



# Improving Your Behavior Management Program

Employees working in the health care, long-term care and social services fields often have responsibility for the care and welfare of individuals that may exhibit aggressive or violent behaviors. Such behaviors can place both parties at risk of injury. How staff recognize and interact with an individual entering the “crisis cycle” will ultimately define the outcome of the interaction. Many organizations have adopted different behavioral or crisis management programs with varying degrees of success.

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A successful Behavior Management Program is predicated on factors, such as positive attitudes of staff, building trust and meeting the needs of the individuals served, showing empathy and respect for individuals, providing comprehensive staff training and continually reinforcing the techniques implemented. Programs that had limited impact or failed altogether generally lacked key elements of an effective behavior management system, had inconsistencies with fundamental work practices and fell short on full program implementation.

## The Process

A comprehensive, structured and interactive Behavioral Management Program is the most effective tool in controlling situations where behavioral problems may arise. The process of developing or improving a current behavior management system starts with a commitment by the senior leadership team within your organization.

The program development process:

- Examines the current behavioral management system in place.
- Analyzes the type of behavioral problems commonly encountered in the workplace.
- Focuses on the methods being used to hire, train and evaluate staff.

## Why It's So Important

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the health care and social assistance sector is the fastest-growing sector of the U.S. economy with more than 18 million workers, nearly 80% of which are women. This group is projected to increase its employment share from 12% in 2014 to 13.6% in 2024, becoming the largest employment sector.

Unfortunately, more workers are injured in the health care and social service industries than any other. In 2014, this segment had 164,440 days-away-from-work incidents, the most of any private sector industry and nearly 40,000 more than the next closest industry sector — manufacturing. Additionally, the rate of injuries and illnesses from violence for workers in this industry, which decreased in 2014, was still more than three times greater than the violence rate among all private industries, so it's critically important for management teams to develop and continuously improve their behavior management programs.

## How to Get Started

This is a brief overview of best practices contained in an effective Behavior Management Program. United Heartland has developed this and other resources to help reduce workers' compensation injuries resulting from physical altercations with individuals served by health care, long-term care and social service organizations. Contact our team of specialists for more information at 800-258-2667 or explore the United Heartland Toolbox at [UnitedHeartland.com/united-heartland-toolbox/](http://UnitedHeartland.com/united-heartland-toolbox/) to find more loss control resources.

## Program Goals and Objectives

A successful Behavior Management Program should have the following goals and objectives: Reduce the potential for injury to both the individuals served and staff. This is accomplished by focusing on the needs and care of individuals during interactions, rather than focusing on physical restraints.

1. Facilitate a positive and proactive relationship with individuals served that treats them with dignity and respect.
2. Create an atmosphere that builds the trust and self esteem of individuals served while decreasing episodes of aggressive behaviors.
3. Present an objective, understandable and consistent means of assessing the individual's needs.
4. Emphasize the importance of staff training and use of the behavior support plan as a guide for interactions and care for individuals served.
5. Suggest a focus on proactive interventions with individuals who may be showing early signs of escalating into a crisis. Work to de-escalate negative behaviors before the individual physically acts out.
6. Create a culture that consists of a mission (what we do), vision (where we are going), and most importantly, values (how we get there). The organization's values are reflected in its company policies, work practices, decision-making and the behavior of its staff.

## Written Program

A written program contains many components, which together outline the core policies and procedures your organization needs in place to ensure proper care of individuals served and to ensure consistent application. The written program serves as a guide for the processes needed within an effective Behavior Management Program to promote a positive and caring relationship for all involved. The following are the core elements which should be included within a written program:

- Management Commitment
- Hiring Practices
- Orientation Program
- Training Requirements
- Incident Reporting
- Debriefing Process
- Behavior Support Plan
- Quality Assurance



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