

PROJECT TITLE: “Gila County Human Resources Safe Workplace For All” Program (GCHRSWAP)

HISTORY:

Gila County is a county in the central part of the U.S. state of Arizona, and it contains parts of Fort Apache Indian Reservation and San Carlos Indian Reservation.

The county was formed from parts of Maricopa County and Pinal County on February 8, 1881, and the original county seat was in the mining community of Globe City, now Globe, Arizona. The county was named from the Gila River, which forms part of its southern boundary. The US Census, stipulates the population of Gila County in 2010 at 53,597 with a land area of 4,767.70 square miles.

Gila County Government is among the largest employers, within Gila County, with a total of 25 Departments and 720 paid employees. Gila County Administration offices are located in Globe, the county seat, and in Northern Gila County, in Payson.

The county mission statement is: “to provide regional leadership and fiscal responsibility for necessary public services in a healthy, safe community, and to promote and support the wise use of natural resources on public, private and tribal lands”. The county goal is to provide a safe, and healthy working environment and the priority of county leaders is the health and safety of all residents, including county employees.

Recent history shows workplace violence incidents are becoming more common place in today’s working environment. One common thread exists in preventing workplace violence; good leadership. Good leadership creates a healthy, productive workplace and can prevent crisis situations.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that government employees face an increased risk of workplace violence. The recessionary economy has lead to increased layoffs (from local copper mines, which is our main resource), local businesses closing, and work furlough which provokes added stress on everyone, especially state and local government employees.

Gila County HR Department Workplace Violence policy is:

26.1 Policy. It is Gila County’s policy to promote a safe environment for its employees. Gila County is committed to working with its employees to maintain a work environment free from violence, threats of violence, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior.

26.2 Violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior in the workplace will not be tolerated. All reports of incidents will be taken seriously and will be dealt with appropriately. Such behavior can include oral or written statements, gestures, or expressions that communicate a direct or indirect threat of physical harm. Individuals who commit such acts may be removed from the premises and may be subject to disciplinary action, criminal penalties, or both.

26.3 Reporting. If you observe or experience violent, threatening, harassing, intimidating, or other disruptive behavior by anyone in the workplace, whether he/she is a county employee or not, report it immediately to a supervisor or manager. Supervisors and managers who receive such reports must notify the Personnel Department immediately. The Director will expedite an investigation of the incident and initiate appropriate action.

The Gila County HR Department and the Board of Supervisors believe that all employees have a right to a workplace where every attempt is made to prevent violence before it happens. The county Workplace Violence policy reflects zero tolerance and it comes with a complete set disciplinary standard attached.

The HR leaders of the county have an established and effective history of communication and collaboration in order to share with employees, the Board of Supervisors, and Elected Officials, knowledge and resources regarding HR issues of mutual interest and concern and it stresses the necessity to be proactive in preventing workplace violence.

The safety and well being of all employees is the ultimate responsibility of everyone, and by providing Gila County employees with training and skills in preventing workplace violence, we can increase safety and ensure a sense of well being which can ultimately save lives.

The need for this program is obvious in: the heightened potential for violence presented to employees and the general public, due to prisoners from the county jail being brought to the court house and routed down the halls of the facility for court proceedings. The need is also evident in that there is currently insufficient security at facility entrances and exits. The need for appropriate ongoing workplace violence training and education of new and current employees is vital, as the Gila County HR Department and Board of Supervisors is committed to respectful, service-oriented, and safe workplace practices at all times and under all circumstances for internal and external customers.

SUMMARY OF OUR PROPOSED INNOVATIVE PROGRAM :

The Gila County HR Department proposes to present a mandatory innovative training program to all employees that will include training and education in recognizing, responding, reporting any action/issue that could point to a potential violence issue. On site drills, and role playing scenarios will be incorporated in the training. All training, and activities will be presented at both county facilities in Globe, and in Payson.

An annual event involving all county employees will be presented at the County Fair Grounds. This event will be fun, interactive, informative and educational. This event will be called the "Gila County Violence Prevention Roundup", and it will feature guest speakers from law enforcement. A variety of "program specific" skits utilizing county employees will be presented using humor, but stressing and focusing on workplace violence issues and the appropriate responses to them. Prizes will be awarded to the skits that best "get the workplace violence message" across.

In anticipation of presenting this application for funding, the HR Department has already secured the approval of the Board of Supervisors in making this program mandatory for all county employees.

Our violence response procedure will also be utilized and explained in the training. Training classes on Preventing and Managing Crisis Situations (PMCS), and Strategies for Crisis Intervention and Prevention (SCIP) will also be components of the training module. Other Training provided will include but not be limited to:

- Education in how to assess work environment, and recognize warning signs
- Techniques for recognizing the potential for violence
- Procedures, policies and work environment arrangements developed to control the risk to workers
- The appropriate response to incidents
- How to obtain assistance and follow-up
- Procedures for reporting, investigating and documenting incidents
- Interactive, participatory training sessions incorporating “role playing” activities
- Behavior escalation levels and early warning signs
- Verbal and nonverbal de-escalation strategies
- Effective listening skills
- Specific human factors that influence behavior during crisis moments
- Specific staff debriefing strategies

Some training and education components will be facilitated by the Gila County Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT), who are fully trained personnel in incident response, and emergency events.

This program will serve all Gila County Employees, Elected Officials, Board of Supervisors and the general public.

The program start date is anticipated to be: November 01, 2011

The HR Department plans to form committees’ who will focus on risk assessment, needs assessment, prevention and response, data dissemination and follow up. These committees will consist of a minimum of 8 staff each committee, who will focus on the above mentioned components and they will work closely with HR to ensure program success and effectiveness. The committee’s will consist of representatives from management; employee assistance, frontline employees, legal counsel and HR.

CURRENT ISSUES/CONCERNS/CHALLENGES:

- Funding to facilitate planned activities and trainings: While a small amount of General Fund monies will be allowed for the initial phase of our program, additional monies are required to fully implement this necessary and vitally important program.

- Limited security for departments
- Lack of sufficient state of the art electronic security devices such as: close circuit cameras, distress alarms, and scanners.

BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES:

The benefits and outcomes we expect will be fewer incidents of violence, reduced complaints and disruptive incidents, lowered risk of injury, improved workplace relations, and reduced exposure to liability. We will have a workforce who are educated regarding all aspects of workplace violence, and who have skills and knowledge necessary to effectively avert or manage any threat of violence. We will have a workforce that promotes respect, and who will work to establish and maintain a safer, healthier and more productive working environment for all. The process of prevention, preparation, and responding will be ongoing involving a. assessment, b. communication, c. training, and d. follow up supported by our policies and procedures.

INTENDED RESULTS/OUTCOMES:

Our goal is to provide training and education to employees that will enable them to be able to readily recognize actions that could trigger violence, to utilize effective ways to deal with such indicators and avoid, minimize or alleviate those actions. We also want to ensure that employees are familiar with the Gila County policy regarding workplace violence, be responsible for securing their own workplace, be responsible for reporting any overt or perceived overt actions, we expect staff to be educated regarding proper procedures and be effective in dealing with threats or emergencies and to perpetuate an environment that is safe, secure, productive, and that provides peace of mind, and well being.

The proposed program is linked to the Gila County goals and strategies in that the goals include “Assure that Gila County is a safe, healthy and attractive place in which to live, work and play”, and included in the strategies are, “develop training, processes, and procedures for a critical response team to handle work place violence, pursue strategies to address prevention and incident response throughout Gila County by ensuring the adequate location of personnel and resources”, and “develop safety screening procedures and equipment in the courts”, to name only a few. **See Attachment A**

Recordkeeping is an essential element of a workplace violence prevention program, and we utilize a database that provides information that is necessary to conduct risk analysis, identify training needs, and provide program evaluation. Program effectiveness and success will be measured by collecting and reviewing information gleaned from our program database records. Some of the records contained in this database are:

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| • An OSHA log | Training Records |
| • Incidents of assaults | Employee questionnaires |
| • Incidents of abuse, verbal attacks or aggressive behavior | Insurance records |
| | Workers’ Comp records |

- Minutes of safety meetings

Medical Records

By utilizing the information retrieved from the data base we can monitor effectiveness, track on- going efforts, and determine where improvements can be made or identify any/specific additional training needs. In addition, surveys will be distributed to employees to identify or confirm the need for additional safety measures. These surveys will be reviewed, at a minimum of quarterly or as the need arises; and the results will be analyzed to improve overall content.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING:

Supplementary funding is not currently available, however the HR Department continues to seek additional grant funding, and intends to request that the Board of Supervisors allocate additional funding to the department, in the effort to enhance, and perpetuate the program, and to expand it in the future, to include purchasing equipment and materials to provide magnetometers, distress alarms, close circuit cameras, and card readers.

PUBLICITY PLAN:

The Gila County HR Department intends to present and promote the program on the county web site and to make presentations to the BOS to promote the program. Program reports will also be provided to the Board of Supervisors and will be posted on the web site.

PROGRAM BUDGET:

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Strategic Plan
- B. Program Brochure
- C. Program Budget
- D. Employee Survey