

## NOTES FOR TRAINERS (TRAINER'S MANUAL)

# Mental Health & Suicide Prevention

Developed by Associated General Contractors of Washington, Central Washington University, and Oregon State University. Funding and support for this project has been provided by the State of Washington, Department of Labor & Industries, Safety & Health Investment Projects.



**CWU** Central Washington University



Funding and support provided by the Department of Labor & Industries



## TRAINING TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

This Trainer's Manual is a companion document to the trainee manual (case study) to help trainers prepare for and lead a productive discussion about the case study and associated questions by providing some additional information. The document also shares online resources and content to extend group discussions about the case study topic.

Prior to conducting the in-class discussions, the trainer should read through both the case study document (trainee manual) and the Trainer's Manual to fully understand the content and prepare for the discussion.

## TRAINING DELIVERY

The trainees should be given the trainee manual at the start of the training. Divide the trainees into small groups of four students per group based on their prior construction experience level. For example, ideally, each group will consist of trainees with diverse training experience.

There are four real-world case scenario-based activities in the trainee manual and several discussion questions as part of the overview section. These activities and questions will help trainees master the subject matter.

Each case scenario comes with its description, pictures, activity instructions, and supplemental materials where appropriate. For each case scenario, initially provide an overview of the topic. Then, allow students time to review the case information provided and engage in a brief discussion as a team to answer the questions and complete the assigned tasks. After the group performs its discussions or tasks, the group can share their feedback with the overall group of trainees at large. Briefly discuss the case and facilitate an overall group discussion with the help of answers and additional information contained in this manual.

The manual also contains sample discussion questions for each section to prompt and engage the trainees and trigger participation. Depending on the trainer's approach, discussion questions will likely take from one to three minutes to answer/discuss. Since there are good chances the trainees will have prior construction experiences, their engagement will result in an excellent learning environment.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The primary learning objectives of the case study are to prepare trainees to: (1) identify warning signs of mental distress for themselves and their co-workers, (2) determine how to respond to and de-escalate issues on the job, (3) practice healthy coping and resilience techniques, and (4)

determine how to help reduce stigma surrounding mental wellbeing. At the completion of the case study training, trainees should be able to:

- Identify mental health best practices for implementation into existing environment, health, and safety (EHS) programs and policies
- Engage in stigma reduction strategies for mental health in the workplace and surrounding communities
- Discover strategies to enhance worker coping skills and resiliency
- Develop a personal coping and resilience strategy

## INTRODUCTION SECTION

Trainers should begin the technical portion of the training by introducing the subject and providing a disclaimer about how to respect one's psychological safety, followed by a review of the definitions relevant to this module. Once definitions are established, it is encouraged to determine some ground rules for students as the sensitive nature of this subject may be hard for some students to consider and discuss. Sample ground rules include:

- Confidentiality of stories and experiences shared in the class
- Not speaking over one another
- Be mindful of your non-verbal communication
- Zero tolerance of hate speech, making fun of others, or stigmatizing language (calling someone crazy, joking about the subject, or rude or dismissive behavior towards anyone in class)

Trainers should then introduce the four main pillars of this module:

- Substance Abuse Prevention
- Workplace Violence Prevention
- Suicide Prevention
- Supporting Mental Health

The trainer should lead a discussion about why these subjects are so important to the construction industry. Some sample questions/prompts include:

- Raise your hand if you know of someone who has struggled with substance abuse.
- Raise your hand if you have seen any form of violence at work.
- Raise your hand if you have lost someone to suicide.
- Raise your hand if you have seen someone struggle with their mental health, or if you personally have had mental health struggles.
- Statistically, are you more likely to die of workplace injuries or suicide?
- Statistically, are you more likely to die of a car crash or suicide?
- In the United States, are there more suicides or homicides?
- Why do we have mental health and substance misuse issues?

Review each case study's supporting materials with the class.

## Substance Abuse

Discussion Questions: Why is it important to have a Substance Abuse policy? How have you seen a substance abuse policy implemented well?

Scenario One Review:

Break class into teams to review the scenario and create responses to report back. Discuss all responses as a class.

### Exercise- Substance Abuse Scenario

You encounter a coworker stumbling onto the jobsite after the lunch break. You have noticed the worker's behavior being more erratic lately. How do you respond?

Ask if they are ok. You can confront the issue by stating, "I have noticed that..." and stick to observable behaviors, not assumptions, and report the behaviors to a supervisor.

What do you make note of?

Observable behaviors (slurred speech, irritability, arriving late, falling or stumbling)

Who do you report your observations/interactions to?

Supervisor, Safety Officer, Human Resources

Who do you share this information with?

No one except the report taker, to respect a person's confidentiality.

What information is critical to collect?

Observable behaviors. The observed behaviors should be documented.

## Workplace Violence Prevention

Discussion Questions: Why is it important to have a workplace violence policy? Have you seen violence in the workplace and, if so, what type of violence?

Scenario Review:

Break the class into three teams to review one of the scenarios below and create responses to report back to the class as a whole. Discuss all responses as a class.

### Exercise- Workplace Violence Prevention

SCENE ONE: You arrive to your jobsite in the morning and are walking towards the entrance gate and are confronted by a member of the public who is belligerent and moving closer to you. You yell towards the job for assistance, and the person continues to advance toward you. You run towards the job entry grabbing for your phone as it appears the person may have a weapon.

SCENE TWO: While working on Floor 3 of a building you hear loud conversation coming from a lower level that escalates to shouting and a possible fight breaking loose. As you begin to walk towards the argument, you hear a gunshot.

SCENE THREE: You are accepting delivery of some trusses for your project. The truck driver gets out without PPE and you have to let him know he needs to wear PPE while onsite. He becomes defensive and yells back that he won't be wearing PPE. You explain site rules and the signage at the entrance indicates that all visitors must wear proper PPE. He goes to his truck to get PPE, and comes back very angry and throws his hard hat at you.

What do you do to protect your personal safety?

[RUN, HIDE or FIGHT](#)

What do you do to protect others?

[Report, Evacuate](#)

What information are you responsible for?

[What you witnessed and any photos or videos you may have of the incident](#)

How could this be prevented?

[Format this as an open discussion and give plenty of positive reinforcement to ideas shared.](#)

## Suicide Prevention

Discussion Questions: Why is it important to have a suicide prevention policy? Have you ever received mental health or suicide prevention training on the job?

### Exercise- Suicide Prevention & De-escalation

Suicide prevention begins with how we treat people. Do we use safe and inclusive language? Do we look out for one another? Are we helping or hurting people's mental health with our words and actions?

Your co-worker divulges to you on break that he's had a rough weekend. His wife left him, and he is insecure about his job because he knows his job performance is slipping, but he feels helpless to get back on his feet. He's hoping you will cover for him while he is struggling. He says he has a gun at home and has contemplated hurting or killing himself.

Do you cover for your co-worker? How else can you support your co-worker?

It's best not to just cover for your co-worker as you are not allowing them to be supported by a network of people including company leaders that may be able to extend additional services or benefits to the co-worker. You can support with empathy and encouraging the co-worker to seek professional help.

Who do you report this observation/interaction to?

This conversation with the co-worker should IMMEDIATELY be reported to a supervisor trained in de-escalation.

How can you de-escalate the situation?

You can utilize the LEARN method, or you can start with the simple offer to sit with them while they initiate a call to the suicide prevention lifeline. That conversation could be framed like this:

"Hey Bob, I am so sorry you are going through so much right now. That seems like a lot, and it is normal to feel overwhelmed at a time like this. I am concerned about you and want to be sure we get you help because you are going to get through this. I am going to sit here in the job shack with you and we can call the helpline to get you connected to a professional who can help. It's confidential. I'll sit with you until you feel comfortable talking to them, but we need to get this ball rolling and get you back on your feet."

Do an exercise of acting out/role playing a de-escalation. Assign the students to perform the exercise in pairs and have one student be the person in crisis and one be the bystander working to intervene. Solicit feedback from the class after each "role play".

## Mental Health Support

Discussion Questions: Why is it important to support one another's mental health on the job? Have you ever heard someone use harmful language about mental health? How can we adjust our words to make sure people feel psychologically safe?

### Exercise- Mental Health support

Stigma reducing language:

Fix the following statements to be more psychologically safe and inclusive:

- He committed suicide- **He died by suicide.**
- They're crazy- **They approach life differently.**
- Sounds like a personal problem to me- **Sorry you are going through that.**
- Suck it up- **Yes, it is difficult, but you're going to get it done.**
- Stop acting like a girl- **No more complaining, we have to get this done.**
- You suck at installing drywall- **This performance isn't meeting standards. What training can you get?**
- You don't know what you're doing- **You are clearly learning. What questions do you have?**

List 5 ways you can make your co-workers feel more psychologically safe:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Examples: Get to know your co-workers, collaborate and share praise, ask people how they are doing, show empathy, practice patience, check your ego, actively listen, be inclusive, use respectful language, and encourage respectful boundaries.

List two ways you can enhance your own mental health

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Examples: Self-care, talking about feelings, proper hygiene, setting and working on goals, getting enough sleep, not relying on drugs or alcohol in hard times, therapy, medication, exercise, and hobbies.

Define your current jobsite culture. Now identify ways you can enhance this personally or with support from your company.

Format this discussion as no "right answer" just an open forum with lots of positive reinforcement for the students who share.



**Self-Reflection Activity: Report** three major takeaways from this training you will **apply** at your jobsites as part of your job.

1.

2.

3.