

Safety Culture Journey, HealthShare NSW

Healthshare NSW's large operational workforce is spread out across over 170 locations. The Workforce: performs low-skilled, repetitive tasks; work non-standard shifts; represent a variety of Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB); and perform vital services which are sometimes considered 'invisible' or 'insignificant'. In this challenging landscape, HealthShare NSW have implemented safety cultural change programs.

Overview

HealthShare NSW is a statewide organisation with over 6,000 predominantly frontline staff who provide non-clinical services to NSW Health Local Health District and related Health Agency locations. The range of services include:

- Food and Hotel Services which supplies about 22 million meals per annum, cleaning, waste collection, portering and security to a number of hospitals
- Linen Services collects and cleans over 160,000 kgs of linen per day, travelling 19,000 kms for collection and distribution
- Non-emergency Patient Transport and licensing across the health network
- Supply of equipment and attendant care to more than 20,000 people with disabilities (EnableNSW)
- Procurement, warehousing and supply chain logistics including uniforms
- Provide centralised transaction support by processing payroll for 140,000 employees, completing purchasing, accounts payable and receivable processes; and arranging recruitment of staff via three Service Centres
- Clinical Information Access Portal: online clinical information gateway for data, statistics and innovation sharing.

Program overview

In late 2012, the Workplace Health & Safety team initiated a program with the key aims of:

- Improving workplace safety

- Reducing worker's compensation liability
- Increasing safety awareness, hazard and incident reporting and compliance
- Streamlining WHS processes, performance and reporting.

The Program also included the following aspects:

- Creating a new safety message encouraging all staff to perform all daily tasks in a safe manner. This message was summarised as:

Think Safe. Work Safe. Live Safe.

- Launching the message: 'Safe Tea' (see below)
- Using this safety message to uniformly brand all safety program documents including the newly created Chief Executive Commitment Statements for WHS and Injury Management
- Revitalising safety noticeboards and creating intranet quick links to WHS
- Creating a Business Partner Model whereby the dedicated WHS team became a single point of contact providing coaching and advice to all operational teams. In support, a hotline was established so a WHS Team member could always be contacted (**WHS Assist Line**)
- Enhancing the capability of frontline managers and supervisors
- Streamlining the incident, hazard and near miss reporting processes and introducing targets for the number and frequency of reports
- Introduced regular reporting to business lines on workplace safety metrics
- Producing simple workplace safety checklists to be used by visiting WHS team members and operational managers

- Improving the visibility of WHS activities by introducing a safety polo shirt, worn by WHS team members and **'Safety Ambassadors'** throughout the business. Safety Ambassadors are staff who have displayed a commitment to safety through the diligence demonstrated in their regular activities and are nominated for the award by their co-workers
- Created a new **'10 Question Worker Safety Culture Survey'** for use throughout the business.

Launching the message

HealthShare NSW wanted to ensure that their new safety agenda was widely communicated throughout the business early on and **'Safe Tea'** events were organised for late 2013 with the following details:

- Communications departments sent out invitations to every member of staff to provide plenty of notice
- Safe Teas were held at five metropolitan locations in Sydney as well as regional centres
- Each Safe Tea was scheduled so that staff on both morning and afternoon shifts could attend. Where a worker was not rostered for that day, they were paid to come and attend

- HealthShare's Chief Executive attended a number of events including the first Safe Tea in Chatswood Head Office
- Introductory information delivered in the sessions included the story behind the new safety message; details of the WHS Assist Line; the new 10 Question Worker Safety Culture Survey; the Safety Ambassadors Program; and the new incident/hazard/near miss reporting system
- Guest speakers, including WorkCover sponsored Paralympians, added their stories to the safety message being introduced at each event.

Attendance was excellent at all events with event rooms overflowing at all locations.

Outcomes

HealthShare NSW has achieved the following:

- Less injury claims
- Paid less worker's compensation benefits
- Reduced its worker's compensation deposit premiums
- Improved incident, near miss and hazard reporting
- Improved return to work performance.

This brief was prepared by Big Picture Communications based on presented material from Julie Bourke, Manager Work Health and Safety Projects, HealthShare NSW at the NSW Treasury Managed Fund Sharing Day 2015. For more information, please contact Julie via Julie.Bourke@health.nsw.gov.au.