

## Personal Conduct to Minimize Violence\*

Follow these suggestions in your daily interactions with people to defuse potentially violent situations. If at any time a person's behavior starts to escalate beyond your comfort zone, withdraw from the situation.

DO	DO NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project calmness: move and speak slowly, quietly, and confidently.</li> <li>• Be a good listener: encourage the person to talk, and listen patiently.</li> <li>• Focus your attention on the other person to demonstrate your interest in what he/she has to say.</li> <li>• Maintain a relaxed yet attentive posture and position yourself at an angle rather than directly in front of the other person.</li> <li>• Acknowledge the person's feelings by gestures such as nodding your head.</li> <li>• Ask for small, specific favors such as asking the person to move to a less public, quiet area, if appropriate.</li> <li>• Establish ground rules if unreasonable behavior persists. Calmly describe the consequences of any violent behavior.</li> <li>• Use delaying tactics which will give the person time to calm down. For example, offer a drink of water (in a disposable cup).</li> <li>• Be reassuring and point out choices. Identify and deal with specific issues.</li> <li>• Accept criticism in a professional manner. When a complaint might be true, use statements like "You are probably right." If criticism seems unwarranted, ask clarifying questions.</li> <li>• Ask for his/her recommendations. Repeat back to him/her what you feel he/she is requesting of you.</li> <li>• Position yourself so that a visitor cannot block your access to an exit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use styles of communication that generate hostility such as apathy, brush-off, coldness, condescension, robotism, going strictly by the rules, or giving the run-around.</li> <li>• Reject all of a client's demands from the start.</li> <li>• Pose in challenging stances such as standing directly opposite someone, hands on hips, or crossing your arms.</li> <li>• Avoid any physical contact, finger pointing, or long periods of fixed eye contact.</li> <li>• Make sudden movements that can be seen as threatening.</li> <li>• Notice the tone, volume, and rate of your speech.</li> <li>• Challenge, threaten, or dare the individual. Never belittle the person or make him (or her) feel foolish.</li> <li>• Criticize or act impatiently toward the agitated individual.</li> <li>• Attempt to bargain with a threatening individual.</li> <li>• Try to make the situation seem less serious than it is.</li> <li>• Make false statements or promises you cannot keep.</li> <li>• Try to impart a lot of technical or complicated information when emotions are high.</li> <li>• Take sides or agree with distortions.</li> <li>• Invade the individual's personal space. Make sure there is a space of 3-6 feet between you and the hostile/irate person.</li> </ul>

\*Adapted from Combating Workplace Violence: Guidelines for Employers and Law Enforcement. International Association of Chiefs of Police. 1996.