

New York State School Safety Group 491

Safe Schools Agenda

____ School Business Off.
____ Athletic Director
____ Supt. Bldgs/Grounds
____ Site Administrators
____ Transportation Dir.
____ Lunch Director
____ Classroom Teachers

Volume 13, Issue 9

September 2006

A monthly service provided to help you with your efforts to make your school safe for students, staff and the public

Wanted: Doctors Who Understand Occupational Health Issues

A University of Washington study has found that injured workers treated by doctors enrolled in a program that encourages occupational-health best practices had less disability and lower medical costs, saving an average of \$447 per Workers' Compensation (W.C.) claim. Injured workers were also found to be 33 percent less likely to miss work.

Workers with back injuries who were treated by doctors enrolled in the program did significantly better than injured workers who were treated by non-enrolled doctors. The program in three counties replicated an earlier program in another part of the state that reported savings of an average of \$566 per claim.

The occupational health program provides mentoring, educational resources and financial incentives to doctors who treat injured workers so that they have a good background in occupational health issues. Physicians are paid more when they discuss with the injured worker's employer light duty jobs that the worker may be capable of doing during recovery, and when they fax the Report of Accident forward within two days.

What can an individual employer do to take advantage of this information? Improve communication lines with local physicians. Take an inventory of physicians most frequently used by employees, establish a mailing list, and begin to educate them about occupational health issues. Tell them about your return-to-work program and the importance of discussing its application on a case by case basis. Encourage them to stress the temporary nature of W.C. benefits in their

discussions with W.C. patients. And try to find out which local physicians have been trained in occupational health and encourage employees to go to them.

From the Courts...

Undocumented Workers Can Get Comp Benefits: The injured worker admitted in court to buying a social security card so he could get work in the United States. Nevertheless, a workers' compensation law judge awarded him benefits for injuries to his back, left leg and left foot. The employer and the State Insurance Fund appealed to the New York Workers' Compensation Board, arguing that the benefits should not be awarded because the claimant was undocumented. The appeal was denied. The New York State Insurance Fund (NYSIF) then appealed to New York's 3rd Appellate Division, and was again rejected because the argument had not been raised before the workers' compensation judge.

NYSIF Regains \$7,800 From Two Who Had Defrauded the Fund: In the first case, the businessperson had given a forged W.C. insurance certificate to a NYSIF-insured contractor. In the second case, the business person had submitted a false application for insurance to NYSIF -- failing to disclose an unpaid bill on a prior canceled NYSIF policy. Both defendants pleaded guilty in court and received one-year conditional discharges in addition to paying the money they owed to NYSIF.

Possible Prison and Fine for W.C. Fraud in West Virginia: The worker was receiving W.C. benefits for a left knee and back injury in 2003. However, investigators obtained surveillance video

Visit our Website at www.nysgroup491.com

Email: info@nysgroup491.com

Program Administrator: Professional Underwriters, 1-800-833-8822

in August 2005 showing that he performed various physical activities inconsistent with complaints made to his treating physician. He faces one to ten years in prison, a fine of up to \$2,500, and a requirement to pay back all moneys illegally gained if found guilty of the charge.

In any state of the nation, defrauding the W.C. system is a crime.

Help Prevent Cyberbullying

“Cyberbullying is online harassment using e-mail, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, Web sites, digital photography, or other technology to send threats, spread gossip, ridicule an individual, steal personal information, or impersonate someone to make them look bad.” (Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA.) HRSA calls attention to a recent study that found:

- 18% of students in grades 6-8 said they had been cyberbullied at least once in the last couple of months and 6% said it had happened to them 2 or more times.
- 11% of students in grades 6-8 said they had cyberbullied another person at least once in the last couple of months, and 2% said they had done it two or more times.
- 19% of regular Internet users between the ages of 10 and 17 reported being involved in online aggression; 15% had been aggressors, and 7% had been targets. 3% were both aggressors and targets.

The study results illustrate how vulnerable children have become to cyberbullying as well as Internet crime, online predators and child pornography. HRSA’s Stop Bullying Now! Campaign has a new cyberbullying fact sheet which can be accessed at www.safeyouth.org/scripts/news/doc/internetsafety.asp.

Also, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has interactive programs on Internet safety at www.missingkids.com. More Internet safety education is available at www.isafe.org. See also the web site for the U.S. Department of Justice’s

National Criminal Justice Reference Service, www.ncjrs.gov for information on Internet safety for children, cyberstalking, cyberbullying, etc.

School’s Opening: Some Thoughts on Safety

How well do your bus drivers know their students? Two young men were arrested in Tampa, Florida for boarding a school bus on its way to the local high school in June. The two were reported to the driver by students during the 20 minute ride. They said that they just wanted to visit the high school. How did they get on the bus in the first place? Could it happen in your district, say on the first day of school?

National School Bus Safety Week will be celebrated **October 15-21**. Get students involved in the program by entering the coloring contest at www.napt.org.

Don’t Wait for National School Bus Safety Week to consult with your local law enforcement agencies on the necessity to vigorously detect and prosecute illegal passing motorists. In Massachusetts last March, police ticketed 90 illegal passing motorists in one day. It is a real problem in many communities. Be sure to remind local residents, too.

The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center website www.safeyouth.org/scripts/news/docs/educators.asp provides access to numerous federally-funded youth violence prevention resources.

The Center for Disease Control Reports that 1 in 11 adolescents reported being a victim of physical dating violence. These young people are also likely to report binge drinking, suicide attempts, physical fighting, and current sexual activity. See www.chooserespect.org for an interactive program aimed at youth ages 11 to 14 about teen dating abuse and forming healthy relationships.

Have a safe and healthy school year!