

IAHSS certification rollout: helping officers succeed

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After determining that security staff should obtain IAHSS certification on every level to help reduce the risk for mishandling of incidents and enhance the health system's reputation for being a "best practice" organization, security managers, working with Human Resources, developed a special training program designed to maximize the chances of an individual officer and supervisor attaining such certification. In this article, the author reviews this training program.

At Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, we have three hospitals and an office park that we staff with proprietary security officers. Our typical Security Officer candidate does not have any healthcare specific, professional security certification. Most come to us with varying levels of practical experience in law enforcement or some other security-related discipline. After hiring we provide on-the-job training to cover the basics of healthcare security, and then assign them to duties throughout the Organization. When the officers complete orientation, we are confident our officers will do the right thing.

In an effort to foster a learning environment, we saw this as an opportunity to provide additional professional training that would focus specifically on the healthcare industry. We wanted to ensure that all CHOA security officers had their Basic Certification in Hospital Security and all

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CHOA security supervisors had their Supervisor Certification in Hospital Security. This certification would give our officers a professional certification that sets them apart from their peers in many organizations and would instill pride and professionalism in their attitudes. The question was--How do we make this happen?

THE PROS AND CONS OF OBTAINING STAFF CERTIFICATION

First, it was important to identify the pros and cons of requiring our staff to obtain this certification. We knew that an officer not having a basic hospital certification could open CHOA up for potential lawsuits and potentially put the organization's reputation on the line. This certification is an important element in providing quality assurance within the healthcare organization and protecting both the officer and CHOA in case of litigation. It is nationally recognized and gives credibility to the officers obtaining the certification. That said, we knew making this certification a requirement of the position meant we could possibly lose some offi-

cers. Additionally, it was important to consider how it might affect the morale of the department.

THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL TRAINING

As a Security Manager, I felt I should personally obtain the three levels of certification to determine whether they would be beneficial to our team. It is important to lead by example and get the support of the management team after you have accomplished the certifications as well. After obtaining these certifications, I realized our typical officer may need additional training.

What could we as security leaders do to help the officers succeed? The answer is train. We developed an intense three-day classroom training program to assist the officers with successfully passing the certification exam. We provide the officers with the Basic Certification study book at least four weeks before the class, we also provide a "mentor" to the officers requesting additional study time during the four weeks before the class, and finally, we identified who in the hospital could teach during the class. Some of the instructors included

a campus HR Manager, a Risk Manager, Medical Records Manager, Customer Service Manager, Security Management, and someone from the pharmacy. Finally, we limit each class to a total of 12 officers to ensure the officer receives some one-on-one time during the training.

I partnered with our Human Resources division to determine what steps I needed to take to ensure a successful program and to assist in creating a communication plan to the security staff to provide a positive outlook for the program. Additionally, a new job description was created to include the new requirements. Also, I worked with HR Recruiting to educate the recruiters on the new processes and developed a plan to assist with retention of officers and recruiting stand by.

DETERMINING PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Finally, we had to determine the program requirements and how the rollout of the new requirements would go. In order to obtain the various levels of certification, the officers will be required to take a certification test. The passing grade for Basic

Certification is 70%, the passing grade for Advanced Certification is 70%, and the passing grade for Supervisor Certification is 70%. All current officers will have their Basic Certification within one year and all new officers will have six months to obtain their Basic Certification. All current and new supervisors will have one year to obtain the Supervisor Certification. Finally, any current officer wanting to be considered for promotion to supervisor will be required to have their Advanced Certification. The final breakdown for the certification levels are listed below.

Basic Certification

- All current officers will have one year from kick-off date to obtain their Basic Certification
- All newly hired officers will have six months from their hire date to obtain their Basic Certification
 - Provide an intense training course to better prepare the officers for the certification exam
 - Provide the officers with the appropriate training materials to fully understand the testing process
 - Pay for each officer to sit for the exam 1 time

Advanced Certification

- All current supervisors will need to obtain their Advanced Certification before obtaining the Supervisor Certification.

- All newly hired supervisors will have eight months from hire date to obtain their Advanced Certification

- Any officer wishing to be considered for Supervisor should have their Advanced Certification

- Provide the officers with the appropriate training materials to take the certification exam

- Pay for all current & newly

hired supervisors to take the Advanced Certification exam one time

Supervisor Certification

- All current & newly hired supervisors will have 1 year from kick-off date &/or hire date to obtain their Supervisor Certification

- Provide the supervisors with the appropriate training materials to take the certification exam

- Pay for all current & newly hired supervisors to take the Supervisor Certification exam one time