Guidelines

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# Guidelines in the event of violence in close relationships

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##### Decision-makers: Anders Fällström.

##### Responsible function: Vice-chancellor

##### Administrator Madeleine Juliusson

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##### Summary: The Mid Sweden University work environment policy stipulates that the goal of work environment management is to create a positive work environment that contributes to our position as an attractive employer and first choice for students. The work with violence in close relationships is based on the Work Environment Act and Discrimination Act, as well as the Government’s gender equality targets. Violence in close relationships risks affecting the victim’s working capacity and relationships in the workplace. As part of the work environment management tasks, there is a responsibility to be alert to the wellbeing of staff. The guidelines and rules of procedure are intended to provide support with this work and in these situations. The aim is to provide safety for managers, staff, students and the person reporting that someone is a victim.

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# Guidelines in the event of violence in close relationships

## Mid Sweden University’s position

Mid Sweden University will not tolerate violence, neither in the workplace nor in personal contexts.

The Mid Sweden University work environment policy stipulates that the goal of work environment management is to create a positive work environment that contributes to our position as an attractive employer and first choice for students. The work with violence in close relationships is based on the Work Environment Act and Discrimination Act, as well as the Government’s gender equality targets.

Equal rights are an obvious and basic prerequisite for activities at Mid Sweden University. The university is built upon participation and discussion. Students and staff alike are to be treated with respect and dignity, meaning everybody has the right to be taken seriously, with respect and compassion.

## Purpose and aim of the guidelines

When managers encounter a situation involving violence in close relationships, it is essential to know what responsibility they have regarding the situation, how to address the problems and how to approach the affected member of staff (or, in some cases, the perpetrator). These guidelines are a way of providing you, as a manager, with knowledge about violence in close relationships.

Violence in close relationships risks affecting the victim’s working capacity and relationships in the workplace. As part of the work environment management tasks, there is a responsibility to be alert to the wellbeing of staff. The guidelines and rules of procedure are intended to provide support with this work and in these situations.

The aim is to provide safety for managers, staff, students and the person reporting that someone is a victim.

## What is violence in close relationships?

Violence in close relationships is when a person becomes the victim of abuse from a person who is or has been close to them, and the relationship has been intimate and based upon trust. A perpetrator may be a partner, parent, sibling, child, grandchild or other family member.

Both men and women can be the victim of violence in close relationships, however women are more affected than men. Men are over-represented among those who are abusive towards women and other men. The abuse can be physical, sexual, psychological, financial, and material.

### Physical abuse

Physical violence can include beating, pushing, kicking and strangle holds.

### Sexual abuse

Sexual violence involves attacks and victimisation of a sexual nature. This can include unwelcome touching, forced sexual actions, rape or other sexual violation. This could also include a person being photographed or filmed against their will during a sexual activity.

### Psychological abuse and violent threats

Psychological abuse and violent threats include insults, isolation, emotional blackmail, shaming or stalking. It can also include a perpetrator threatening to harm a child, pet or close friend.

### Material and financial abuse

Material and financial abuse often involve the perpetrator taking control over a person's finances and/or material assets. This increases the victim's isolation making it more difficult for them to leave the relationship. It can also involve vandalism, such as destroying furniture, crockery and other items in the home. Violence against pets also constitutes material abuse.

## The employer's duties

### The Work Environment Act

An employer has a statutory duty to promote a good work environment and prevent ill-health and incidents in the workplace. Working conditions are to be adapted to the physical and mental conditions surrounding a person. Furthermore, work must take place in a healthy and secure environment.

The Work Environment Act places students and employees on an equal footing, however there are no provisions governing job modification and rehabilitation responsibility for students.

#### Systematic work environment management

Systematic work environment management must be a natural element of everyday work. It must include physical, psychological and social workplace conditions that are significant to the work environment. This means that an employer must investigate, assess risk, remedy and follow up on risks in the work environment of both staff and students.

#### Job modification

Job modification is defined as individual measures taken in the physical, organisational and social work environment to enable a member of staff whose working capacity is reduced to continue working or return to work. It is used as a preventive measure to avoid illness and sick leave, as well as in the work following sick leave (AFS 2020:5, p.7).

#### Rehabilitation

An employee who is on sick leave as a result of violence in close relationships may need support and rehabilitation to be able to return to work. As an employer, we are responsible for vocational rehabilitation. Mid Sweden University has a rehabilitation process and HR specialists and occupational health services can provide support with rehabilitation work.

Additional services are available that are better suited to managing other elements of the employee’s personal circumstances. These include the police, social services and women's shelters. For instance, social services and women's shelters are better equipped for providing counselling to a person who has been the victim of abuse.