

**WORKING TOGETHER TO CREATE AND MAINTAIN A HEALTHY AND SAFE LEARNING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT - Central Corporate Services Unit**

This project was initiated in late 2003 in response to a number of incidents and workers' compensation claims submitted for both psychological and physical injuries related to challenging student behaviours. The financial and social costs incurred with these incidents can be extensive both for the individuals and the organisation. They include but are not limited to:

- Medical costs for an employee with physical injuries
- Psychological assessment and counselling for the injured employee
- Time lost for the employee
- Loss of confidence and increased fearfulness for the employee
- Additional allocation of staff while trying to rehabilitate the injured employee back into the workforce
- Loss of morale for school staff
- Compromised learning plans for the student due to employee fearfulness
- Disruption to class learning outcomes

Central Corporate Services Unit (CSU) has piloted a program to prevent incidents of this kind and to share skills and staff expertise across a number of districts. The aims of the project are to reduce injuries and incidents and also minimise stress associated with managing student behaviour.

After a review of a number of behaviour management programs used within Education Queensland schools the *Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training* provided by the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI), Inc was selected as the pilot program.

The CPI course focuses on the following outcomes and principles:

- The emphasis is always on the primary responsibility - the care, welfare, safety and security of all staff and students at the school site
- Physical intervention is only recommended as a last resort when all verbal and non-verbal techniques have been exhausted
- Even when physical intervention is used, it is used in such a way as to allow the person an opportunity to calm down at his or her own pace
- Acquiring skills and practical techniques
- De-escalation of the behaviour
- Defusing explosive situations and feeling confident about it
- Intervene more safely when behaviour becomes dangerous

The decision to pilot this type of intervention was supported by the comparison of WorkCover claims between a school that had been using Non-violent Crisis Intervention and schools that had no such intervention in place. Although a number of claims were still evident at the school using the intervention, they resulted in reduced injuries and associated costs, little lost time and no claims for residual psychological distress.

The principal reported that there was a significant reduction in incidents and an improvement in students' behaviour. This was attributed to the following factors:

- The training included identifying and managing the triggers that lead to undesirable behaviour
- Participants learnt safe techniques to restrain students if required thus reducing the risk of sprain and strain injuries
- Students being restrained in a manner that is seen as positive and aims to maintain the student's dignity
- The training provides staff with a course of action enabling them to take control and reduce feelings of anxiety and psychological distress.

## **How has the process been undertaken in Central CSU?**

A reference group representing all districts in the CSU, PEO Student Services, Principals, Heads of Special Education Services, Senior Guidance Officers and the Organisational Health Team has been formed to:

- Determine the criteria for the Expression of Interest conducted to nominate the most suitable staff for the 'train the trainer' program.
- Assist in the development of a schedule of training sessions for each district under a user pays arrangement.
- Develop and apply performance indicators to assess the success of the process.

To meet the needs of the districts, two staff were required as "trainers". The two successful applicants from the Expression of Interest attended a four day Instructor Certification Course in October 2003. Training sessions for school-based staff commenced in Rockhampton in March 2004.

## **School Participation**

Participants are instructed that the intervention is to be adopted at schools in conjunction with a risk management approach and the DOEM sections:

- Physical Restraint and Time Out Procedures (SM-05)
- Management of Behaviour in a Supportive School Environment (SM-06)

A risk assessment is conducted for students who are identified as engaging in challenging behaviour. An agreement outlining the risk management plan and the different strategies to effectively manage the challenging behaviours is signed by:

- the Principal (on behalf of the school),
- the parents or guardian (on behalf of the student), and
- the Manager, Education Services (on behalf of Education Queensland).

Risk assessment, “Agreement” forms and an information brochure have been developed to assist schools in this process.

A survey form is to be completed by the Principal of participating schools prior to training in order to provide a profile of current practices and expected outcomes. A post-training survey will be conducted at three monthly intervals for 12 months to ascertain the success of the program.

In order for the training to be successful and staff to be confident using the intervention strategies, it is necessary for participants to practice the techniques. If the post-training surveys indicate that there are problems applying the techniques the school will be contacted for follow-up support.

Performance indicators on the success of the pilot will include both quantitative (e.g. injury and cost statistics) and qualitative (e.g. injury profiles) indicators.

### Training Details

CPI is an organisation based in the U.S.A. with offices around the world. CPI offers training in Australia twice a year.

#### *Cost of the Course (2003):*

1 day introductory seminar	\$495.00
2 day comprehensive workshop	\$695.00
4 day instructor certification course	\$1095.00 (“train the trainer”)

For schools in the Central CSU pilot, the “instructor” is one of the two EQ staff members who have completed the Instructor Certification Course. To ensure their base schools are not disadvantaged by them providing training to schools within the area, course costs will cover the cost of relief staff for their base location.

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Further details about the training course can be found at [www.crisisprevention.com](http://www.crisisprevention.com)