



**MELBOURNE HEALTH**

in partnership with

**NORTHEAST HEALTH  
WANGARATTA**

**Aggression Prevention  
and Management Project**

**I**NDUSTRY

**R**EFERENCE

**G**ROUP

**22 June 2005**

*Hagen Tuschke*

*Deborah Smith*

# Aggression Prevention and Management Project

In December 2004 Melbourne Health, in partnership with Northeast Health Wangaratta, signed a Safety Development Fund agreement with the Victorian WorkCover Authority for a 3-year project to address the increasing incidence and impact of occupational violence in the health sector workforce.



WORKSAFE VICTORIA

## SAFETY DEVELOPMENT FUND

SUPPORTING THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF AGGRESSION IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

July 2005

### CREATING A SAFER WORKING ENVIRONMENT IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

There is growing recognition of the impact and frequency of occupational violence. In response WorkSafe Victoria in February 2003 released a guidance note on the prevention of bullying and violence at work. It has also been recognised that organisations need to be strategic in their approach to addressing this problem and solutions need to be more systematically implemented.

Over the period 1999-2000 and 2001-02 it is estimated there were 703 workers' compensation claims arising from occupational violence and aggression in the 329 workplaces of the Victorian Health Services, costing in excess of \$8.1 million. This represents an estimated average claim cost of \$11,480. It is also suggested that these figures underestimate the real incidence of violence and aggression-related incidents as, anecdotally, many go unreported.

#### WHAT WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS

Over the next three years Melbourne Health and Northeast Health Wangaratta, together with other Victorian Health Services, health sector unions and health professional organisations, will seek to develop and trial sustainable and integrated systems for managing occupational violence risks.

The project aims to implement a risk management based system that addresses occupational aggression and meets the following challenges within the health sector:

- The different needs of specialist units such as emergency departments, psychiatric units and aged care services;
- Applies to all employees, not just to direct care staff;
- Can be integrated into existing risk management approaches;
- Gives equal weight to upstream or prevention measures.

The project aims to reduce exposure to risks from aggression, with consequent reductions in direct and indirect injury costs.

For patients and the community the benefits of the project are expected to include:

- Improved safety and service outcomes;

- More effective communication and customer service;
- More effective communication of patient/client rights and standards of behaviour; and
- Improved Police liaison.

For employees the benefits are expected to be:

- Demonstrated commitment to aggression prevention and management;
- Safer workplaces; and
- Improved information, training and instruction.

#### SAFETY DEVELOPMENT FUND

WorkSafe Victoria's Safety Development Fund supports employer and employee groups working together to develop and implement innovative health and safety initiatives. The objectives of the Fund are:

- Facilitate lasting change in workplace health and safety;
- Reduce the incidence and severity of work – related injury and disease
- Implement initiatives to eliminate workplace hazards;
- Support cooperative problem solving in the workplace;
- Promote a wider understanding of 'best practice' systems and solutions.

#### PROJECT PARTNERS AND FUNDING

- Melbourne Health
- Northeast Health – Wangaratta
- Supported by a range of metropolitan and regional Health Services, health sector unions, health sector professional and industry associations and the Department of Human Services:

WorkSafe Victoria will contribute \$465,600 to the project over three years. Direct and in-kind support totalling \$269,555 will be provided by Melbourne Health and Northeast Health Wangaratta.

For further information on the Safety Development Fund:

Contact Andrew Buzzcott at WorkSafe Victoria on (03) 9641 1582.

# Definition of Aggression

- Occupational violence and aggression is defined as any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened, or assaulted in circumstances arising out of, or in the course of, their employment.

ANF (Vic Branch) Zero Tolerance  
(Occupational Violence and Aggression) Policy

# Extent and Significance

- Growing recognition of the impact and frequency of occupational violence.
- Realisation that organisations need to be strategic in their approach to addressing this issue, and that the solutions need to be systematically implemented.
- Cost Victorian Health Services in excess of \$8.1 million from 1999 thru 2002.
- 703 workers' compensation claims at an average amount of \$11,480 during same period.
- Figures underestimate the real incidence as many go unreported and additional hidden costs are considerable.

# WorkSafe Victoria – Safety Development Fund Grant

- Over three years.
- Full time Project Officer based at Melbourne Health.
- Part time (0.5 EFT) Project Officer based Northeast Health Wangaratta.
- Training, briefing and education materials.
- Evaluation and audit costs.
- *Direct and in-kind contributions by Melbourne Health and Northeast Health Wangaratta.*

# Current Approach to Aggression Management

- Reactive
- Ad-hoc
- Fragmented
- Safety driven & centralised
- Culture of tolerance
- Underreporting of incidents
- Focus on high risk areas only

# Project Aims

- To develop and trial sustainable and integrated systems for managing occupational violence across Melbourne Health (covering 26 workplaces) and Northeast Health Wangaratta's in-patient, community and residential services.
- To implement these systems across a wide number of metropolitan and regional Victorian Health Services.

# Project Aims cont

- To implement a risk-management-based aggression management system that:
  - meets the different unit needs within public health;
  - applies to all employees, not just direct care staff;
  - can be integrated into existing risk approaches;
  - gives equal weight to management and prevention.
- To reduce exposure to risks from aggression, with consequent reductions in direct and indirect injury costs.

# Benefits for Patients & Community

- Safety and service improvements;
- Improved customer service and more effective communication of patient/client rights and standards of behaviour; and,
- Improved police liaison, information sharing and intervention strategy and practice.

# Benefits for Employees

- Improved work practices.
- Safer work environment.
- Increased recruitment and retention.
- Greater provision of information, training and instruction to up-skill staff in managing a diverse range of client environments.
- Demonstrated commitment to prevention and management of aggression.

# Best Practice Transfer

- Key objective is to establish working models that can be made available to other organisations.
- To be achieved by:
  - Documentation
  - Seminars & Facilitated Training
  - Specific Services
  - Guides and Templates

# Prevention Framework

---



# Project Plan

2005/06

- Establish project governance.
- Seek “best practice” framework.
- Develop guides and templates.

2006/07

- Implement “best practice” approach at MHS and NEH in Wangaratta.

2007/08

- Commence state-wide implementation.
- Evaluate and review.

# Project structure

---

- Governance
- Consultation
- Monitoring/Feedback
- Evaluation



# Industry Reference Group

- Diverse stakeholders
- Project consultancy
- Advisory role
- Employees – Unions
- Employers - VHIA, Hospital networks
- DHS
- Ambulance Services
- Victoria Police

# Areas of special interest/expertise

- Rules, Regulations, Policies
- Funding
- Training, Education
- Workplace Design
- Evaluation