

1. Application Form

NASCA 2001 Outstanding Program Awards

Program Title: Preventing Workplace Violence – A Guide for Agency Planners

Category: Human Resources

State: Idaho

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a. Description of Program and Relative Significance to the Improvement and Operation/Efficiency of State Government

Preventing Workplace Violence – A Guide for Agency Planners was developed by the Idaho Department of Administration – Office of Insurance Management, and the Division of Public Works-Security, to provide Idaho state government agencies assistance in addressing the issue of violence in the workplace and to offer specific guidelines to help agencies develop plans to prevent workplace violence.

The goal of the program is to create and maintain a safe work environment via a proactive, hands-on method, which enables Idaho State employees to identify potential areas of conflict in their own workplace, to mediate solutions before problems become crises, and to resolve problems to benefit the workgroup as a whole.

A strong attribute of the “Preventing Workplace Violence” program is its adaptability by other State agencies and public service organizations. The program holds the promise of improving workplace safety and security while also affording employees the ability to solve potential problems and to participate in needed improvements.

The Guide covers information and methods to develop a complete program including how to prepare a written policy statement, organizing an incident response team, fact-finding and investigating, administrative and disciplinary considerations, employee assistance and/or counseling considerations, workplace security, and organizational recovery after an incident.

The Guide provides a process by which agencies can develop an in-house prevention program suited to meet not only a user-agency’s unique needs but also the expectations of State employees to work in a non-violent environment. The program’s guidelines are designed to offer meaningful assistance to large and small State government agencies without severely impacting limited financial resources.

b. Calculation of actual savings in the short term and/or long term

The owner agency of the “Preventing Workplace Violence” program is Idaho’s Department of Administration. Its customers are State agencies who adopt the program for implementation in their own workplaces. Agencies realize cost savings through the program’s design utilizing in-house personnel and resources for implementation and on-going prevention management.

The efficiency of a user-agency’s program is measured through the efforts of its in-house training program to decrease physical confrontation. It is also measured through its successful resolution of incidents that do occur.

Cost savings in a successful program will be evidenced by a reduction in the need for outside intervention to resolve problems and/or provide employee counseling. The owner agency provides program users the services of its Security Manager and staff to intercede, if needed, to resolve incidents of violence and to assist in reconstruction efforts.

The costs associated with the “Preventing Workplace Violence” program are portions of salaries for employees participating as prevention team members, workforce training by in-house facilitators, and the cost to produce and distribute the Guide for Agency Planners.

Contractual outsourcing has been limited to Employee Assistance Program counselors, when such professional services are deemed necessary. Given the program’s recent inauguration, cost data for program efficiency and effectiveness is in the initial stages of collection and analysis.

It should be noted that since the program’s inception in October of 2000, the Idaho State Security Manager has not received any reports from employees experiencing incidents of workplace violence.

c. Quantitative Benefits Realized by Service Recipients, Taxpayers, Agencies and/or the State

The direct beneficiaries of the Preventing Workplace Violence program are the employees of the State of Idaho. Through its proactive approach, the program provides employees a safer, more secure working environment.

Indirect beneficiaries of the program are State employees’ spouses and family members, and a host of others who visit State government workplaces such as vendors, service contractors, and interested citizens.

The Idaho State taxpayer also benefits by a reduced potential for civil liability associated with the lack of solid procedures to prevent workplace violence and to manage incidents that do occur in such a way as to minimize their potential of recurrence.

d. Relevancy of Use by Other State, Local and Federal Governments

The “Preventing Workplace Violence” program can be easily adopted and used by State, County, or Municipal government entities. Such organizations can adapt the program, with only minor modifications to meet the needs of their specific workplaces.

Idaho’s Department of Administration initiated its “Preventing Workplace Violence” program in its four Divisions in April 2000. Following a six-month trial period, the Guide for Agency Planners was distributed to all of Idaho’s State agencies in October of 2000.

The State's Division of Human Resources will be inaugurating its program based on the Department of Administration's model in the near future. To assist agencies and other entities in adopting the program, the State Security Manager and staff offer one-day training sessions for supervisors and managers. Training focuses on behavioral awareness issues, prevention strategies, developing incident response teams, and management support for prevention efforts.

The program's guidebook is available for viewing or adaptation at:

http://www2.state.id.us/adm/pubworks/facservices/security/violence_guidelines.pdf

3. Executive Summary

Since the 1980's, violence in the American workplace has been on the rise at an alarming rate. Physical confrontation between employees or visitors to a work environment ranges from intimidating behavior to aggressive yelling and shoving to the use of lethal weapons and potential injury and fatality.

Workplace violence also manifests as sabotage by breaching computer security and tampering with electrical and mechanical systems. Central to the "Preventing Workplace Violence" program is an acknowledgment on the part of the Department of Administration that reactionary models of workplace violence management may be ineffective due to their crisis management focus.

In most cases, crisis management and related activities occur after a violent incident takes place. In incidents of workplace violence, a crisis management approach does not offer avenues to *create an organizational climate of proactive violence prevention*.

In 1998, the State of Idaho's Department of Administration assigned the State Security Manager and with the support of the department's Office of Insurance Management, the responsibility to develop and implement a cost efficient and effective management approach to counteract and prevent workplace violence.

A 12-person team comprised of Department of Administration and Division of Human Resources employees representing a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and responsibility levels examined the problem of workplace violence and proactive models to manage it.

After two years of research, legal consultation, planning, and design, the Department introduced in October of 2000, its "Preventing Workplace Violence" program for State agencies, augmented by a comprehensive training and implementation manual entitled, Preventing Workplace Violence: A Guide for Agency Planners.

Believing that workplace violence prevention will not become the norm if State security programs simply focus on managing incidents as they arise, the design of the Department's program is proactive. It acknowledges that violent incidents may occur and is founded on the principle that such events may be avoided by improving the knowledge, skills, and abilities of workplace members to manage their own prevention program. Utilizing a team approach, the "Preventing Workplace Violence" program directly involves all levels of employees

In summary, the goal of the program is to create and maintain a safe work environment via a proactive, hands-on method, which enables Idaho State employees ways to identify potential areas of conflict in their own workplace, to mediate solutions before problems become crises, and to resolve problems to benefit the workgroup as a whole.