

March 27, 2012

DIRECTIVE:	JOB CORPS INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 11-60
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TO: ALL JOB CORPS NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF
ALL JOB CORPS REGIONAL OFFICE STAFF
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER DIRECTORS
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER OPERATORS
ALL NATIONAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT CONTRACTORS
ALL OUTREACH, ADMISSIONS, AND CTS CONTRACTORS

FROM: EDNA PRIMROSE
National Director
Office of Job Corps

SUBJECT: Recognizing Warning Signs of Potentially Violent Behavior,
and the Referral Process

1. Purpose. To remind the Job Corps community about the importance of recognizing warning signs of potentially violent behavior, and the referral process.
2. Background. It is not always possible to predict behavior that will lead to violence. However, staff and students can recognize certain warning signs.

In some situations and for some youth, different combinations of events, behaviors, and emotions may lead to aggressive rage or violent behavior toward self or others. A good rule of thumb is to assume that these warning signs, especially when they are presented in combination, indicate a need for a referral to determine an appropriate intervention. Recognizing the warning signs of potentially violent behavior is the first step in preventing a violent act. Violence is not an event, it is a process. Therefore center staff and students must be aware of warning behaviors that could provide clues that a person has the propensity for violence.

3. Recommendations. Job Corps has been active in addressing and preventing violent behavior through the development of Information Notices, website resources, Technical Assistance Guides (TAG), presentations, and center staff trainings. Most recently, Job Corps has partnered with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and provided webinars to staff and students on violence prevention. However, listed below are suggestions to increase violence prevention efforts based on recognizing possible precursors to violence, warning signs, and when to make referrals.

WHAT ARE POSSIBLE PRECURSORS TO VIOLENCE?

Circumstances or situations that may trigger disruption and/or rage:

- A break-up with boy/girl friend
- Death/suicide of family member, friend, classmate, or community member
- Arrest of a parent or caregiver
- Public/peer humiliation
- Family member fighting in war
- Prejudice (homophobia, racism, bigotry)
- Physical factors (hunger, allergies, gastrointestinal issues, sleep deprivation)
- Exposure to violence, aggression, bullying, and/or gang conflict
- Abuse (physical, sexual, and emotional)
- Strained relationship between teacher and students
- Poor academic or trade performance
- Peer isolation or ostracization

WHAT ARE POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS FOR VIOLENT BEHAVIOR?

None of these signs alone is sufficient for predicting aggression or violence. Moreover, it is inappropriate and potentially harmful to use the warning signs as a checklist against which to match individual students. Rather, the warning signs are offered only as an aid in identifying and referring students who may need help. Always consider social, cultural, and linguistic factors when judging student and adult behavior. The warning signs include:

Behaviors/Activities

- Any change in behavior and attitude that causes concern
- A student who loses his temper on a daily basis
- A student who always seems ready to engage in a physical fight
- A student who significantly vandalizes or damages property
- A history of violent or aggressive behavior
- Drug or alcohol use, especially binge-drinking episodes
- Threatening others regularly
- Trouble controlling feelings like anger
- Withdrawal from friends and usual activities
- Feeling rejected or alone
- Having been a victim of bullying
- History of discipline problems or frequent run-ins with staff members
- Feeling constantly disrespected

Appearance

- Any change in appearance that causes concern
- Poor hygiene
- Unkempt hair and clothes
- Inappropriate affect – laughing at situations that are sad or disturbing
- Expressionless face or an inability to express and/or experience joy and pleasure

Interests

- Gang membership or strong desire to be in a gang
- Fascination with weapons, especially guns
- Poetry, art, or songs with violent themes

THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS STUDENTS MAY EXPRESS

- A student who has detailed plans to commit acts of violence
- A student who announces threats or plans to hurt others
- A victim/martyr self-concept – fantasizes that someday they will represent the oppressed and wreak vengeance on the oppressors
- Paranoia – feeling like others are out to get them

HOW TO RESPOND TO WARNING SIGNS AND WHEN TO REFER?

At any time, if the behavior is obviously dangerous or threatening to self and/or others, first ensure safety. Call center security and/or local police. Remove the student in question or remove other students from the area.

During the Training Day

- Staff are encouraged to report student suspicious behavior to their supervisor. The supervisor should make a referral to the student's counselor for an initial assessment. The counselor will make a decision if a referral to Health and Wellness is needed.
- Students are encouraged to report student suspicious behavior to any center staff member. Students who feel connected to their peers and staff are more inclined to alert a staff member if they hear a fellow student "wants to do something dangerous."

After the Training Day and Weekends

- Staff is encouraged to report student suspicious behavior to their supervisor and/or the Health and Wellness "on-call" staff person for direction.
- Students are encouraged to report student suspicious behavior to any center staff member.

WHAT ELSE CAN CENTERS DO?

- As required by the Policy and Requirements Handbook (PRH), provide training on the Symptomatic Management Guideline for Non-Health Staff, specifically the guideline on how to manage changes in behavior or unusual behavior.
- Conduct brief trainings for students and staff on the information contained in this Information Notice.

- Provide a cell phone number to students where they can send an anonymous text message to security to report any unusual or strange behavior of fellow students.
- After an episode has been resolved, talk to other students who may have witnessed or been involved, and provide limited structured information about the situation and its resolution. Privacy rights must be protected. Provide assurances about safety.
- For additional information on what to do after a traumatic event on center go to the Job Corps Health and Wellness website and click on the tab “Emergency Management.”

References: American Psychological Association (APA) and APA Help Center.

<http://www.apa.org/ed/schools/cpse/activities/violence-against.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/warning-signs.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/recovering-disasters.aspx>

4. Action. Addressees are to ensure that this Information Notice is distributed to all staff.
5. Expiration Date. Until superseded.
6. Inquiries. Inquiries should be directed to Carol Abnathy at (202) 693-3283 or abnathy.carol@dol.gov, or Johnetta Davis at (202) 693-8010 or davis.johnetta@dol.gov.