



ADMINISTRATIVE/FISCAL/CLINICAL/PHF POLICY AND PROCEDURES

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA
ALCOHOL, DRUG AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Section - QUALITY ASSURANCE	Effective: 5/19/2010
Policy - #45 THREATS TO STAFF	Revised:
Director's Approval <u>Ann DeNck</u>	Date <u>5/26/10</u>
Deputy Director's Approval <u>[Signature]</u>	Date <u>8/20/10</u>
Form Ref. -	Reviewed:

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Santa Barbara County Mental Health Plan (SBCMHP) to take all possible steps to protect consumers, staff, and other individuals when a threat of violence is made by a consumer, or by a family member or other person associated with a consumer.

DEFINITIONS:

For purposes of the P&P, the following definition is used:

Threat of violence is any threat of physical harm, or of an action which is reasonably likely to result in physical harm, which is made in person, in writing, electronically, or by telephone against an individual or a group.

PROCEDURE:

A. Considerations. When a threat is made, there are four primary considerations:

1. Does the mental condition of the individual making the threat warrant considering the threat to be serious?
2. Can the intended victim(s) be warned?
3. Are there others, in addition to the intended victim(s), who are directly or indirectly endangered by the threat?
4. What steps can be taken to safeguard the welfare of potential victims, the consumer, and/or the individual making the threat?

B. Assessment of the individual making the threat

1. In order to determine the seriousness of the threat, it is important that staff who are familiar with the individual making the threat be involved in assessment whenever possible.
 - a. Whenever possible, a licensed clinician or psychiatrist who is familiar with the individual will conduct the assessment, or will be consulted by telephone if not present.
 - b. If no one who is familiar with the individual making the threat is present or available, a licensed mental health professional or the supervisor of the program will be responsible for assessment of the individual.
 - c. If no licensed clinician is available, program staff will contact CARES, Mobile Crisis, or another county-operated program (including ADMHS Administration) for assistance.
2. If the consumer possesses a weapon or appears to possess a weapon, has engaged in violence toward any individual, or has caused significant damage to property at or near the time of the threat, or if staff consider themselves to be in imminent danger of physical harm, law enforcement will be called for assistance.
3. In all communication with the individual making the threat, every possible attempt will be made to defuse the threat.
4. When the assessment of the individual making the threat is completed, to the extent possible under the circumstances, the staff conducting the assessment will communicate all relevant information to the program supervisor or designee.
 - a. The staff conducting the assessment will complete a written Unusual Occurrence Incident Report, which will be forwarded to the program supervisor. The program supervisor will contact the ADMHS Medical Director, Quality Assurance Manager, and Assistant Director and/or Division Chief for Programs by telephone as soon as possible.
5. If the person conducting the assessment determines that a serious threat exists, Policy & Procedure "Tarasoff-Hedlund Warnings (Civil Code §43.92)" will be implemented.
6. If the person conducting the assessment determines that the individual making the threat is a danger to others or otherwise requires involuntary hospitalization, the steps necessary for such hospitalization will be undertaken.

C. Security Responses

1. The supervisor of the program is responsible for determining and implementing appropriate security precautions in order to minimize the risk of harm to staff, consumers, and the public.
 - a. Depending on the specific situation, security precautions may include, but are not limited to, such steps as:

- i. Locking all outside doors and stationing a staff member at one or more entrance to screen individuals who wish to enter the building.
 - ii. Locking inside doors.
 - iii. Contacting law enforcement for advice and assistance, providing law enforcement with all available information regarding the individual making the threat, the threats received, and information regarding potential victims (both victims who are specifically identifiable and other possible victims whose identities cannot be determined).
 - iv. Clearing and closing the building if necessary.
 - v. Maintaining close communication with staff in the program as well as ADMHS administration.
- b. The supervisor of the program should also determine and implement appropriate steps to minimize potential psychological and emotional harm to consumers, staff, potential victims, and others who may be affected by the threat or actual violence.

D. Physical Violence

1. If a physical assault actually occurs, the goal of any act of self-defense will be to restrain the assaulting individual without causing physical harm, to the extent possible, while avoiding injury to self.
2. In case of actual physical violence, "911" will be called immediately to obtain assistance from law enforcement and, if potentially required, emergency medical responders.

Assistance:

Reference:

Replaces: