

Glatfelter Public Practice

A Division of Glatfelter Insurance Group
(Formerly Professional Underwriters)

Route to:

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

Safe Schools Agenda

April 2009/Volume 16, Issue 4

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

NYSIF TOPS IN ANTI-FRAUD EFFORTS

The New York State Insurance Fund (NYSIF), the underwriter for the New York State School Safety Group 491 Workers' Compensation (WC) program, has announced that its fraud prevention program accounted for more than \$20 million in savings in 2008, a record amount.

“The total savings includes cash restitution of approximately \$1.6 million and estimated future savings of more than \$19 million resulting from additional premium, lower reserves, and the forfeiture of future payments on fraudulent claims.”

NYSIF's actions, in cooperation with local district attorneys, resulted in about 148 arrests in 2008. Since 1995, the Fund's fraud fighting activities have resulted in about 1,228 arrests of insured's and claimants for fraud. WC fraud is a serious offense, which can, and does, lead to serious consequences.

Detection of fraud can impact premium by reducing reserves. The Fund depends on policyholders to work with their claims and investigative teams to report suspicious claims as well as the under-reporting of payrolls.

TEACHER HURT ON SCHOOL TRIP ENTITLED TO WC

A Kentucky teacher hurt while chaperoning students to an honor society conference filed for WC, but was denied by the school board. The Kentucky Supreme Court ruled otherwise. The Court (and an administrative law judge, a Workers' Comp Board, and an appeals court) found that the injury occurred within the scope of her employment.

BE AWARE OF THE SAFETY NEEDS OF OLDER WORKERS

Why focus attention on the needs of older workers? Because there are more “baby boomers” delaying retirement or re-entering the workforce due to the nation's economic slowdown, there are more older workers than there are younger people entering the workforce. The workplace is growing older.

There are advantages to hiring an older worker who has years of experience, or who can mentor younger co-workers. But NIOSH warns that employers will face the following questions:

1. What are the physical effects of a strenuous job for a person over 45 who lifts heavy loads or performs repetitive movements?
2. What difficulties do older workers face in adapting to new technologies and new ways of doing business?
3. What work-and-family conflicts exist for workers 45 or older who have responsibilities both for elderly parents and for children in school?
4. What measures are needed to help people maintain good health and physical capability throughout their adult lives, reducing cumulative wear and strain as they enter their 50s, 60s, and 70s?

One thing is for sure – you will have to evaluate your slip and fall prevention program. One third of all injuries to older workers are from slips and falls. Their injuries tend to be more severe and the recovery time is often two or three times longer than that of younger workers who suffer the same injuries.

Workstations and workspaces need to be evaluated ergonomically to identify causes of fatigue and strain for older workers. Return-to-work programs also need to be strengthened because of the costs associated with increased healing time.

SUICIDE/DEATH GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS

The recent suicides of two students at a school in up-state New York have raised awareness of this all too frequent tragedy. Surely, you have established procedures for staff to follow in the event that your school suffers this experience, but the following guidelines may be of help.

1. Don't expect to get your usual amount or quality of work done. Try to teach a lesson, if you can, based on your feelings as well as those of your students. If this is not possible, a quiet class period is certainly appropriate.
2. You may feel uncomfortable about dealing with the situation. Call for help if you want it.
3. It is okay for teachers to show their feelings.
4. Both teachers and students need to support each other as much as possible.
5. Staff may be overwhelmingly upset; especially those who have had contact with the deceased. Crisis rooms will be designated for a comfortable place for the faculty to go. Mutual support is helpful and encouraged.
6. Get back to routines as soon as possible after children have had a chance to express their feelings.
7. Be aware of the facts regarding what happened to counteract rumors.
8. There is no inappropriate, immediate response. What may seem like inappropriate feelings expressed by some children reflect real feelings which we, as professionals, may not immediately understand. Children can be helped to empathize with others and express honest feelings appropriately. Expect the entire range of emotional reactions from hysterical behaviors to joking. All reactions are normal.
9. Teachers may get the feeling that there are some students who are using this tragedy to avoid school responsibility. However, these students are in the minority. We all need to be careful not to judge the feelings or motivations of others.
10. If a child expresses feelings that he/she should have "done something to prevent the death," listen to what the child has to say. Don't shut a child down until he/she has expressed themselves, and let them know that they were not responsible.
11. If there is a possibility of suicide, do not glamorize, romanticize, or speculate about what might have happened. When children speculate, ask them if they know for sure what happened; listen and point out gently and without criticism that what we think we know and don't know may not represent all the facts related to what happened.
12. Think about adults with whom children can talk, at home or at school. Should they express a need or desire, help the student find an appropriate contact person.
13. For those students who are extremely upset, locations should be set up in various parts of the building where support staff are available to assist them. Unsupervised students should not be in the corridors, but rather sent to designated areas of the building; they will be returned to class at the appropriate time.
14. Students who seem overwhelmed by the tragedy will be identified by the support team for follow up conferences and/or parental involvement.
15. What can the students do to express sympathy to the family? Students may write notes of sympathy and some children may attend the funeral with an adult.
16. All services available to students are available for staff as well.
17. Continue to monitor reaction and review with support services teams and faculty. Be prepared to deal with intensity for some time after the crisis.