being the target of a "conspiracy"
- short fuse; quick to anger and reach conclusions; tendency to become very difficult, defensive, accusatory, and combative; easily triggered into verbal aggression; displays heightened levels of anger that causes apprehension and/or fear
- intense sense of personal injury
- open comments about wanting to "get even" with coworkers or management
- frequent disputes and conflicts with coworkers, supervisors, or others in the work environment

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

D Recognizing Risk Factors (Continued)

- makes direct, indirect, veiled, or conditional threats of harm

Note: See subparagraph C for examples of each type of threat.

- frequently overreacts in a hostile/aggressive manner to situations, causing others to “walk-on-eggshells” and to have a “gut-feeling” that given the “right trigger”, who knows what the individual might do
- strong sense of entitlement; belief that rules do not apply to the individual; does not respect boundaries
- obsession and strong feelings of anger, injustice, or humiliation over any negative decision, action, setback; for example employment, relationship, etc.
- unacceptable physical actions, short of body contact or property damage (for example, angrily getting in a person’s face, throwing small objects, slamming doors and handbooks, etc.
- negative employment status; negative performance; inappropriate conduct; possible, pending, or inevitable discipline, termination (nonviolence-related)
- personal stressors; such as, serious financial, legal, health, family, and/or personal problems or recent significant relationship loss, such as death, divorce, loss of custody of children, betrayal, abandonment, etc.
- destructive coping style
- alcohol/substance abuse that may decrease accuracy of perception and increase aggressive behavior
- highly isolated individual with no support system; a “loner” with a history of acting out, self-mutilation, substance abuse, or fire setting
- stalking behavior
- accessibility to and/or fascination with weapons; exhibits extreme interest in semi-automatic or automatic weapons and their destructive power to people
- identification and/or empathy with perpetrators of workplace and/or other types of violence
- intimidating references to weapons; bringing and/or brandishing a weapon in the work environment

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

D Recognizing Risk Factors (Continued)

- statements indicating that violence can be effective in achieving a person's objectives or that it is an acceptable way of resolving a problem
- statements such as, "I don't have to worry about anything; I've got my gun to protect me"
- history of conflict/violence; threats made with a weapon in hand; arrests/convictions for disorderly conduct and/or for assaultive acts, especially assaultive acts that involved use of a weapon, and/or acts of battery that resulted in physical injury
- history of domestic and/or neighbor-related situations in which victims call law enforcement for assistance, but victim is unwilling to press charges
- excessive interest or membership in groups that espouse violence as an acceptable means of achieving an end
- barred from Government and/or other offices and institutions
- under a restraining order
- desperation to the point of contemplating harm to others and/or suicide.

Note: People considering suicide often give hints or even talk openly about their intentions. The FFAS WVP&R coordinator can present management a range of options for dealing with situations in which employees, customers, or other non-employees who openly express suicidal thoughts and/or threaten suicide.

Example: In cases involving employees, the coordinator can assist management in conducting a telephone intervention to compassionately express care, concern, and support, and to act as a bridge to EAP.

E Risk/Threat Assessment Processing

The risk of workplace violence can be reduced and managed by participation in the FFAS risk/threat assessment process, to which both FFAS and USDA are committed. A risk/threat assessment is the evaluation of an incident/situation and identifiable risk factors by management with the assistance from the FFAS WVP&R coordinator. Depending on the circumstances, assistance in this process may be obtained from the following resources:

- local and/or State law enforcement, Federal Protective Service (FPS)
- USDA OIG personnel, behavioral science professionals, and other professionals as needed.

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

E Risk/Threat Assessment Processing (Continued)

The objectives are to gather information to evaluate the credibility and seriousness of a threat and/or to assess the potential risk to safety posed by an incident/situation that causes intimidation and/or fear for personal safety and/or disruption to the work environment, and to develop and implement an effective response plan, for example “reasonable” measures to reduce and manage the risk of violence. This process includes recommendations for increasing employee safety, the FFAS WVP&R coordinator’s presentation of customized safety briefings to employees, supervisors, and managers on options for dealing with a specific situation; and, assistance to supervisors/managers with the development and preparation of case-related correspondence and other measures, as needed.

Notes: The FFAS risk/threat assessment process is usually conducted by telephone. This process may be coordinated at the Washington, DC, or local level. For FSA’s DAFO, the State Office is the local level.

During the FFAS risk/threat assessment process and development, and implementation of a response plan, the privacy interests of the accused individual are balanced with the Agency’s safety interests.

Important: No absolute guarantee of privacy can be made.

F Notification Process When a Risk/Threat Assessment is To Be Conducted

For:

- **DAFO**, FSA managers and supervisors shall promptly notify SED, or his/her designee, that a risk/threat assessment is being conducted

Note: SED, or designee, in turn, shall promptly notify DAFO at the National Office and provide information about the nature of the incident/situation, involvement of Federal and/or county system employees, customers, etc., their location, and measures taken.

- **RMA**, RMA managers and supervisors shall promptly notify their respective Deputy and Associate Deputy Administrator or staff office Director that a risk/threat assessment is being conducted and provide information regarding the nature of the incident/situation, involvement of employees, customers, etc., their location, and measures taken.

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

G Requesting a Risk/Threat Assessment When an Incident Occurs and/or a Situation Develops That Generates Intimidation, Fear for Personal Safety, and/or Disruption in the Work Environment

Any employee at any level of FFAS may request a risk/threat assessment through a supervisor, anyone in management, a representative, or by directly contacting the FFAS WVP&R coordinator at 202-401-0641.

Note: During the FFAS risk/threat assessment process and development, and implementation of a response plan, the privacy interests of the accused individual are balanced with the Agency's safety interests.

Important: No absolute guarantee of privacy can be made.

H Recognizing Victims of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior in which an intimate partner uses physical violence, coercion, threats, intimidation, isolation, and emotional, sexual, and/or economic abuse to control the other partner in the relationship.

Note: Workplace violence incidents can stem from a domestic abusive relationship.

Indicators of possible victimization include, but are **not** limited to, the following:

- unexplained bruises or injuries
- inappropriate attire, such as wearing sunglasses inside the building or a turtleneck and long sleeves in the summer
- disruptive visits, telephone calls, and/or e-mails from current or former intimate partners.

Note: Victims of domestic abuse, even if **not** ready to leave the abuser, may contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) to obtain information that may increase their safety and that of their family and coworkers. Deaf and hard of hearing employees may call the hotline at 1-800-787-3224 (TTY) or their relay service. Concern about an employee or coworker being a victim of domestic violence may be discussed with an alternate contact, the FFAS WVP&R coordinator, or EAP. See Exhibit 3 for alternate contacts. The coordinator can assist management by conducting a non-emergency teleconference to act as a bridge between an employee and the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

I Recognizing a Violence Emergency

A violence emergency is a critical incident in which a serious, direct, or implied threat of harm has been made, and/or violence appears imminent or is in progress.

Examples of critical incidents may include, but are **not** limited to, the following:

- display or actually using firearms or other weapons with intent to harm
- attempted or actual homicide and/or suicide
- severe destruction of property
- angry, disruptive rampage, such as shouting, kicking furniture or doors, punching the wall, and/or throwing objects
- direct threat.

Example: “I’m leaving right now to get my weapon out of my car, and when I return I’m blowing your brains out!”

J Preparing for a Violence Emergency

Managers and supervisors shall:

- verify which local law enforcement agency is responsible for responding to a violence emergency; for example, the sheriff’s office, police department, or FPS, and establish a schedule for periodically communicating/updating this information to employees, with special attention to new employees when they enter on duty
- ensure a documented emergency evacuation plan is in place and establish a schedule for periodically communicating the plan to employees and conducting drills.

Important: Employees shall be responsible for becoming familiar with the emergency evacuation plan. However, the reality is that human behavior is unpredictable and the dynamics of every violent situation are different. Depending on the circumstances, following an established evacuation plan may increase risk to safety. Instead, in an emergency, it may be necessary to create alternate escape route; for example, breaking a window with a chair to escape from the office, or going to a designated “safe room” within the building that is equipped with a phone and a door that locks.

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

J Preparing for a Violence Emergency (Continued)

Notes: Offices are encouraged to hold discussions about the physical layout of the worksite and options for increasing safety, such as installing a duress alarm (also called a “panic button”) that immediately signals a request for assistance from local law enforcement, or by possibly implementing controlled access to the office. The FFAS WVP&R coordinator can provide additional options to consider for increasing safety.

A request may be made to the local sheriff’s office or police department to conduct a “physical security walk-through” of the premises and to make recommendations for improving security and conducting a safe evacuation, in the event of a workplace violence incident.

K Sources of Assistance in Emergencies

For emergencies in:

- the **Washington, DC, Metropolitan area**, including the South and Whitten Building complex and USDA satellite locations, where a serious, direct, or implied threat of violence has been made, and/or violence appears imminent or is in progress, employees are expected to do the following:
 - exercise their best judgment in taking steps to ensure their personal safety
 - contact local security and/or law enforcement personnel for assistance
 - then notify management

Note: See Exhibit 1 for emergency contacts within the Washington, DC, Metropolitan area.

- **Field Offices, except** overseas, managers and supervisors at USDA Field Offices are responsible for verifying which local law enforcement agency is responsible for responding to an emergency; for example, sheriff’s office, police department, or FPS, and for providing employees written notification of this information.

Notes: Where a serious, direct, or implied threat of violence has been made, and/or violence appears imminent or is in progress, employees are expected to do the following:

- exercise their best judgment in taking steps to ensure their personal safety
- contact local security and/or law enforcement personnel for assistance
- notify management

See Exhibit 2 for emergency contacts.

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

K Sources of Assistance in Emergencies (Continued)

USDA OIG is **not** an emergency response Agency. In an actual or potentially serious workplace violence situation, local law enforcement personnel should be notified first; however, OIG can assist in the FFAS risk/threat assessment process and provide liaison and assistance to local law enforcement personnel. OIG may make a determination to investigate an incident or situation, if it meets prosecutorial guidelines.

Nationwide, after local law enforcement personnel or FPS is contacted, according to established local and national protocol, management should notify the local USDA OIG Regional Office as soon as possible. In Washington, DC, notification of incidents should be made by contacting the duty OIG Agent pager at 1-888-620-4185 (24 hours a day/7 days a week). For telephone numbers of OIG Regional Offices, go to <http://www.usda.gov/oig/investigative.htm>.

After law enforcement has responded and employees have secured their safety, the FFAS WVP&R coordinator at 202-401-0641, and EAP coordinator at 202-401-0683, can provide support and assistance in workplace violence situations nationwide.

L Sources of Assistance For Non-Emergencies

In a workplace violence non-emergency, an individual may be observed engaging in behavior that causes apprehension or fear, but no immediate risk to safety is readily apparent. Non-emergencies may include, but are **not** limited to, the following situations:

- an angry employee shouts about his frustration with his supervisor and angrily slams drawers, but no attempt is made to physically harm anyone
- a veiled reference to suicide is made; for example, “the way my life is going, I don’t know if I want to live anymore”
- a supervisor increasingly overreacts with anger towards subordinates.

Notes: In a non-emergency, an individual may exhibit behavior that causes disruption in the workplace and, if ignored, may increasingly negatively impact employee morale and/or escalate to the point where it may pose an actual risk to safety. See Exhibit 3 for alternate contacts for nationwide non-emergencies.

In certain situations, an employee may want to discuss a workplace non-emergency with an alternate source of assistance before informing management. FFAS supports this flexibility to go outside the traditional management chain to request assistance, **without** fear of or experiencing retaliation. However, management bears the final responsibility for dealing with conduct issues, and management’s ability to timely reduce any potential risk to safety may be diminished or hindered if not timely notified and involved.

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

L Sources of Assistance For Non-Emergencies (Continued)

For FFAS assistance in non-emergencies, the following can provide support and assistance in workplace violence situations nationwide:

- FFAS WVP&R coordinator at 202-401-0641
- EAP coordinator at 202-401-0683.

See Exhibit 3 for alternate contacts for non-emergencies nationwide.

M Assistance Available for Intimidating Incidents in the Work Environment Involving Non-FFAS Employees

Intimidating incidents may involve strangers, former FFAS employees, other Government Agencies employees, external customers, contractors, consultants, an employee's relative or intimate partner, or others. The FFAS WVP&R coordinator is available to assist management in coordinating risk/threat assessments, developing action plans to implement reasonable safety measures, prepare correspondence that may prohibit or limit access to offices, and to conduct customized safety briefings by teleconference, among other things.

In cases involving external customers, depending on the level of threat to safety and/or disruption to office operations caused by a customer's behavior, the FFAS WVP&R coordinator is available to assist with implementing the following measures to restructure the manner in which future FFAS business will be conducted:

- limit customer to visits to the office by appointment **only**, to be arranged at least 3 workdays in advance, with no "drop in visits" permitted

Note: Depending on the circumstances, management may require the customer be accompanied to these pre-arranged meetings by a responsible family member or a representative of his/her choice, at his/her expense.

- bar customer from Government premises, with business conducted with him/her by appointment **only** at a location away from the workplace, such as a public library

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

M Assistance Available for Intimidating Incidents in the Work Environment Involving Non-FFAS Employees (Continued)

- bar customer from Government premises, with business conducted with him/her by appointment **only** at the sheriff's office or police department.

Note: The willingness of law enforcement to authorize this measure varies by jurisdiction.

Notes: The FFAS WVP&R coordinator is available to assist in drafting the correspondence necessary to implement any of these options and to present, by teleconference, safety briefings to employees tailored to the specifics of the situation. Depending on the circumstances and facts of the case, the first step may be to issue the customer a soft cautionary letter or a stern warning letter.

For:

- FSA State level, SED's must obtain DAFO's approval to implement these measures
- RMA Field Offices, Regional or Compliance Office Directors must obtain the respective Deputy or Associate Deputy Administrator's respective Deputy or Associate Deputy Administrator's approval to implement measures.

Any correspondence addressing an external customer's behavior and/or implementing any of these measures **must** be signed by an FSA SED or an RMA Regional Office Director.

N Being Proactive

Nothing can guarantee that an employee will not become a victim of workplace violence. The following; however, can help reduce the odds:

- be familiar with the office/building evacuation plan
- employee and management awareness and communication are critical; alert supervisors to any concerns about safety or security and report **all** incidents immediately **in writing**
- recognize that there is no "one-size-fits-all-plan" for dealing with a potentially volatile or violent situation; every situation requires an individualized assessment and action plan
- management's early intervention tailored to the specifics of a situation may prevent or reduce the risk of violence

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

N Being Proactive (Continued)

- if a person is angry or hostile towards an employee, the employee should stay calm, maintain normal/relaxed eye contact, and be courteous, patient, and empathetic
- in an intense verbal exchange, keep the “humiliation factor” down and avoid going “tit-for-tat”, because humiliation can trigger a desire for revenge that can possibly escalate to violence
- learn defusing communication techniques and practice them

Note: Visit AgLearn at <http://www.aglearn.usda.gov/> to review course offerings on conflict resolution.

- take steps to resolve a conflict at the earliest stage possible

Note: Assistance is available through the FFAS Alternative Dispute Resolution Program, “Dialogue at Work,” at 202-401-0643.

- take advantage of services available through EAP at 1-800-222-0364, and 1-888-262-7848 (TTY), because an EAP counselor can help explore options for dealing with tensions and conflict in and outside the workplace.

Emergency Contacts for Locations Within the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Area

Note: Deaf and hard of hearing employees may reach all the following telephone numbers through their relay service.

For emergencies, where a serious, direct, or implied threat of violence has been made, and/or violence appears imminent or is in progress, the sources of assistance are listed as follows.

- **Washington, DC, South and Whitten Annex Building Complex**

In response to an emergency, Washington, DC, Metropolitan Area employees may always contact FPS at 202-708-1111 or the DC Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) at 911. However, if possible, it is preferred that employees **first contact the USDA Security Control Center at 202-690-0869 and 202-720-0000, open 24 hours a day/7 days a week.** USDA Special Police officers are commissioned by DC and are trained to respond to emergencies. Also, a call to the USDA Security Control Center to either 202-690-0869 or 202-720-0000 will alert building emergency management personnel and the Emergency Operations Center that an event has occurred in the building. They will contact appropriate emergency support and services.

Note: If contact is made with FPS at 202-708-1111 or MPD at 911, notification **must** be made, as soon as possible, to management at the USDA Security Control Center at 202-690-0869 or 202-720-0000, open 24 hours a day/7 days a week, or the USDA Protective Operations Branch at 202-720-6270.

- **USDA Washington, DC, Metropolitan Area Satellite Locations (For Example, Patriot Plaza III)**

Contact FPS at 202-708-1111 and MPD at 911. Both have concurrent jurisdiction at **all** USDA-satellite locations that mean that either agency can be called to respond to an emergency.

In severe cases of violence, call 911 for assistance; otherwise, contact FPS at 202-708-1111.

Notes: OIG is **not** an emergency response Agency. See subparagraph 4 K.

The FFAS WVP&R and EAP coordinators provide support and assistance in workplace violence situations nationwide.

Emergency Contacts for Field Offices, Except Overseas

Note: Deaf and hard of hearing employees may reach all the following telephone numbers through their relay service.

- **Offices Under the GSA Umbrella**

FPS and local law enforcement personnel often have concurrent jurisdiction. This means that either agency can be called to respond to an emergency. However, in an emergency, employees should immediately call 911 from any USDA site, since local law enforcement personnel are usually able to respond more quickly. If local law enforcement personnel are called, management should follow up by notifying FPS and the local USDA OIG Regional Office, following established local and national protocol. For telephone numbers of the OIG Regional Offices, see <http://www.usda.gov/oig/investigative.htm>

Following an emergency in Washington, DC, notification should be made by contacting the duty OIG Agent pager at 1-888-620-4185 (24 hours a day/7 days a week).

- **Privately Leased Space, Not Under the GSA Umbrella**

Local law enforcement personnel have jurisdiction. Employees should dial, “911” for assistance.

Note: In some jurisdictions, law enforcement personnel have a different emergency number other than “911”. This information should be verified by supervisors/managers and provided, in writing, to employees.

The FFAS WVP&R and EAP coordinators are available to provide support and assistance in workplace violence situations nationwide.

Alternate Contacts for Non-Emergencies

In a workplace violence non-emergency, an individual may be observed engaging in behavior that causes apprehension or fear, but the behavior does not rise to the level of serious misconduct or criminal actions and no immediate risk to safety is readily apparent. In certain situations, an employee may want to discuss a non-emergency with an alternate source of assistance before informing management. FFAS supports the flexibility to go outside the traditional management chain to request assistance, without fear of or experiencing retaliation. However, management bears the final responsibility for dealing with conduct issues, and management's ability to timely reduce any potential risk to safety may be diminished or hindered if not timely notified and involved.

Note: Deaf and hard of hearing employees may reach all the following telephone numbers through their relay service.

Alternate contacts for non-emergencies include, but are **not** limited to, the following:

- designated individuals and/or officials in the management chain
- Irene Rubin Seastrum, FFAS WVP&R coordinator, by any of the following:
 - e-mail to irene.seastrum@wdc.usda.gov
 - telephone at 202-401-0641
 - FAX at 202-205-3781
- Juliet McBride, FFAS EAP coordinator, at 202-418-0683
- EAP provider contacted at 1-800-222-0364
- FSA, RMA, and FAS Early Intervention Program contact at 202-401-0643
- local security

Note: In Washington, DC, in the South and Whitten Building complex, alternate contacts for non-emergencies include the USDA Security Control Center (USDA Special Police Officers) at 202-690-0869, open 24 hours a day/7 days a week; the USDA Protective Operations Branch at 202-720-6270 and 202-720-0000, or Ken Lescallett, USDA Security Operations Chief, at 202-720-6270.

- union and/or association representative, if applicable.

The FFAS WVP&R and EAP coordinators are available to provide support and assistance in workplace violence situations nationwide.