

OFFICER ASSAULTS DETENTION

OBJECTIVES

- Staff will be provided with and provide strategies to reduce the risk of officer assaults

Assaults on county detention staff is at an alarming rate across the State. Detention officers are frequently and violently assaulted in our facilities. Any harm to staff on the part of inmates is unacceptable, but we also need to ensure that staff responses to incidents are appropriate and professional. This presentation is intended for us to examine our procedures and responses.

Injury to staff is very expensive; over \$1 million dollars a year is paid out in officer assault workers' compensation claims in New Mexico, not to mention the adverse impact on officer retention and facility security.

In order to reduce harm to staff and inmates, detention personnel must develop strategies or plans to deal with these assaults. The strategy or plan needs to be developed with a systemic approach to include many, if not all of the jail systems. The systems need to be examined and ensure that they are operating correctly. Some examples of the systems that need examination are:

1. Policies, procedures and post orders. Are they reviewed and up-to-date? Are they readily available to staff? Is staff trained and re-trained on them and do staff understand them?
2. The inmate classification system (policy, classification instrument and actual housing of inmates) needs to be working well.
3. The staff training program needs to be examined and ensure that staff are being trained and re-trained on all jail operations.
4. The use of force policy needs to be reviewed and ensure that the policy and procedures are adequate and that staff are following them. Use of force reports need to be reviewed in order to determine whether or not staff responses to incidents are appropriate and in compliance with their training and policy requirements.
5. The inmate discipline policy and system needs to be examined and ensure that staff are utilizing it properly and are holding inmates accountable for their actions through a legitimate avenue.

6. The physical plant needs to be in good working order and free of safety and security hazards.
7. Inmate supervision is essential to reducing inmate on staff violence. The preferred method of inmate supervision is direct supervision, supplemented by camera surveillance. Direct supervision enhances staff to inmate communication. Inmates are not as apt to engage in illicit behavior if they are being constantly monitored by staff and camera surveillance.
8. Incident reports, logs and recorded incidents need to be reviewed to try and determine what the patterns or trends reveal. (Where are most of the incidents occurring and why?)

Once these and other systems are reviewed and analyzed, a plan needs to be developed. The plan also will require monitoring by a staff member. A major effort will need to be made to reduce inmate on staff violence and reducing injury to staff.

POLICY

Discuss any policies relating to officer assaults and prevention measures.

CLOSING

- *Ask staff for suggestions and recommendations to prevent officer assaults in the facility.*
- *Upon completion of this presentation, forward all recommendations and suggestions to the administrator for review and consideration.*