

June
2021
Issue 108

June is
National
Safety Month

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Trust Intelligence

A Newsletter published by the Workers' Compensation Trust

\$450,000 in Safety Grants Awarded 60 Members Receive Grant Money

It's a pleasure to report the 2021 safety grant program continued to hold high returns in both participation and distribution. There were 128 entrants requesting over \$1.4 million dollars. After a very difficult selection process, 60 recipients were ultimately chosen to receive \$450,000 in grant money with the average award in excess of \$7,500.

Winning entries covered a wide spectrum of safety needs such as patient handling equipment, security doors, lighting, safety mats, ramps, railings, lifting devices, professional training, icy grippers, and much more.

Diane Ritucci, President and CEO stated: "We're delighted with the growth in participation this program continues to see. Its impact on loss prevention is enormous, reducing future losses far in excess of the grant money invested. However, the best part of this program is that every Trust member benefits! Taking proactive steps in loss prevention helps generate additional premium returns to all members."

Congratulations to all of our winners:

A Brand New Day	MARC: Community Residences
Abilis	Marrakech
Aetna Ambulance Service	Milestones Behavioral Services
Alberta Manor	My Sisters' Place
Allied Community Services	New Britain Emergency Med. Services
Ambulance Service of Manchester	New Horizons
ARI of Connecticut	New Samaritan Corporation
Beyond Homecare Staffing Services	Northeast Placement Services
Boys & Girls Village	Notre Dame Convalescent Home
Change Meadowbrook Manor	Odd Fellows Home of CT, dba Fairview
Columbus House, Inc.	Pathways, Inc.
Community Child Guidance Clinic	Perception Programs, Inc.
Community Residences	Prestige Companion & Homemakers
Cook Willow Convalescent Hospital	Reg. Hospice and Home Care of W. CT
Covenant Shelter of New London	Reg. YMCA of Western CT
CSC Enterprises	Residential Management Services
Duncaster	SARAH Tuxis Res. & Comm. Resources
Easter Seals Capital Region & E. CT	Stamford Health
Elder Care Consulting	Star, Inc...Lighting the Way
Foothills Visiting Nurse & Homecare	Thames River Council for Comm Action
Golden Horizons Elder Care Services	The ARC of Farmington Valley
Groton Ambulance Association	The Children's Comm. Programs of CT
Hebrew Health Care	The Connecticut Hospice
Help Unlimited	The Hartford Dispensary
Homes with Hope	The Mary Wade Home
Humanidad	The McCall Foundation
Jumoke Academy	VNA Community Healthcare
Juniper Homecare	Visiting Nurse Assoc of Ridgefield
Klingberg Family Centers	Wethersfield Housing Authority
LEARN	

How To Promote Vaccination in Your Organization

There are many resources to assist employers with promoting vaccination to employees. The CDC has several resources to help spread the word including communication toolkits for:

- Medical Centers, Clinics and Clinicians
- Long-Term Care Facilities
- Essential Workers
- Community Based Organizations
- Health Departments and Public Health Partners
- Teachers, School Staff and Childcare Workers



These toolkits provide employers with print resources in several languages and the ability to customize the documents with your organization's logo. Printable stickers for staff to handout to people who have received a vaccine are also available. Multiple graphics are available including portrait-style graphics and text-style vaccine graphics in both English and Spanish. There are also video resources for employees who may respond better to verbal information.

The COVID-19 Vaccination Communication Toolkit allows employers to:

- Adapt the key messages to the language, tone, and format that will resonate with your organization. You know what works for your employees.
- Customize the template letter and send or email it to your employees to introduce your COVID-19 vaccine educational activities.
- Print copies of the communication resources and use them as handouts or to hang in highly visible places in your offices, buildings, and other employee locations.
- Organize a COVID-19 vaccine presentation for your employees and promote it via digital and employee communication channels. If you are able, organize a virtual presentation. If not, organize an in-person presentation following COVID-19 safety precautions. Ask if your local health department can provide a speaker if you do not have a health educator on staff.
- Have open discussions. Create and publicize a feedback mechanism for your employees to ask questions about COVID-19 vaccination (email inbox, phone number, point of contact).
 - Acknowledge that certain communities and groups have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 infections and severe outcomes, and that some might have had previous experiences that affect their trust and confidence in the health system.
 - Provide accurate information about the benefits, safety, side effects and vaccine effectiveness.
- Continue to educate your workforce via articles, blog posts, and social media posts. Tailor information for your community and include graphics if you can.
- Learn more about finding credible vaccine information. Get the facts to respond to misinformation you might encounter.
- Encourage leaders in your organizations to be vaccine champions and share testimonials about why they got vaccinated and promote their stories.
- Encourage social support. Invite your employees to wear stickers once they have been vaccinated and post vaccination selfies on social media.

In a world driven by social media, the CDC has also developed a Social Media Toolkit: COVID-19 Vaccinations which include Facebook, Twitter and Instagram sample messages and digital resources.

To access the CDC's toolkit go to: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/resource-center.html>

June is National Safety Month

This is the 25th anniversary of National Safety Month, an annual observance to help keep each other safe from the workplace to anyplace. With the U.S. seeing the highest number of workplace deaths since 2007; 5,333 fatal workplace injuries in 2019, this observance is more important than ever.

Many of these webinars and materials are free for employers and if you are a member of the National Safety Council (NSC), additional materials are available.

The weekly topics for this year's safety campaign are:

Week 1 - Prevent Incidents Before They Start

Identifying risks and taking proactive safety measures to reduce hazard exposure on important topics from ergonomics to chemical management is crucial to creating a safe workplace. In response, the NSC has provided the following On Demand webinar:

Great Safety Performance is No Accident: Overcoming Common Incident Management Mistakes

This presentation will review the most common mistakes that undermine incident management programs, and more importantly, how to overcome them! We'll discuss strategies for making sure your program is compliant with regulatory requirements, and for identifying and eliminating the problems that keep your safety programs from reaching the next level. To register visit the webinar page on www.nsc.org

Week 2 - Address Ongoing COVID-19 Safety Concerns

As the pandemic continues, employers play an important role in the return to physical workspaces, building trust around vaccines, mental health and so much more.

Week 3 - It's Vital to Feel Safe on the Job

Being able to be one's self at work without fear of retaliation is necessary for an inclusive safety culture. Leading organizations focus not only on physical safety, but psychological safety as well.

Week 4 - Advance Your Safety Journey

Safety is all about continuous improvement. Whether organizationally or individually, the NSC can help provide guidance for your path forward.

**On Demand Webinars for Weeks 2, 3 and 4
are COMING SOON!! They will be available on
the NSC website.**

Prioritize your mental health

**Mental health distress and illness
can impact your safety and wellbeing.**

Watch for signs

Signs of mental distress may show up weeks or months after a stressful situation. If you're not feeling like yourself, don't ignore it.



Use your time off
Time away from work can help you recuperate.

Utilize healthy coping mechanisms

Find time for activities you enjoy; limit those that cause harm or stress.



Ask for help

Use your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), connect with a counselor or mental health provider, and talk with your friends and loved ones for additional support.

Take care of yourself

so you can keep your co-workers and loved ones safe.



For more information on this and other safety topics. Visit the member-exclusive website at nsc.org

National Safety Council | nsc.org



Nancy Frank, Nurse Care Manager Retires

The Trust would like to wish Nancy Frank, Nurse Care Manager, the very best in her retirement. Nancy started at the Trust in May of 2013 and has worked so closely with many of our members and their injured workers. She has been an invaluable member of the Trust team and will surely be missed.

OSHA's New National Emphasis Program Will Affect Trust Members

Effective March 12, 2021, OSHA launched a new National Emphasis Program (NEP) which will most likely impact many Trust members.

The goals of the NEP are:

- To significantly reduce or eliminate worker exposures to COVID-19, by targeting industries and worksites where employees may have a high frequency of close contact exposures; and therefore, controlling the health hazards associated with these exposures. This will be accomplished by:
 - a. Inspection targeting,
 - b. Outreach to employers and
 - c. Compliance assistance
- Protect Workers from Retaliation - The NEP includes an added focus to ensure workers are protected from retaliation. This will be accomplished by:
 - a. Preventing retaliation where possible,
 - b. Distributing anti-retaliation information during inspections,
 - c. Outreach opportunities, and
 - d. Promptly referring allegations of retaliation to the Whistleblower Protection Program

Additionally, to monitor the effectiveness of OSHA's enforcement and guidance efforts, certain follow-up inspections from worksites previously inspected for COVID-19 related hazards will be included, as part of the targeting strategy. The highest priority, for these inspections, will be given to:

- **Fatality/Catastrophe** - Workplaces with a higher potential for COVID-19 exposures, including assisted living communities and nursing homes, among other healthcare providers treating patients with COVID-19, as well as workplaces with high numbers of COVID-19-related complaints or known COVID-19 cases.
- **Complaints and Referrals** - Allegations of potential worker exposures to COVID-19 without proper protection (e.g., insufficient controls in place such as PPE). OSHA will involve workers suspected or confirmed positive for COVID-19 or with symptoms of exposure to the virus in this inspection process.

As part of the inspection process, OSHA may request the following information at a minimum:

- Did the facility perform a risk assessment regarding COVID exposures?
- Was the risk assessment shared with employees?
- Was the risk assessment implemented?
- What guidance did the organization utilize to protect employees against COVID exposure?
- Where there any engineering controls in place regarding COVID exposure?
- Where there administrative controls in place regarding COVID exposure?
- What PPE is provided to employees for COVID?
- A copy of the written work rules, policies, procedures related to employees' activities as they relate to COVID. If not written, describe verbal policies
- Employees were trained in these procedures (and documentation?)
- A sanitation schedule and description of the facility as it relates to COVID
- A copy of the SDSs for cleaning and sanitizing chemicals used.

The targeted healthcare related industries include: Physicians/Doctors Offices; Home Health Care; Ambulance Services; General Medical and Surgical Hospitals; Psychiatric and Substance Abuse Hospitals; Skilled Nursing Facilities; Residential Intellectual and Developmental Disability Facilities; Continuing Care Retirement Communities; and Assisted Living Facilities for the Elderly.

Public entities will not be part of the Federal OSHA NEP. However, inspectors will still be focusing on these areas if an inspection takes place. For more information on the NEP please contact fronczek@wctrust.com if you have questions or need assistance.

To assist our members, the Trust has a new webinar titled "Preventing OSHA COVID-19 Complaints and Inspections". To register, visit our website www.wctrust.com.

Trust TeleCare - An Innovative Way to Provide Quality Medical Care while Reducing Claim Cost

As a responsible employer, maintaining a safe and productive work environment for your employees is critical to the overall success of any organization. But no matter how alert management may be to an organization's workplace risks, accidents and injuries can occur. When they do, having a timely and effective response plan in place to manage the incident can be the difference between a claim that causes minimal disruption to the injured worker and your organization and one that causes a major issue that could have been avoided.

Trust TeleCare is a tele-triage service offered through the Trust and powered by Medcor, a national leader in telephonic triage and medical assessment services, which provides a simple and effective way for members to address the challenge of reporting and managing work related injuries. It provides:

- Immediate access to specially trained triage nurses for injured employees and their supervisors to report injuries 24/7/365.
- A thorough and consistent employee statement taken minutes from the time the injury occurred.
- Sound recommendations as to if first aid or self-care is appropriate or if an employee should seek medical care and what type of care he or she should seek. These recommendations are evidenced based and endorsed by the Utilization Review Accreditation Council (URAC), a nationally recognized accreditation organization that monitors quality in the healthcare industry.
- Documentation of injuries and recorded statements that can be retrieved in the future.
- Prompt notification to all designated recipients including the Trust.
- Generation of the First Report of injury, relieving the member of any further reporting responsibility.

Since 2017, over 60% of Trust members and 3 major self-insured clients have placed over 6,500 calls into Trust TeleCare which have yielded the following outcomes:

- Over 49% of calls have resulted in Self Care which does not create a claim or require the event to be OSHA recordable.
- Lag time reduced to minutes between call and Trust notification.

- Some members have experienced a 30 to 40 percent reduction in Medical Only claims after implementation.

If your organization is still not taking full advantage of this innovative program offered through the Trust and would like to learn more about its benefits, please contact your assigned Loss Control Representative and they can provide an overview of the program and sign you up. It's that easy.

We would like extend a sincere thank you to our Members who continue to support the Trust for over 20 Years!

ACORD
All Pointe Care
Assisted Living Services
Chrysalis Center
Community Health Services
Community Mental Health Affiliates
Community Systems
Connecticut Handivan
Connecticut Renaissance
The Franklin Academy
Hands On Hartford
ImmaCare
Klingberg Family Centers
Our Piece of the Pie
Star Inc., Lighting the Way...
Visiting Nurse Assoc. Community Healthcare
Westview Nursing Care & Rehab Center

Welcome To Our Newest Members

All Ways There Home Care
Companions Forever
King's Daughters & Sons Housing
Manchester Housing Authority
The Madison Beach Club
Valley Shore YMCA

The Legal Corner

Attorney John M. Letizia, Managing Partner
Letizia, Ambrose & Falls, PC

Employer Obligations Following Landmark US Supreme Court Decision Expanding Sex Discrimination

The US Supreme Court recently decided, for the first time ever, that protection under the Civil Rights Act (which is the employment area) extends the “sex” discrimination protection to individuals who are discriminated against based on their being “homosexual” or “transgender.” In brief, the Court found, as it did years ago when it extended the definition of sex discrimination to include protection from sexual harassment, that employees who are discriminated against in their employment due to “being homosexual or transgender” may bring a wrongful discharge discrimination complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and then file a civil lawsuit in Federal court.

In the case of *Bostock v. Clayton County*, the Court actually addressed the lawsuits of 3 plaintiffs, 2 of whom claimed they were discharged because they were gay and one who claimed she was discharged because she announced a change in her gender status. The decision was written by Justice Neil Gorsuch and he had some insightful points as to why the Court needed to interpret the original protection of “sex” discrimination more broadly to include discrimination, in essence, based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Justice Gorsuch wrote, “The limits of the drafter’s imagination supply no reason to ignore the law’s demand” and also “[A]n employer who fires an individual for being homosexual or transgender fires that person for traits or actions it would not have questioned in members of a different sex.”

It is our recommendation, especially as it relates to someone transitioning while in your employ or even someone who discloses for the first time while in your employ, that they are gay, that you have an internal policy in place to help ensure that these individuals are not discriminated against, mistreated or isolated by members of management, fellow employees, vendors, patients, customers, clients, etc. This is especially important for someone who is transitioning while in your employ because that individual should be treated no differently than anyone else. Their preferred new gender status and new name should be immediately recognized and no one should refer to them, in any way, under their prior gender status or name, or you risk a discrimination complaint with the EEOC, the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, and then a lawsuit.

Loss Control Team Launches New Webinars Available On Demand

The Risk Management Series is focused on providing relevant information to leadership to further strengthen and enhance safety efforts.

The Supervisory Toolkit series provides a new session titled “Diversity Without Adversity”.

The OSHA 10-Hour General Industry class helps our members stay current requirements.

All of these can be found by going to our home page; <https://www.wctrust.com/Events/education-webinars/>



CDC joins the World Health Organization (WHO) in observing World Hand Hygiene Day. Today and every day, we want to remind everyone that practicing good hand hygiene, such as handwashing and using an alcohol-based hand

sanitizer, is a simple yet effective way to help prevent the spread of germs and protect against serious infections.

The Clean Hands Count campaign offers patient and provider educational materials available in English and Spanish. These resources are intended to empower patients to ask healthcare providers to clean their hands and to guide healthcare personnel in the importance of providing patients with clean care by cleaning hands often. For information on this campaign, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/campaign/index.html>

COVID -19 Vaccine Progress

In our last newsletter I discussed the U.S. COVID vaccination effort, as well as the effort in the State of Connecticut. Good news, in follow up to that, at time of writing, we have fully vaccinated 29% of Americans, including approximately 60% of those over the age of 65. In the State of Connecticut 37% of our state's residents are now fully vaccinated. We have seen significant declines in the proportion of COVID-related hospital admissions among the elderly as a result, and there has been some increase in the proportion hospital-admitted COVID patients from younger age groups. We expect to see a change in that pattern as younger people become fully vaccinated. Overall COVID incidence in the state, thankfully, has begun to trend downward.

Real world experience with the mRNA vaccines continues to be consistent with what was seen in the Phase 3 trials, as well as subsequent studies, namely that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines appear 95% protective against symptomatic disease and 85% effective against infection overall. As with any vaccine preventable disease, breakthrough cases have occurred, but in general have tended to be milder than COVID among unvaccinated individuals. While the Johnson and Johnson vaccine rollout paused for a brief period due to a rare and potentially lethal side effect (thrombosis-thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS)), the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has recommended as of April 23rd that administration of the J and J vaccine resume, albeit with a warning regarding blood clots with low platelet counts among women under the age of 50. While the benefits of the vaccine were judged to outweigh the harms of a rare side effect, it remains to be seen how readily the vaccine will be accepted by the general public.

As vaccinated individuals we can begin to do more than we could prior to vaccination. The CDC recently released guidance addressing this, and the relaxation of certain restrictions in Connecticut is consistent with that guidance. Fully vaccinated people, for example, no longer need to wear a mask outdoors, except in certain crowded settings such as concerts, sports events or parades. They can also visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or maintaining physical distancing.

CDC has said it is OK to resume domestic travel without needing to test before or after travel or to self-quarantine after travel. However, we should continue to wear a mask in indoor public settings, when visiting indoors with unvaccinated people at increased risk for severe COVID, and when visiting unvaccinated people from multiple households. We should also avoid large indoor gatherings. In the workplace fully vaccinated individuals generally do not need to be restricted from onsite work following an exposure as long as they do not have symptoms.

The next phase of the vaccination effort may be the most challenging. Vaccine hesitancy needs to be addressed with effective, informative and culturally sensitive educational campaigns. Unfortunately, misinformation continues to proliferate, and the efforts by some to debunk the benefit of vaccination or grossly exaggerate its risk will result in the continued loss of life among those who decline to be vaccinated. In the face of an epidemic that has killed more than 3 million people worldwide, and nearly 600,000 Americans, effective vaccines are a Godsend, and the single pathway back to our normal lives.

Upcoming Webinar Spotlight Safety Workshop Series

We look forward to continuing to provide relevant information to our members and with this in mind, we have put together the June through September webinar schedule which can be found on our home page. We will be providing training on several new topics including a **NEW** series of safety classes.

The **Safety Workshop Series** is intended to assist with creating, developing and updating safety programs to ensure that our members are effectively protecting employees and conforming to OSHA regulations as OSHA requires site specific programs and trainings. This series will highlight specific safety programs that impact the majority of our members. See back page for more information



Upcoming Educational Programs

The following webinars are designed to assist members in gaining knowledge of issues that surround and support the reduction of work related injuries and create a safe and healthy workplace. To register, or obtain detailed information, go to www.wctrust.com. Your attendance is encouraged.

Safety Solutions: Making Your Safe Patient Handling Program More Effective

Thursday, June 24 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Safety Solutions: Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls

Wednesday, June 30 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Safety Solutions: Active Shooter Preparedness

Thursday, July 15 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

Navigating the Trust Website

Thursday, July 22 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Improving Your Accident Investigations

Thursday, July 29 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Safety Solutions: The Important Role of the Safety Chairperson

Thursday, August 5 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Safety Workshop Series: Part 1 - Hazard Assessment

Thursday, August 12 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

Safety Solutions: Safe Patient Handling for Caregivers

Thursday, August 26 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM



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