

SECTION 26 – EMERGENCY AND ESCALATION RESPONSE POLICY

26.1 Purpose

This policy establishes procedures for responding to emergency situations, including incidents involving irate, disruptive, or potentially unsafe behavior by participants, customers, staff, or visitors. The purpose is to ensure the safety of all individuals, promote consistent response practices, and provide clear guidance when de-escalation is unsuccessful.

26.2 Scope

This policy applies to all Workforce Development Board staff, contractors, partners, and program operators in all service locations, including Virginia Career Works centers, training sites, and community-based service environments.

26.3 Definitions

Escalated Situation:

Any interaction in which an individual exhibits heightened emotional distress, agitation, or disruptive behavior that interferes with normal operations.

Emergency Situation:

Any situation involving immediate risk of harm to individuals, including but not limited to threats of violence, physical aggression, medical emergencies, or unsafe conditions.

De-escalation:

Actions taken to reduce tension and stabilize a situation through calm communication, active listening, and non-confrontational behavior.

26.4 General Policy Statement

The Workforce Development Board is committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for staff, participants, and the public. Staff are expected to attempt appropriate de-escalation when safe to do so. However, staff safety takes priority over

service delivery, and no staff member is expected to remain in or manage a situation that poses a risk to personal safety.

26.5 Response to Escalated or Irrate Individuals

When encountering an irate or escalating individual, staff shall:

1. Remain calm and use a respectful, non-confrontational tone.
2. Listen actively and allow the individual to express concerns without interruption.
3. Set clear and appropriate boundaries for behavior.
4. Avoid arguing, threatening language, or physical contact.
5. Maintain appropriate physical distance and position themselves near an exit when possible.
6. Seek assistance from a supervisor or colleague when needed.

If the situation stabilizes, staff may proceed with service delivery or refer the individual through appropriate grievance or complaint procedures.

26.6 When De-escalation is Unsuccessful

If the individual continues to escalate or refuses to comply with behavioral expectations, staff shall:

1. Disengage from the interaction in a calm and professional manner.
2. Inform the individual that services cannot continue due to behavior.
3. Remove themselves and others from the immediate area if necessary.
4. Notify a supervisor or designated leadership staff immediately.
5. Avoid further engagement that may escalate the situation.

26.7 Emergency Response Procedures

Staff shall treat the situation as an emergency and take immediate action if any of the following occur:

- Threats of harm to self or others
- Physical aggression or attempted assault
- Possession of a weapon or implied weapon

- Severe disruption posing a safety risk
- Medical emergency or collapse
- Any situation where staff feel unsafe

In such cases, staff shall:

1. Call 911 or local emergency services immediately.
2. Follow site-specific emergency procedures (evacuation, lockdown, etc.) if applicable.
3. Notify supervisory staff as soon as it is safe to do so.
4. Do not attempt to physically intervene unless trained and authorized.

26.8 Removal from Premises

When behavior poses a disruption or safety concern:

- Staff may request that the individual leave the premises.
- If the individual refuses, law enforcement may be contacted.
- Access to services may be suspended in accordance with applicable program policies, including participant conduct and grievance procedures.

26.9 Staff Safety and Authority

- Staff are not required to tolerate threatening, abusive, or unsafe behavior.
- Staff have the authority to discontinue services when safety is at risk.
- Supervisors are responsible for supporting staff and assuming control of escalated situations when present.

26.10 Incident Documentation and Reporting

Following any escalated or emergency situation:

1. Staff shall document the incident in accordance with established incident reporting procedures.
2. Documentation must include:
 - Description of the incident
 - Date, time, and location

- Individuals involved
 - Actions taken
 - Outcome and any follow-up actions
3. The incident shall be reported to the Program Manager and Executive Director as required.
 4. Documentation must be retained in accordance with record retention and reporting requirements.

This policy shall align with all applicable incident reporting requirements outlined in program-specific procedures, including YouthBuild and other federally funded programs.

26.11 Training Requirements

All staff shall receive training on:

- De-escalation techniques
- Workplace safety awareness
- Emergency response procedures

Training shall be documented and provided periodically to ensure staff preparedness.

26.12 Policy Alignment

This policy shall be implemented in coordination with:

- Participant conduct and disciplinary procedures
- Grievance and complaint procedures
- Incident reporting protocols
- Applicable Virginia Works guidance

Where conflicts arise, the stricter safety requirement shall apply.