Policy Corner:

CUNY has updated its workplace violence prevention policy, emphasizing that it will respond promptly to threats and acts of violence.

Do you know what constitutes workplace violence? Here are some answers:

CUNY’s policy defines workplace violence as any physical assault or act of aggressive behavior that occurs where an employee performs any work related duty.

It includes, but is not limited to:

1. An attempt or threat, whether verbal or physical, to inflict physical injury upon an employee.
2. Any intentional display of force that would give an employee reason to fear or expect bodily harm.
3. Intentional and wrongful physical contact with an employee without his or her consent that entails some injury.
4. Stalking an employee in a manner that may cause the employee to fear for his or her physical safety and health.

This refers to an action that occurs during the course of employment or has arisen as a result of employment. For the details of the University’s policy on workplace violence prevention, please see: http://www.cuny.edu/violenceprevention

Hotline For Help with Many of Life’s Challenges

Are challenges in your personal life affecting your peace of mind or your work?

Here are some answers:

CUNY employees can save money by using the CUNY Work/Life Program’s Savings Center, a discount shopping program provided through the Corporate Perks Web site. The Savings Center offers discounts of up to 25% on name brand, practical and luxury items.

First-time users need to register using the organization code “advantage” to access the Savings Center. If you are already a registered user, you can access and login to the Savings Center from the link below:

http://www.powerflexweb.com/centersDetail.php?Division=2&nameDivision=Cents&kModule=m9002&nameModule=Saveings%20Center&kElement=020&nameElement=Saveings%20Center&recid=36258

And for those work/balance issues, the counselors also can recommend solutions to less daunting problems—a reliable pet kennel for example, or a better gym.

Recently, a staffer called the hotline with a concern about her elderly mother who lives hundreds of miles away from New York and has moved into an assisted living facility.

While it was safe and secure, her mother needed more care than she could get on site. So it fell to the CUNY staffer’s sister—who didn’t live too far away but has a full-time job—to spend all of her free time taking her mother on excursions to lift her spirits and make sure she was taking her medication properly.

This was the kind of heavy responsibility that could affect an employee’s work. The solution was to hire people to help her mother.

But within five days after calling the Work/Life hotline, the problem was solved. A counselor helped her identify the best-located local agencies. As a result she was able to make a few calls instead of many. She hired a companion for her mother to drive her to appointments and take her on excursions. The program also helped her find a home care health nurse to monitor medication. “A lot of the groundwork was done for us,” the staffer says. “I saved a enormous amount of time...” And this has allowed my mother a certain amount of independence she would not have had otherwise.”

“Well-balanced employees are more engaged, productive and focused,” says Veronica Alabi, an account executive for CCA Alabi, a social worker, was until recently a counselor who

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answered hotline queries from CUNY employees and their relatives. She emphasizes that employees “achieve more balance when they use our service to proactively manage their needs.”

She says that in 2010 more than half of the employees who called needed help with psychological or emotional issues.

For example, one CUNY employee needed help in dealing with a family member’s suicide. “Through short-term grief counseling, the Work/Life Program provided the employee with a safe space to express feelings and to receive support and education about coping strategies,” Alabi says.

Others employees asked about work-life challenges and sought help with personal and job-related situations.

For more info, go to www.cuny.edu/worklife and click on the “saving center” box on the right. The site also offers free webinars with assistance on a wide diversity of life-balancing subjects—even including one on the use of feng shui, the ancient Chinese system of architectural choices, to turn your home into a more soothing environment.

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Commuter Program Available to All

News flash: The University’s senior college and central office employees have officially transitioned to the new Commuter Benefits Program administered by WageWorks.

Community college employees transitioned late last year.

Employees who were previously enrolled with the commuter program administered by JP Morgan Chase have had their old cards deactivated and received new cards from WageWorks. And here’s some more good news: Balances on the old JP Morgan Chase cards were transferred to new WageWorks accounts.

As reported in the last issue of For Your Benefit, the new WageWorks program gives CUNY employees who use public transportation to commute to work more and better ways to save. It covers virtually any transit system in the Tri-State area.

The program provides a stored value card loaded with pre-tax and post-tax payroll deductions. It works just like a credit card. Other options include a transit pass plan, a plan for Access-A-Ride and a Park-n-Ride plan for those who park at or near public transit on their way to work.

Do you have a new WageWorks Commuter card? If so, make sure to activate the card so you can begin to use it. And here’s some additional and important information about the new Commuter Benefits Program administered by WageWorks.

• The Commuter Card is a MasterCard stored-value card that works just like a credit card at transit agency ticket vending machines and ticket windows.

• When using this Commuter Card be sure to select “credit.” Not “debit.”

• If you enrolled in the Transit Pass Plan, make sure to log in to the WageWorks website to choose the particular transit pass you would like to have mailed to your home.

• Unused balances will remain in your account, and/or on your card as long as you work at CUNY.

• If you leave, you will have 90 days from your separation date to spend the balance of your account.

For more information visit www.getwageworks.com/nyc.

Welcome
For Your Benefit is a publication of The City University of New York’s Office of Human Resources Management and Office of Labor Relations. Published for University faculty and staff, For Your Benefit provides information on employee benefits, programs, policies and opportunities. For more please visit: www.cuny.edu and click “Faculty/Staff”

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Smoothing The Way For Veterans’ Benefits

Epifanio Rebollo, a Brooklyn College Peace Officer, has also served in war — in Basra, Iraq. Assigned to National Guard Company 442 in Jamaica, he was deployed in June 2009 for fourteen months.

A married father of three, Rebollo, 43, received certain military benefits from CUNY which, like those provided by the city and state, have been extended each year since 9/11 by the University's board.

In 2000, CUNY had 71 reservist employees. Rebollo says Human Resources personnel at Brooklyn College helped him to get financial and medical benefits. “I was not aware of the specifics,” he said. “But they were great and they put in for it.” Also, his family was able to use his CUNY medical benefits during his time in Iraq.

CUNY covers the first year of health benefits for families of individuals who are deployed. “The key area we are concerned about is the family,” says Leslie E. Williams, University Executive Director of Shared Services. Rebollo was assigned to assist Iraqi civilians — and transport troops, envos and journalists, “often through the city, outside the [military] wire,” or the zone of relative safety and protection. He describes seeing thousands of Iraqis travel miles to his base for medical care and the heartbreak of having to turn most away due to a lack of facilities and doctors.

Before ’9/11, CUNY-employed reservists called up for active military duty were eligible to receive one month of full University pay, once a year. This benefit is still in place. The extension provides an additional “once in a lifetime” one month’s pay for reservists deployed to fight the war on terror.

Since 2001, these reservists also receive financial benefits to ensure that together with their military compensation there is no reduction from what would have been their CUNY pay while they are deployed. As long as the CUNY board renews the policy, this “reduced military leave pay” is available for the full time of deployment during a calendar year.

CUNY’s Office of Human Resources Management is putting together a deployment package to help explain these benefits. That might some day help Taneshia Orridge, 29, a City College Peace Officer, who has been in the National Guard since 2003.

She served in Iraq but has not been deployed since she began working at CUNY in 2008. “It’s not a matter of wanting to go. I have to go,” she says. “I am single. I’d rather go than have someone who is married and has children go.”

Data Bank

Do you know how many of your co-workers took the latest Early Retirement Incentive? The answer: 667

Some details about who chose the benefit offered by the University in 2010:

Of that number, 281 were faculty members, 141 were non-teaching instructional staff, and 245 were classified staff.

Part “A” of the ERI drew 635 applicants. It was open to eligible employees age 50 or older with at least 10 years of service, who were members of the New York City Employees’ Retirement System, the Teachers’ Retirement System of the City of New York, Board of Education Retirement System of the City of New York, or participants in TIAA/CREF.

Last year, 149 more CUNY employees took advantage of the ERI than in 2002, the last time such an incentive was offered. ERI-2002 participants totaled 517, including 311 faculty, 125 non-teaching instructional staff, and 81 classified staff.

Part B had 32 participants, and was available to eligible employees age 55 or older with at least 25 years of service who were members of the New York State and local employees’ retirement system, or the New York City teachers’, employees’ and Board of Education retirement systems.

Last year, 149 more CUNY employees took advantage of the ERI than in 2002, the last time such an incentive was offered. ERI-2002 participants totaled 517, including 311 faculty, 125 non-teaching instructional staff, and 81 classified staff.