

*There was a time when places of worship were not considered potential targets for violence. Sadly, we now know that places of worship, no matter what religion they represent, could experience acts of violence. It is important to take the preventive steps outlined in this brochure to lessen the chance of violence and to ensure better response to violence if it does happen.*

## Common Violence Myths

- ❖ It won't happen here.
- ❖ We can handle it.
- ❖ The matter is too minor to report.
- ❖ The matter is a private one.
- ❖ There is no way to tell when it will happen.
- ❖ It is not worth the effort.
- ❖ That type of person will not come here.
- ❖ We do not have that type of person here.



**ORANGE COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

**Crime Prevention Unit  
408-254-7106**

**EMERGENCY 9-1-1  
Non-Emergency  
407-836-HELP (4357)**

*Visit us online at  
[www.ocso.com](http://www.ocso.com).*



**ORANGE COUNTY  
SHERIFF**

*Sheriff Jerry L. Demings*



**Safety & Security  
in Your Place of  
Worship**

## Violence Prevention

This brochure is being provided by the Orange County Sheriff's Office as a result of recent tragic attacks upon places of worship. Often times, places of worship were not considered as being targeted locations. Tragically, we know that places of worship, like schools and other buildings, are susceptible to violence.

Violence, whether in a place of worship, school, home, or on the street can have serious consequences. There are no simple solutions or simple formulas in predicting who will commit acts of violence. It is also true that violent behavior develops progressively and that making threats represents a state in the evolution of violence. There are observable signs that occur along the way and we must do our best to recognize them.

It is essential to react to threats either written, spoken or symbolic by reporting them. It then becomes vital to assess whether the person who made the threat has the intent, means and the motivation to carry it out.

Places of worship cannot ignore any threats of violence. Direct, hidden, plausible or not, every threat must be taken seriously and reported to your local law enforcement agency immediately.

## What You Can Do To Prepare

- ❖ Create a comprehensive all hazards crisis plan.
- ❖ Disseminate your plan for use by personnel in emergency situations.
- ❖ Train staff members and volunteers in your crisis plan.
- ❖ Ensure that a process is in place for controlling access to your place of worship.
- ❖ Make sure you have adequate lighting inside and outside of your place of worship.
- ❖ Review landscaping. Ensure that your building is not obscured by overgrowth of shrubs or bushes that can hide contraband or persons.
- ❖ Check and inspect emergency building systems, fire alarms, emergency exits and exit lights.
- ❖ Report all suspicious individuals, phone calls, or activity to your local law enforcement agency immediately.

Remember, the worst time to plan on how to react to a critical situation is during the event. Have a pre-conceived mental and physical plan as to how you will react during a crisis.

## When Your Place of Worship Is In Session

- ❖ Be visible.
- ❖ Greet your members.
- ❖ Have staff monitor general gathering areas as members enter your place of worship.
- ❖ Have staff monitor all points of entry.
- ❖ Look for suspicious individuals or activity.
- ❖ Report suspicious activity immediately to your local law enforcement agency immediately.

*Remember, together we can all help combat violence or the threat of violence and keep our community safe.*

If you would like a security survey conducted for your place of worship, or if you would like us to create or review your existing crisis plan, please use the phone numbers listed on the reverse side of this brochure to contact the Orange County Sheriff's Office.

