



## Service Alternatives Training Institute

RIGHT RESPONSE™ Workshops

*When Safety Is Your Responsibility...*

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### How to make the Least of De-escalation Training

by Steven Seiller, Service Alternatives Training Institute

Note: This is a tongue-in-cheek approach to common sense. Frequently I find it absurd that I cannot help agencies because they will not do the right things for the right reasons. So I figure why not show how absurd and wasteful it can be to do the wrong things. The following are common areas of cost leakage which cost more than the training itself. How many apply to you?

- **Staff not reporting incidents.** Some think it just goes with the job, some are afraid of looking incompetent. When classroom problems are not reported, you can't manage them. Be sure staff understand scope of incidents you deem problematic and reportable.

- **No documentation.** Without documentation of incidents, you cannot truly assess the extent, danger and cost of the problems in your classrooms. Be sure every incident is documented with consistently observable, objective and measurable methods.

- **Little or no communication between departments.** Many incidents involve staff from many different departments. These might include administrators, building principals, risk management and security staff- all of whom have different training, expectations, tolerances and techniques for addressing problem behavior and assaults. To maximize time and effort within your district, ensure that there are common expectations and practices regarding the use of de-escalation techniques.

- **Ignore staff concerns regarding safety conditions.** Denial of problematic issues only allows them to become bigger problems to manage. Having an established system of crisis management gives you ready access to tools which address problems while they are small and manageable.

- **Don't provide prevention strategies before crisis begins.** Waiting until there is a fire to teach people what to do about it is known to be dangerous. Don't wait until there is an assault to teach staff how to protect themselves in foreseeable situations.

- **Don't have real goals for trainings.** Staff training is not a fix-all solution. Training can only improve the problems it was designed for. The success of your training program is constrained to the goals you set for it.

- **Don't do a good assessment of needs.** Not having a good handle on the needs of staff or the performance deficits of your program can hamper the impact of a training program. Frequently staff will return from a training with more questions than when they started- usually about how to implement what they learned.

- **Provide training to staff which does not meet their needs.** Just because a specific de-escalation training is accepted or is well-known doesn't mean it will provide your staff with the specific tools they need to solve their problems. Fully investigate the contents of any training for which you will expect staff to implement.

- **Don't really research the specific procedures or techniques** of the training to ensure they meet your district, local and state statutes. Wait to learn that they don't until after you pay for it.

- **Don't really research the hidden costs of trainings.** All training programs have their requirements and costs. Some charge more upfront but less in the long-term, some cost more over time due to recurrent charges. Be sure to assess all of the costs related to the training you decide to use based on the time period for which you will benefit from it.

- **React instead of prevent.** Placement of students in alternative programs due to unmanaged behavior costs more than positive behavior support. Managing problematic behavior in its early stages saves time and money and helps you achieve educational outcomes.

- **Ignore signs of staff abuse.** Denial of potential abuse by staff not only endangers students, but opens your culpability by omission. To prevent potential staff abuse and to promote quality student support, you must adopt regular strategies for incident review and analysis. Data collection and analysis is critical to this evaluation process.

- **View training as an expense rather than as an investment.** Don't prioritize training which can reduce unmanaged assaults, injuries and property damage.

## Learning

- **Over train staff.** Providing specific staff members more training than they need is a waste of time and money. And you risk them not remembering what the most important parts of the training for them.

- **Under train staff.** Whether from trying to save time, save money or from not understanding staff needs, provide training which provides all the skills needed to address behavior problems and to maintain safety.

- **Don't provide sufficient time for proper training.** There are no shortcuts for learning.

- **Don't give staff specific expectations as to why they are sent to a training.** After all, the learning only takes place in the training itself. Right?

- **Don't provide specific policy and procedure regarding the use of the material** taught in the training. After all, if the training is really good the staff will figure it out for themselves.

## Implementation

- **Don't create an implementation plan.** No training program can be effectively implemented unless its content has alignment with the district's goals and procedures. Unless administrators actively guide the implementation of training content and reinforce its use, the program is not likely to make an impact beyond the individual efforts of proactive trainees.

- **Don't create a training schedule.** Instead wait until there is a problem and scramble to put together a class. Also don't look ahead on when recertifications need to be completed each year.

- **Focus on interventions which require more than one employee's involvement.** These require more work to train, practice and utilize. Also students feel safer when a whole crew of staff descend upon them in their time of stress.

- **Don't make staff use the techniques taught in the current training.** Without reinforcing the material staff learned, training benefits are limited to individual staff memory and ability to recall material. Maximizing your training investment by integrating the training content into the operational levels of your programs and building mastery.

- **Don't have direct supervisors reinforce procedures taught in the training.** You don't really want staff to master their training or make it a part of their workflow.
- **Have someone in district be trained as a trainer then don't have them actually train the material.** If you manage this one, it is probably because you followed previous advice about not assessing your training needs, creating an implementation plan or developing a training schedule.
- **Switch to a different training program without fully researching it first.** Be sure not to look at the new program's recurrent fees, materials costs or charges for recertification. Especially don't compare them to your current training program costs over the time period you expect to use the program.
- **Pick a program with recurrent instructor recertification fees,** especially one which makes your trainers sit through the same material for days and charges you hundreds of dollars for it. Better still is when the trainers have to travel out of town for it.
- **Let staff certifications lapse,** forcing them to retake a longer certification course.
- **Forget to order course supplies** until you are required to pay more expensive expedited shipping charges.
- **Don't enforce staff attendance** so you have extra space in the class and leave staff untrained.
- **Don't keep training documentation** where you can easily find it such as in an employee's personal file. Which until there is an investigation regarding a specific staff and then hunt for it. Also expect your training provider to drop everything the minute you need it from them.
- **Discourage a problem solving mindset** in staff by dismissing their ideas or not allowing them to contribute to the work of more credentialed staff.

## **Analysis**

- **Don't review course evaluations** especially if you are not interested in what isn't working for staff or heeding their suggestions.
- **Don't pay attentions to the reactions of course attendees.** If you don't want them to use the new content on the job, you don't really want to know how they respond to the content and how it affects their working attitudes, knowledge and skills.
- **Don't look for changes in work behavior.** Were you expecting the training to make a little difference in the workplace or none at all?
- **Don't analyze data regarding safety issues.** It is more fun to make guesses about how much the training course impacted your workplace environment and safety issues.

## **Looking for how to make the Most of De-escalation Training instead of the least?**

- **Don't follow the advice of this article.** Instead, do everything this article said not to do! Grin.