

JPCA Courthouse Safety Training

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Court security division



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Overview

- ☐ Personal Safety "The Basics"
- ☐ Courthouse Safety
- ☐ Threat Reporting
- ☐ Discussion

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Normalcy Bias

- “Nothing like that has ever happened to me”
- “You’re just being paranoid!”
- “That only happens in the movies”
- “If something like that happened, *I’d just know* what to do”

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Normalcy Bias

- Bad things can, do and will happen
- Being prepared is not the same as being paranoid
- You don’t need to build a bunker, but you should have a plan for home, work and travel
- The life you save.....may be your own!

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Levels of Awareness

White	Unprepared and unready to take action.
Yellow	Prepared, alert & relaxed. Good situational awareness.
Orange	Alert to probable danger. Ready to take action.
Red	Action Mode. Focused on the emergency at hand.
Black	Panic. Breakdown of physical & mental performance.

- Unless you are asleep-You should ALWAYS be at yellow

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Personal Safety

- ☐ Always Be Aware
- ☐ Trust Your Instincts
- ☐ "If it doesn't seem right, it probably isn't!" or "Knowing without knowing why"
- ☐ If you see something-say something!
- ☐ Confidence!!

We judge BEHAVIORS & ACTIONS

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Personal Safety

- Travel with safety in mind
- Escape
 - Where will you go if you need to run away?
- Have a plan-share it with family-talk!
- Know your surroundings
 - Google street view
 - Satellite views

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Street Safety

- Carry a charged cell phone
- Walk in populated, well lit areas when possible-Safety in numbers
- If someone is following you:
 - Make eye contact for one second
 - Make an abrupt direction change
 - Go to a public place & Call for help

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Street Safety

- Walk facing traffic
- If threatened from a vehicle, run in the opposite direction
- Run, fight, scream - Don't get into car

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Personal Protection

- Whose job is it to protect *you*??
 - The police/sheriff?
 - The court?
 - Your spouse/partner?
 - None of the above!
 - Its YOU!!
- Fighting back!
 - What is your "EDC" and how can it save your life?

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Defense Tools

- Pepper Spray
- Electronic Devices
- “Tactical” Lights
- Impact

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LTC/Constitutional Carry

- Guns aren’t magic
- Training-training-training
- Holsters & safe carry
- Retention
- Mindset!

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Pre Attack Indicators

- Scanning Eyes Back/Forth
 - Looking for witnesses/LE/victims/escape routes
- Heavy Breathing/Flared Nostrils
- Flushed Red Face/Sweating
- Wide Eyes/Dilated Pupils
- Rapid Blinking or no Blinking
- Clenched Jaw & Balled Fists
- “Puffing” of Chest or Fighting Stance

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On the Road



Vary your routes/routines/times



No personalization



Be aware of choke points



Transitional spaces

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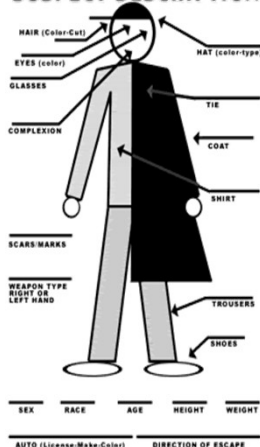
Calling 911

- Many people have never called 911
- First words to 911 are always
 - **Specific location/address-Where are you!**
 - Address/Building name/floor/office number
- Nature of incident
 - Shooting/bomb/fight/fire/medical emergency/etc.
- Number and types of injuries
 - Gunshot/stab/bleeding/not-breathing/heart/broken bones...
- Suspect location and description
 - As detailed as possible

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Suspect Description

SUSPECT DESCRIPTION



- Race
- Gender
- Age-approx.
- Height
- Weight/Build
- Top to Bottom Description
 - Hat, jacket/shirt, pants/shorts, shoes
- Describe weapons/bags/etc.
- Vehicles
 - Color/Year/Make/Model/Details

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Summary

- **Trust Your Instincts**
- **Always Be Aware**
- **Have a Plan**
- **Know Where to Go/Who to Call**

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15 Minute Break

- Did I time it right???
- Starting back up at 2

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Courthouse Safety Principles

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Justice of the Peace Courts

- “We’re just a small town JP. Nothing ever happens here, isn’t this a **little much?**”
- Are people angry when they get evicted? When they lose money in a long festering neighbor dispute? When they have to pay fines?
- Do those things happen in your court?
- Big or small, rural or urban...no court is immune to violence.

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Policy & Procedure

☐ Do you know:

- ☐ Who is on the court security committee?
- ☐ Who can carry guns in the courthouse?

☐ Make sure you know what to do:

- ☐ Fire alarm
- ☐ Bomb threat
- ☐ Power outage
- ☐ Violence in courtroom
- ☐ Threat against you, where to report?
 - ☐ Sheriff? Constable? Police?

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Courtroom Safety Plan

- Develop courtroom safety plan
 - Roles of courtroom staff
 - Ingress, egress & refuge (Plan A, B & C)
 - Duress button location and testing
- Daily calendar meeting-Include Judge/Bailiff/Clerk
- Bailiff-Judge-Staff Communication
- Staff incident debrief

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Emergency Action

- **Define roles of each courthouse staffer**
- **Clerk-press duress button and get down or get out with judge**
- **Court Reporter-clear well & seek refuge/get out with judge/clerk**
- **Bailiff**
 - *Priority is judge's safety*
 - Once judge is safe, restore order in courtroom

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Courtroom Safety Plan

- **Ingress**
 - What is my primary route into the court?
 - My Secondary?
- **Egress**
 - What is my primary route out of the court?
 - My Secondary?
- **Refuge**
 - If I can't get out, where is the best place to seek cover? Ballistic bench?
- **Listen for and follow bailiff instructions...but be ready to save yourself**

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Courtroom Safety Plan

- Duress buttons- Where are they?
 - Are they tested?
 - By whom?
 - How often?
- Alternate methods of summoning assistance
 - Court Security Unit telephone number
 - Program it into every courtroom phone

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Calendar Meeting

- **Before court meet with staff & bailiff**
- **Review calendar for defendants/cases that:**
 - Have caused disruptions in the past
 - Are having disciplinary issues in jail
 - Are facing sentencing/an unfavorable ruling/remand
 - Are high profile/gang related
- **Identify issues before they occur and take steps to prevent them**

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Communications

- **Verbal & Non-Verbal Communication**
 - Judge to Bailiff/Staff
 - Bailiff to Judge/Staff
 - Staff to Bailiff/Judge
- Can you communicate a threat without the defendant or spectators knowing?
- **How do you contact security staff?**
 - Duress buttons
 - Phone numbers
 - Code words

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Violence at Work

- If attacked-*Don't be a victim!*
 - Fight back until separated from attacker
 - Get away
 - Alert Court Security Unit

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Incident Debrief

- If an incident does occur, learn from it
- What:
 - Worked well
 - Needs improvement
 - Equipment needs to be added/repared
 - May have prevented the incident
- Ensure the emotional & physical well being of staff-Employee Assistance Plan

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Public Contact-Phone & Internet

- Harassing callers/mailers
 - Give proper advice/routing
 - Explain process/limitations of your power to address issue-put it in writing
 - Tell them you can no longer assist them
 - Stop responding to/accepting comms
 - Let supervisors/peers know-document incidents
 - Contact Security/LE if necessary

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Meetings & Appointments

- If you suspect violence-have security/LE/staff on alert/nearby
- Client History-Past Threat or Violence? Sensitive topic for meeting? Giving bad news?
- Don't put subject between you and exit
- Scan for weapons of opportunity
 - Remove blunt object or sharp objects within reach
- If subject escalates, stay calm, press duress
- Do not engage-if violence seems imminent, get out

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Progression of Violence

- **Three types of violent behavior:**
 - Verbal Abuse/Threats
 - Threatening/Intimidating Behavior
 - Physical Assault/Violence
- Any of these behaviors, alone or together, constitutes an incident
- Has your court suffered one or more incidents?

If yes-you need a plan!

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Categories of Violence

- **By Strangers**
 - Random street violence (to/from work/breaks outside) or people entering the court whose sole motivation is violence
- **By Court Users**
 - Angry at a perceived insult or lack of service/poor outcome
- **By Co-Workers**
 - Disgruntled staff, disciplinary actions, performance reviews, promotional jealousy
- **By Personal Relations**
 - Intimate partners, parents, children, family members, close friends, acquaintances

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Risk Factors- Stranger Violence

- **Face to face contact/close proximity to public**
- **Valuable property in workplace (computers/electronics/cash/etc.)**
- **Working late/early/hours of darkness**
- **Working alone or in small numbers**
- **High crime areas**
- **Unsafe parking**
- **Lack of security or law enforcement presence/response**








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Mitigating Stranger Violence

- Scheduling eliminates need for solo opening/closing (buddy system)
- Adequate exterior lighting & landscaping
- Safe parking area
- Video cameras, building alarm and sturdy doors/locks
- Valuable property secured/inaccessible
- Control public access to office
- Develop a system of codes
- Identify safe place of refuge
- Employ security staff

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Risk Factors-Client Violence

-  Working alone or in isolated areas
-  Working before or after regular hours
-  Facility has uncontrolled public access
-  Clients with past violent behavior
-  Weapons of opportunity available
-  Lack of ability to contact coworkers/security/LE for help
-  Lack of escape route or refuge

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Mitigating Client Violence

Control public access to facility and/or staff spaces

Limit employee isolation (employees shouldn't be alone with clients)

Set up workspace to create physical separation between employee and client

Remove weapons of opportunity

Method of alerting coworkers/supervisors/security/LE

Develop agency security plan and train often

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Risk Factor-Co-Worker Violence

- Negative performance reviews
- Disciplinary action
- Pay cuts/furloughs
- Excess overtime/long hours/excessive workloads
- Lack of administrative attention to complaints
- Lack of discipline when protocols breached
- Poor training
- Personality conflicts
- Labor/management disputes
- Workplace romance gone bad
- Professional jealousy-promotions/assignments/raises/etc.

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Mitigating Co-Worker Violence

Develop policies setting clear expectations for behavior and performance

Fairly and consistently enforce policy

Foster an atmosphere where staff are comfortable communicating concerns to HR/management

Develop policies to safely handle negative employment actions

Continue to train staff on safety and security

Provide Employee Assistance benefits and encourage their use

**Install physical security features
(lighting/landscaping/cameras/locks/alarms/etc.)**

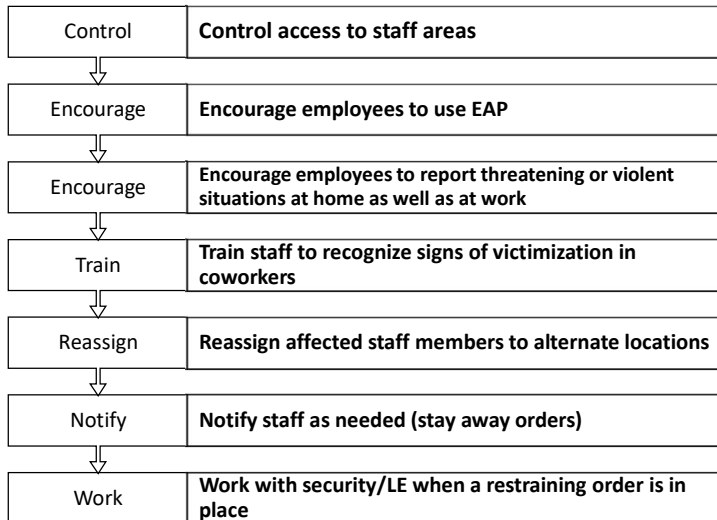
Communicate with local law enforcement for fast response

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Risk Factor-Personal Relations

- **Current or former romantic partner comes to worksite to confront staff**
- **Issues staff are dealing with in personal life extend into the workplace-affecting coworkers**

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Mitigating Personal Relations Violence

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iWatchTexas COMMUNITY REPORTING SYSTEM

Launched in 2018 by Texas DPS

Available as a Web, Android and Apple App.

Reports reviewed by LE analysts to determine similar reporting.
Appropriate referrals – “Connecting the Dots”

Less than 5 minutes to complete – CONFIDENTIAL
Option to leave your call back number/email.

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iWatchTexas COMMUNITY REPORTING SYSTEM

Reporting mechanism for suspicious activities or behaviors indicative of future or ongoing terrorist or criminal activity.

- ✓ Prevent threats through early identification
- ✓ Initiate criminal investigations
- ✓ Provide leads to ongoing investigations
- ✓ Track individuals that may pose a threat

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Examples of Reportable Behaviors and Activities

- Comments regarding harming or killing someone.
- Asking questions about/taking pictures of building security & procedures.
- Requesting sensitive information – blueprints, security plans, VIP travel.
- Briefcase, suitcase, backpack or package left behind (testing staff/security reaction).
- Seeing the same vehicle or people circling the building, walking the halls, loitering (learning the layout, watching for security systems and routines).

www.iwatchtx.org

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Court Security Incident Reporting

The LE Agency providing security **SHALL** provide a written report regarding any court security incident that occurs in or around a building housing a court within **3 DAYS**.

Copy to be provided to presiding judge !

Burden of reporting has shifted to the LEO.

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What is a Court Security Incident?

- **Violence, threat of violence or criminal activity in the court.**
- **Weapons or contraband in the building.**
- **Anything abnormal, unusual, different than the routine that raises suspicion and/or caused security or court leadership to be involved.**
- **May occur in another department within courthouse.**
- **Subjective – You make that determination.**

If you have to ask yourself if something should be reported....it should be!

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<http://www.txcourts.gov/programs-services/court-security>

COURT SECURITY INCIDENT REPORTING

Court Security Incident Reporting

**SUBMIT A SECURITY INCIDENT
REPORT**

As amended by SB 42 of the 85th Legislative Session, Article

102.017(f) of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure requires the sheriff, constable, or other law enforcement agency or entity that provides security for a court to submit to the Office of Court Administration a written report regarding any security incident involving court security that occurs in or around a building housing a court for which the sheriff, constable, agency or entity provides security not later than the third business day after the date the incident occurred. A copy of the report must also be provided to the presiding judge of the court in which the incident occurred.

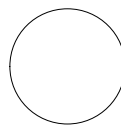
What is a Court Security Incident? Any adverse event that threatens the security of a person or property, or causes or may cause significant disruption to functions of the court due to a breach in security. This includes, but is not limited to, threats to harm a person or property, disorderly conduct, assaults, escape/attempts, weapons, introduction of weapons or contraband, or any other serious situation involving security issues that disrupts court activities. Note: An incident is not a medical emergency or a non-threatening personnel matter.

Who should submit a court security incident report? The sheriff, constable, or other law enforcement agency or entity that provides security for a court.

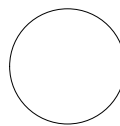
When should a report be submitted? A Texas Court Security Incident Report form **must** be completed for each incident involving a breach of court security that occurred in or around a courthouse, courtroom, or court-related offices. **By statute, the report must be submitted to the Office of Court Administration (OCA) no later than the third business day after the incident.** You will receive a copy of your submitted report by email.

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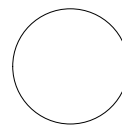
Review



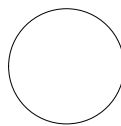
BE AWARE



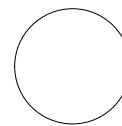
HAVE A PLAN



COMMUNICATE



MITIGATE



KNOW HOW TO
GET HELP

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Contact & Questions

- **Nick Barsetti**

- Court Security Division, Office of Court Administration,
Texas Judicial Branch

- **Nicholas.Barsetti@txcourts.gov**

- **830-388-1030**