

Workplace Violence Prevention

The California Constitution requires schools to ensure a safe, secure and peaceful environment for students and employees (Article I, Section 28). District administrators are responsible for responding to safety concerns, including workplace violence. Last year, the District issued Bulletin 5610.0, Workplace Violence, Bullying, and Threats (Adult to Adult), to assist administrators in intervening and preventing incidents of workplace violence.

Bulletin 5610.0 defines workplace violence broadly to capture a variety of behaviors that may escalate or have escalated. The bulletin notes that workplace violence falls on a continuum that recognizes severity, frequency, and recency. Workplace violence can be impacted by individual characteristics, environmental stressors, and/or the relationship between involved parties. Any act of physical, verbal or emotional aggression, and represents a continuum of behaviors that includes threats, harassment, bullying, stalking, vandalism, emotional abuse, intimidation, and other forms of conduct that create anxiety, fear, and a climate of distrust in the work or educational setting. In addition, the bulletin specifically addresses threats and bullying by associated persons, which include but are not limited to volunteers, vendors, parents, former students, former employees, and relatives or friends of employees.

To assist site administrators in ensuring a safe school campus, the bulletin includes protocols and checklists for dealing with threats, bullying, harassment and discrimination, and workplace violence. While each type of incident has a specifically designed response procedure, site administrators should keep in mind the following steps to address reports of workplace violence:

1. Secure campus/office safety.
2. Assure involved parties that allegations are taken seriously.
3. Investigate promptly and thoroughly.
4. Request a factual written statement from all involved parties and, if appropriate, witnesses.
5. Consult with your Local District, Staff Relations, and other offices as appropriate.
6. Take action to stop the behavior.
7. Document actions taken.
8. Implement disciplinary action as needed.
9. If appropriate, the victim may file a criminal complaint with law enforcement.
10. Continue to monitor behavior and address inappropriate behaviors.
11. Complete the iStar incident report.

Each situation presents unique facts that must be taken into account in responding. The Crisis Counseling and Intervention Services Unit provides assistance and support for handling threat assessments and mental health issues; the Office of Human Relations, Diversity and Equity in the Office of School Operations provides assistance and support in addressing bullying, conflict resolution, and diversity training; the Equal Opportunity Section provides assistance and guidance with sexual harassment and discrimination complaints affecting employees, and the Office of the General Counsel assists with legal issues arising from or related to reports of workplace violence. Additional resources and contact information are included in Bulletin 5610.0.

This LAUSD Legal Brief is for information only and does not constitute legal advice. Please contact the Office of the General Counsel to determine how this information may apply to your school's specific facts and circumstances.