



WORKFORCE INSIGHTS

- YOUR SAFE AND DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE CONNECTION -

A publication of
Carlsbad Community Anti-Drug/Gang Coalition

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WORKPLACE SAFETY BOOSTED BY PEER EFFORTS

In the search for ways to improve workplace safety, employee wellness, and the bottom line, South Eddy County businesses have voiced the need for more help and ideas. Peer-based programs make up one approach used by some industries. The results are surprising.

WHAT IS IT?

Variations exist of the peer-based model for workplace substance abuse prevention, but there are common factors. Most take a two-pronged approach. As the name suggests, workplace peers provide the first prong of the program's structure.

Caring employees volunteer as program participants and form teams within their work area. These employees act as helpers and listeners. Training for basic substance abuse awareness and program policies is provided, teaching the helpers how to identify problems and intervene if necessary.

Peer education and awareness comprises the main thrust of the programs. The goal is preventing problems before they occur. Teams plan substance abuse awareness and

education activities best suited to their work environment. Examples may include distributing brochures to planning a family fun day.

Education to the general employee population is provided as well,

sharing the option to bypass, or "mark-off," a day when they recognize their threat to workplace safety due to substance use. A peer helper meets with the employee upon return to work. The employee's situation is

assessed with a possible referral to the company's employee assistance program. For larger companies, regional committees and more highly-trained peer counselors add to the structure.

Randomized drug testing provides the second crucial prong of most programs.

DOES IT WORK?

The answer appears to be a resounding yes. One study *continued on next page*

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COALITION'S MISSION:

To build and strengthen the capacity of our Carlsbad community to create a safe, healthy, and a drug & gang/ crime free environment. Includes serving as a catalyst to mobilize community efforts to reduce substance abuse and gang activity among youth and adults over time, in the city of Carlsbad and South Eddy County. Through prevention, intervention, education, and treatment, the Carlsbad Community Anti-Drug/Gang Coalition will promote a healthy, safe community and target risk factors that lead to substance abuse.

“ Sustainability and effectiveness go hand in hand. ”



- Bobby Bonds,
Director,
Amtrak's
Operation Red
Block

TOOL KIT SPOTLIGHT

In each issue we highlight a safe workplace resource.

<http://www.dol.gov/asp/programs/drugs/workingpartners/dfworkplace/dfwp.asp>

The **U.S. Department of Labor** web site provides comprehensive prevention resources for employers, including a drug policy builder, printable materials, and much more. This is a favorite resource of the Coalition.

THIS IS WHAT I NEED...

How do you prefer to get safe workplace resources?

Workshops? Online seminars?
Newsletters? Other ways?

Let us know! Vote in our poll:

<http://www.carlsbadcoalition.net/?q=node/71>

WORKPLACE SAFETY CONTINUED

researched the long-term benefit/cost ratio of such a program used by a national transportation corporation.¹ For their peer-based program implemented between 1988 and 1990 and continuing today, results from 1999 show that the peer-based program cost \$35 and the drug testing cost \$35 per employee. An estimated \$1,850 in employer injury costs was avoided that same year, yielding a benefit/cost ratio of 26:1.

This program, later identified as Amtrak's Operation Red Block (ORB), confirmed results in other ways. ORB Director Bobby Bonds shares that during one long-term period, Amtrak experienced 43 employee deaths company-wide. These were workplace fatal injuries wherein autopsy reports revealed no existence of drugs or alcohol, therefore not a cause. "The industry standard is that one in five work-related deaths is substance abuse related," he says. Other benefits arise as coworkers help coworkers. "One worker relating to another is invaluable."

What are some keys to success? "Sustainability and effectiveness go hand in hand," Bonds says. The more effective a program is, the more sustainable it will be, and vice versa.

Successful programs have also strong union endorsement with long-term management support. Can a non-unionized business find success with this model? Studies of such have yet to be seen, but certain concepts may assist in the adaptation to other work environments. Buy-in or cooperation from all parts of the business (management, employees, etc.) appears vital, including training of employee-volunteers. Within the work area, it could also be crucial that employees have a say in how and by whom their peer-based program is conducted. Last, randomized drug testing remains a necessary component.

However such a model is adapted, the goal remains the same: increased workplace safety and health of the employees and business through substance abuse prevention.

¹ Miller, Ted R. et al. Effectiveness and benefit-cost of peer-based workplace substance abuse prevention coupled with random testing. Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 11710 Beltsville Drive, Suite 125 Calverton, MD 20705, USA

FAQ: WHAT IS THE COALITION?

Carlsbad Community Anti-Drug/Gang Coalition was founded in 2003. The organization is comprised of citizens, students, and agency leaders working toward the goal of eliminating substance abuse and related crimes in southern Eddy County. The Coalition is an IRS 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Join us for our Community Board meetings! We meet the first Monday of each month, 4:00 p.m., in the second floor planning room of Carlsbad City Hall. For more information, visit www.carlsbadcoalition.net.