



Mental Health Risk Retention Group, Inc.

A Liability Insurance Company Owned by its Policyholders

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In March of 1996, Trend Community Mental Health Services (Trend), an Area Program based in Hendersonville, NC, created and implemented an organizational-wide Violence Abatement Program. The program was created to prevent future incidents or occurrences of violence by creating guidelines for Trend employees' response to violent or potentially violent situations through staff training, the development of active response teams and attention to environment controls.

The program is truly an organizational effort, and stresses that all Trend employees recognize that they have an active role in preventing workplace violence. The components of the program, which include: using a key word for requests for assistance; the designation of facility-specific safe rooms; the establishment of facility-specific response teams; the use of the buddy system; and response to violent incidents, are introduced to Trend employees through existing orientation process and training programs, and review sessions regarding the program and its components are also conducted periodically. [Trend policy #2402](#), "General Administration Safety – Violence Abatement" clearly outlines, in detail, the components of the program as well as the procedures associated with the above-mentioned components. A copy of [Trend policy #2402](#) has been attached for your review, as a supplement to this essay.

Since the onset of the program in 1996, the number of staff injuries has been tracked, being sure to separate the number of non-client and client related injuries in order to obtain accurate data. Client related injuries are broken down into several categories: injury due to client transfer; necessary client restraint; a client acting out; or a client attack. Data for year 1995 (the year before the program was implemented) was used as a baseline. Since the onset of the Violence Abatement Program, Trend has seen a decrease of 68% in injuries related to clients acting out. Summary reports and a [graph](#) outlining the data on staff injuries due to clients acting out for years 1995 – 1997 have been included in the application. (Please note: data for years beyond 1997 is not yet inclusive, as it sometimes takes a few years beyond the incident for the case to be

considered closed).

This data, as well as each report or documentation of an incident of violence, is reviewed by Trend's Safety / Environment of Care Committee (SECC) monthly. The SECC is an internal committee that consists of a team of selected Trend management, division directors, clinicians, medical staff and support staff. Upon review, recommendations are made for further action, as well as any recommended changes to related policies, procedures, site-specific security measures, etc. In addition, the Safety Director is available to consult with appropriate division directors and to review any reports if a decision needs to be made immediately, or if the safety of either staff or clients is in imminent danger.

The program and its supporting policies have increased the quality of care at Trend. For example, staff now has the availability of cellular phones when going into potentially violent situations, which not only protects staff but the clients they are assisting as well. In addition, Trend is not afraid to take more aggressive steps to protect staff and consumers when they are threatened, and the agency has implemented precautions such as re-assigning duties, notifying proper authorities and locking down facilities to keep clients and staff out of danger. Not only has this increased the quality of care, but it also assures that the quality of care given continues to match Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) and the Council on Accreditation's (COA) professional standards.

Trend is not the only organization that has benefited from this Violence Abatement Program and has noted an improvement in the quality of care it brings. Since the program's establishment at Trend, seven Area Programs and one local hospital have used Trend's program and related policies in building their own Violence Abatement Program.

Trend Community Mental Health Services

Trend Policies
Number 2402

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

SAFETY – VIOLENCE ABATEMENT

1. **PURPOSE:** This policy is to set forth guidelines for staff response to violent or potentially violent situations through adequate training of staff, the development of active response teams and attention to environmental controls.
2. **GENERAL POLICY:** The overall goals of response to a violent situation include: maintaining safety of staff and clients, resolving the conflict as quickly as possible, and dealing with the effects on staff and clients.

Trend shall develop written procedures specific to each facility in which services are provided. All employees are responsible to report any violent/potentially violent situation, document by way of an Incident Report and follow the safety procedures developed for that work site.

All violent/potentially violent confrontations shall be reviewed in order to implement any change in procedures or change in facility security as deemed necessary to minimize the possibility of future incidents.

It is important that all employees recognize that they have a role in preventing workplace violence. Management supports all reasonable efforts to increase employee and client safety in the workplace and is committed to the implementation of Trend's Violence Abatement Program.

3. **PROCEDURES:** Violence and conflict of all types are becoming an increasingly serious problem in the workplace creating concern among employees and employers alike. Each Trend facility shall develop written procedures for responding to workplace violence. The site manager will review these procedures with each new employee upon hire.

A. AGENCY WIDE KEY WORD – RON LAM

In order to maintain consistency throughout the agency, all requests for assistance in the management of violent incidents shall be stated over the intercom as follows: "RON LAM needed in (the area in which the situation is occurring)."

A designated **SAFE ROOM** is recommended for each facility over 1500 square feet in size. This is the place to which responding staff are to gather to prepare for intervention or as a place of safety.

B. RESPONSE TEAM

A Response Team will be chosen and trained from each facility and will be responsible for responding to any situation that could be potentially violent. Their training will include but not be limited to differing ways to verbally de-escalate, detention, and physical restraint of perpetrators if necessary.

The Team Leader will be chosen from each Response Team and will be in charge of how the Response will be handled.

C. THREATS

Definition – “Any action, whether verbal, non-verbal, or written, which declares an intent to do injury or harm.”

Trend has zero tolerance for threats. Any threat made by a staff member or toward a staff member should always be taken seriously and reported immediately to a direct supervisor or Division Director. This information should then be forwarded to the Safety Director (and to Human Resources in the case of a threat made by a staff member). Any substantiated threat made by a staff member could result in termination.

D. BUDDY SYSTEM

A Buddy System will be developed and implemented in any program where staff work out in the field in potentially dangerous situations and one on one with potentially violent clients. Until it is determined otherwise, all new clients will be considered potentially violent. This requires reporting to a specific staff your destination and your time of return with the activation of response teams (911) if your return is not on time.

E. REVIEW OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS

The Safety/Environment of Care Committee (SECC) shall review each reported incident of violence and shall make recommendations as necessary for the involvement of management, including Division Directors, the Medical Director, and/or the Executive Director. SECC shall also make recommendations as deemed necessary for review of policies and procedures, changes in facility security, etc.

The Chairs of the Incident Management and Safety/Environment of Care Committees will review all incidents of violence at least yearly and make recommendations for review of relevant policies and procedures as deemed necessary.

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F. VIOLENT INCIDENT RESPONSE PROCEDURES

DEFINITION OF A VIOLENT INCIDENT

A violent incident is any circumstance, situation, or action which is created, instigated, or taken by a person which is intended to result in, is likely to result in, or does result in physical harm to another person.

(1) This policy is intended to cover any violent incident which occurs either:

- (a) Against any person on any premises owned or operated by Trend; or
- (b) Against a Trend employee off premises as a result of, or in conjunction with the performance of their duties; or
- (c) Against a Trend employee off premises that is likely to result in a violent incident on any Trend premise.

(2) Examples of a violent incident include, but are not limited to:

- (a) The hostile presentation of a deadly weapon.
- (b) The employment of any weapon or any item utilized as a weapon.
- (c) A physical assault or attempted physical assault.

G. RESPONSE TO A VIOLENT INCIDENT

Follow Crisis Prevention Institutes (CPI) Street Smart recommendations which are as follows:

- (1) **Keep Yourself Safe** – If you are injured during a violent incident, you will not be able to help others who are in danger.
- (2) **Assess the Situation** – Make a quick evaluation of the circumstances. Try to take as calm a view as possible. Look at the number of people involved, their physical size and apparent emotional state, and the number and type of weapons, if applicable.
- (3) **Summon Assistance** – Learn the established method for your site for calling in the type of assistance that is needed and as it pertains to your specific locations (refer to site specific violence procedures). This could be response teams, “panic buttons” or a 911 call. **Remember 9911 – To dial 911 from an agency phone you must first dial 9.**
- (4) **Make the Environment as Safe as Possible** – Remove any onlookers. Also, remove any items in the area that could be used as a weapon. Seal off the area so nobody wanders into the situation inadvertently. If possible, get people out of the building or out of the area where the incident is occurring.

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- (5) **Utilize Personal Safety Techniques** – To counter a physical assault, utilize personal safety techniques as taught in the Violence in the Workplace, Street Smart or Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training; and if you are confronted:
- (a) Take all threats seriously.
 - (b) Stay calm and be polite – look the person in the eye and don't argue or threaten.
 - (c) Notify the response team or the police if frightened – or use the agency's "key word" to alert other staff.
 - (d) Get to a safe place, if possible (e.g., Safe Rooms at each site).
 - (e) Yell if you are being attacked to alert others.
 - (f) Give an attacker valuables or other articles on demand.
- (6) **If You Are Confronted with a Weapon** – Treat the situation seriously, don't resist, and don't take any chances. Among the most important ways to avoid violence is to know how to respond if you are faced with someone exhibiting a weapon and whose actions or words frighten you. Consider the following:
- (a) Individual Is Unsure – Stay calm and remember that someone who is confronting you with a weapon probably hasn't decided whether or not to use it. If they had already decided, they most likely wouldn't threaten, they would just attack.
 - (b) Individual Is Afraid – Keep in mind that the individual may be as afraid as you are. In fact, fear is often the reason the person has a weapon in the first place. Avoid rushing or disarming – even trained law enforcement professionals try to avoid this course of action. It is extremely dangerous.
 - (c) Negotiate – Try to get as many "little" yes answers as possible, starting with a basic request like, "Is it okay if I take a few steps back?" The longer you can keep the individual talking to you, the less likely that individual is to use the weapon.
 - (d) Negotiate Three Steps Back – Try to get the individual to agree to let you back up three steps. Distance may help to reduce some of the individual's anxiety, as well as the accuracy of the weapon.
 - (e) Concentrate on the Individual, Not the Weapon – Attempt to keep the focus of your negotiations on a personal level and not as an intimidation response to the weapon. The impression of power or authority represented by the weapon tends to be diminished in a person-to-person conversation.

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Number 2402

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(Reviewer – Safety/Risk Management Director)

FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Donald Bayse
Safety/Risk Management Director**

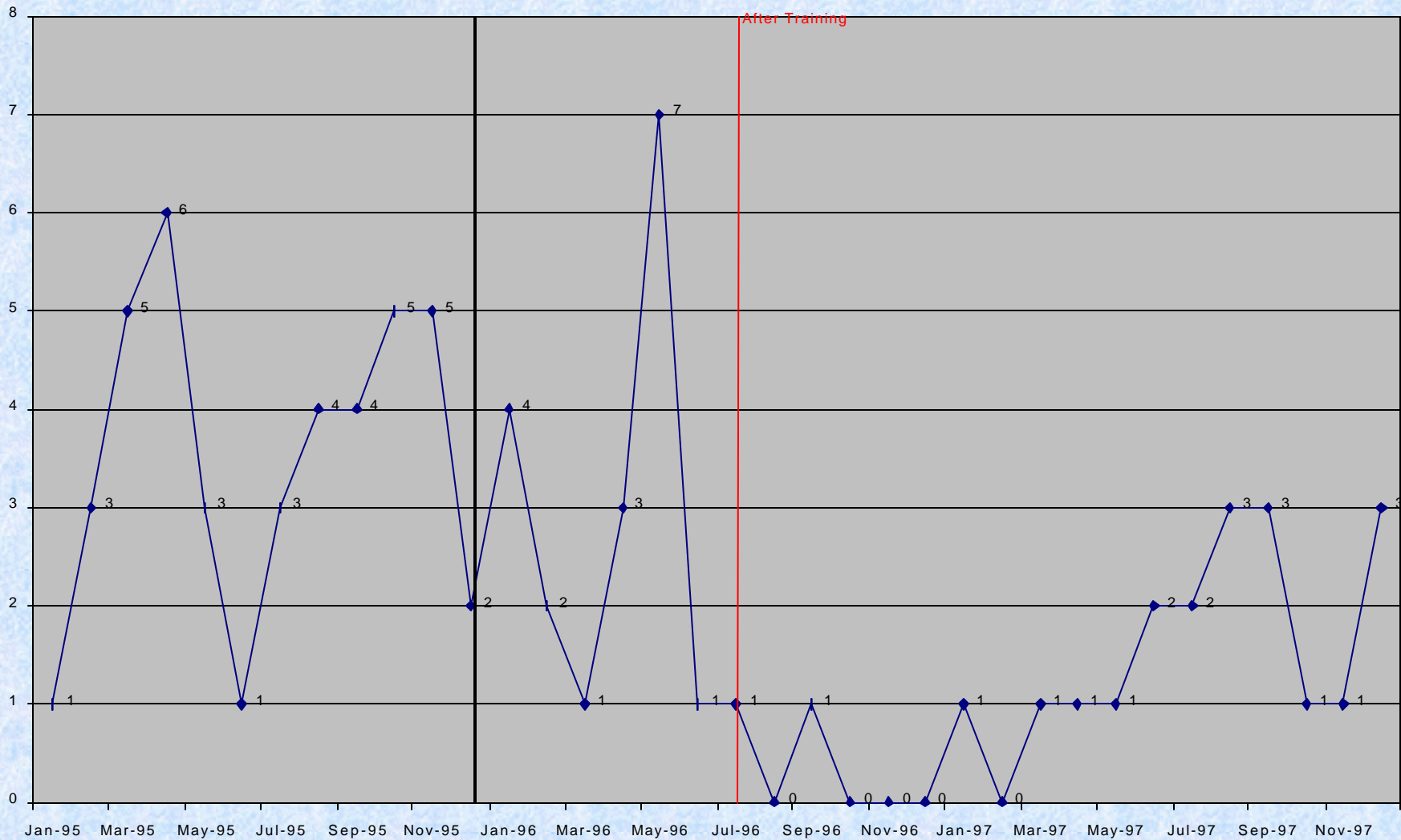
Approved: 3/26/96

Revised: 9/29/99

Revised: 10/24/00

Staff Injuries Resulting in Workman's Comp Claims Related to Client Acting Out 1995 to 1997

66% decrease in staff injuries resulting from clients acting out (1 ½ years)



Staff Injuries Resulting in Workman's Comp Claims Related to Client Acting Out 1998 to 2000

60% decrease of injuries resulting from clients acting out (4 1/2 years)

