Rules of Procedure

2024-04-16

Registration number: MIUN 2024/1073

Rules of procedure regarding employees or students who are the victim of violence in close relationships

##### Published: 2024-04-16

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

##### Responsible function: Vice-chancellor

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##### Date of decision: 2024-04-16

##### Period of validity: 2027-04-15

##### Latest review: Date

##### 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.

##### Previous versions State registration number and date of decision

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## **Rules of procedure regarding employees or students who are the victim of violence in close relationships**

## Mid Sweden University’s position

Mid Sweden University will not tolerate violence in close relationships, 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.

## As a manager, what can you do?

Violence in close relationships risks affecting the victim’s working capacity and relationships in the workplace. It may also have a negative impact on the entire workplace, for example by creating conflict, concern or tension as well as increasing colleagues’ workloads.

As part of the work environment management tasks, there is a responsibility to be alert to the wellbeing of staff. As a manager, you should demonstrate compassion and talk to your staff if you become aware of signs of a member of staff experiencing violence in close relationships. You should therefore ask how your employee is feeling and how their work is going, as well as ask what support they need. Depending on the outcome of the conversation, action may need to be taken from a work environment perspective. This may include counselling, job modification or rehabilitation.

As a manager delegated work environment duties, you must ensure that your staff’s work environment is safe and secure, even if they work remotely or hybrid. Working from home poses a work environment risk for an employee who is the victim of violence in close relationships. Thus, as a manager, you will need closer contact with your staff, ask them questions and be alert to risks in their home work environment. If a safe work environment cannot be created in the employee's home, it is better if they work on site in their regular workplace.

The occupational health service provides support to employees who have experienced any form of violence in close relationships. They, in turn, can help employees access further help and support.

#### Student victims

The Student Health Care provides support to students who have experienced any form of violence in close relationships. They, in turn, can help the student access further help and support.

### Warning signs

The following signs may suggest that an employee is the victim of violence in close relationships. Naturally, some of the signs described below may be due to reasons other than violence in close relationships, however from a work environment perspective, line managers must find out about their employee's wellbeing and be alert to whether violence may be the cause.

* Repeated short-term absence.
* Difficulties being flexible with working hours.
* Stops participating in social activities outside of work.
* Close telephone contact with their partner during working hours.
* A partner who always picks up and drops off the employee at work.
* Tiredness, difficulty concentrating, anxiety, low mood or substance use.
* An over-protective and controlling partner.
* Bruises, redness and wounds.

### Questions you can ask as a manager

#### The performance review

The support material for performance reviews includes a few questions relating to experiences of threats and abuse. As the university is an integral part of society, we know that social problems can also arise among ourselves, which is why we ask questions that relate to discrimination and violence in close relationships. All employees are asked the same questions, meaning that nobody needs to feel singled out. The questions are:

* Do you feel unsafe at home or at work in any way? *(question taken from the Swedish Gender Equality Agency)*
* Do you behave in a way that you have noticed negatively affects other people, either at home or in the workplace? *(question taken from the Swedish Gender Equality Agency for determining whether a person is subjecting another to violence in close relationships)*

#### The rehabilitation meeting

During the rehabilitation meeting, as a manager you will need to ask questions about the employee’s wellbeing. If there are signs to suggest ongoing abuse that is affecting an employee’s health, as a manager and out of concern, you should ask your employee questions about the issue.

Examples of questions include:

* How do you like it here at work? (The question can be based on issues such as high rates of absence or the employee avoiding joint activities)
* Are you able to achieve a work-life balance here?
* Do you feel safe, both here and at home?
* Have you ever been, or are you treated badly by somebody at work or at home?
* As your manager, can I support you in any way?

#### Well-being conversation

As a manager, if you are worried or suspect that your employee is the victim of abuse, you should – out of consideration – raise this issue with the person by holding a well-being conversation.

You can use the work place dialogue question guide for your well-being conversation. The guide was created by Prevent in collaboration with Umeå University. You can access this guide on the pages for managers on the staff portal beneath the `well-being conversation’ heading.

Examples of questions in the guide include:

* What support do you receive from those close to you – how safe do you feel?
* Are there times when you feel afraid? At work? In other situations?

### Safety planning

It may be necessary to create an action plan to minimise the risk that the workplace becomes an unsafe place for the employee if they leave an abusive relationship. This primarily applies to an employee moving to a safe house and/or being given a protected identity.

Your HR specialist and the university’s security commander can help you with the work with the action plan and implementation of measures.

#### Examples of sections in an action plan

The following examples can be included in an action plan. They were taken from the Swedish Gender Equality Agency ([www.jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se](http://www.jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se)).

* Appoint a workplace contact person who:
	+ has the details of a contact chosen by the employee and can be contacted if something happens or the victim does not come in to work;
	+ regularly contacts the victim while they are absent from work;
	+ telephones the employee at agreed times to ensure that everything is ok (e.g. once per week or day).
* You must ensure that:
	+ nobody in the workplace discloses where the victim may be, not even to family members;
	+ as few people in the workplace as possible know where the victim can be found.
* Other things to keep in mind
	+ If necessary, change codes for entering offices as well as email passwords and more.
	+ Understand that the victim may need to change their working hours or take time off work due to time-consuming activities such as police interviews and legal hearings.
	+ If it is possible for the organisation, a temporary internal change of workplace may be suitable, i.e. the victim is able to continue working, albeit somewhere else for a short time.
	+ The university has procedures for processing protected personal details. Therefore, it is essential that you contact the HR specialist and security commander for help.

## What can colleagues and coursemates do?

Show that you care and ask questions out of consideration for your colleague or coursemate. Although you must remember to show respect and sensitivity towards your colleague or coursemate.

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency has tips about what to think about before talking to your colleague or coursemate:

* Maintain a neutral stance towards the abuser. If you criticise the partner, there is a risk that the victim will end up in a defensive position. The victim may also blame themselves, rather than the abuser.
* If you are dismissed, do not take this personally.
* Tell them what you can do, what support you and the workplace can give them.
* Be clear that you will not do anything without first informing them, nor will you do anything that goes against their will.
* Respect their view of the situation and do not give advice.
* Have patience, offer your help at the pace they prefer.

## Who do you turn to if you are the victim, or see somebody being victimised?

Regardless of whether you or a colleague are the victim, you can always turn to your manager who is responsible for your work environment. You can also contact a union representative or health and safety representative.

You can contact the student health service if you are a student and the victim of abuse, or are aware of a coursemate who is.

**Reporting to social services**

If a student or employee’s child is suspected to be at risk of harm following violence in close relationships, this should be reported to social services. Social services will then investigate the child's circumstances.

## Training

Links to online training and more information about violence in close relationships can be found on the staff portal.

## Confidentiality

Information about job modification and rehabilitation linked to sick leave is confidential and bound by professional secrecy. As a manager with staff responsibility, you must always consult with your employee and agree on which information may be spread to others. Documents relating to rehabilitation cases must be stored securely.