Implementing the Risk Watch Curriculum into the District 6 Schools

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed:_____

Abstract

It is responsibility of the fire department to attempt to keep their community as safe as possible through community education. It is very difficult to accomplish this due to time, man-power and financial constraints. The fire service organization needs to insure that a risk reduction/ prevention program is implemented. This program needs to be taught by educational professionals and supported by experts in the particular section being taught.

The problem was that the District 6 school system does not include the National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum to their students. The purpose of this research was to identify the processes for including the National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum in the District 6 schools. The process started with a literature review of Risk Watch Programs, national and state statics on childhood injuries and other prevention programs.

The descriptive research method was used to identify the processes for including National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum into the District 6 schools. The research questions that were answered were:

1. What, if any, are the costs for District 6 to include the National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum in the District 6 curriculum?
2. What, if any, are the cost to Westview-Fairforest for introducing and supporting the National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum in District 6?
3. What are the instructional requirements that would be required of teachers who taught the Risk Watch curriculum in District 6?
4. What, if any, are the requirements for implementing the National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum into the District 6 school curriculum?

By answering these questions, it was realized that due to South Carolina Educational requirements, there was insufficient time allotted to implement the Risk Watch curriculum into the District 6 schools at this time.

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Introduction

Since humans took their first steps, there have been preventable injuries. In the beginning they had to learn the hard way, by trial and error. Over the years we have learned that we can track these injuries and prevent them by education. This education needs to be started early in life to be raised as a safety oriented society.

To reduce injuries and deaths, preventable injury education should be the top concern for all fire service organizations. Every fire service organization should be implementing and supporting these programs in the local schools. All fire department personnel should be trained to deliver their part of these preventable injury programs.

The problem is the Westivew-Fairforest Fire Department does not have an effective preventable injury program in the local school district. The purpose of this research is to identify the processes for including the National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum in the District 6 schools. This will be justified through literature review and statistical data. The descriptive research method was used to identify the processes for including National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum into the District 6 schools.

The research questions were:

1. What, if any, are the costs for District 6 to include the National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum in the District 6 curriculum?
2. What, if any, are the cost to Westview-Fairforest for introducing and supporting the National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum in District 6?

3. What are the instructional requirements that would be required of teachers who taught the Risk Watch curriculum in District 6?
4. What, if any, are the requirements for implementing the National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum into the District 6 school curriculum?

Background and Significance

The Westivew-Fairforest Fire Department (WFFD) is a combination department with 7 volunteers, 14 full-time and 15 part-time staff. WFFD covers nineteen and one half square miles in the middle of Spartanburg County with two Interstates and has two railroads' running through it. There are approximately ten thousand homes, six-hundred and fifty businesses', twenty churches', seven schools', eight hotel/motels, and seven apartment complexes. WFFD has three stations, four engines, two ladder trucks, one rescue truck, one brush truck, one utility truck and two administrative units. We are the busiest fire department in the county with approximately sixteen hundred calls a year. We also offer ALS first response, extrication and technical rescue.

Due to the fact that we only have four personnel per shift, one chief officer and an administrative assistant on duty Monday through Friday, it is difficult to engage in a great deal of prevention efforts. Since there is no Fire Prevention Division, all prevention activities are handled by each shift.

The majority of departments in Spartanburg County only concentrate on fire prevention and that is usually during fire prevention week. A Fire Chief in Canada looked at the statistics and realized that he was spending 100 % of his efforts on 5% of the problem (Seaton, 2000).

Most departments do not even think of being involved with risk reduction programs that target preventable injuries of children.

In 2010, Westview-Fairforest Fire Department ran 1616 calls of which approximately 50 percent were medical calls. Many of those medical calls were render to aid to children 14 years and younger. No organization in Spartanburg County has introduced or supported an injury prevention program for children 14 years old and younger.

In the Executive Analysis of Community Risk Reduction course, we learned about the 5-step process of Community Risk Reduction. The implementation of a risk reduction program targeting preventable injuries in children 14 years old and under will create a challenge for everyone involved. Some of the people involved will resist the change, but resisting change is normal behavior. The results of this research should aid in an adaptive change process.

This research project directly correlates to the USFA operational objective to reduce risk at the local level through prevention and mitigation. The present lack of an effective risk reduction program for preventable injuries in children 14 years old and younger is outrageous. As the leader of this department it is my responsibility to implement an effective risk reduction program for preventable injuries in children 14 years old and younger.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review started with a search of periodicals from the learning resource center at the National Fire Academy. More literature review was gathered from books, internet articles, and various websites. By the numerous amounts of articles on fire and injury prevention, this seems to be a topic that has perplexed organizations in the past, and will continue to do so into the future.

The first published material that drew everyone's attention to the fact that prevention was necessary was, *America Burning*. It plainly explained that people in general are not careful and are unaware of the hazardous environment that they live in. The National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control identified that the public needed education in prevention. It was also recommended that the fire service should be teaching this community prevention (National Commission, 1973). The naïve taxpayer may think that career firefighters just watch television; sleep or play checkers but, getting out into the community and doing fire inspections and prevention programs can help alter that mindset (Kiurski, 1999).

As study by Safe Kids USA (2009), shows that children in America are involved in preventable injuries at a disturbing rate. The study reveals that in 2007, over 6 million preventable injuries occurred. Safe Kids USA reports, "Every 101 minutes, a child in the United States dies from an unintentional injury, such as a vehicle crash or a fire, making it the leading cause of death and disability for children ages 1 to 14 in the United States (p.3). Another alarming statistic is 50,000 more children are permanently disabled due to preventable injuries (Donahue, 2000).

There are great prevention programs available such as Sesame Street Fire Safety, NFPA's Learn not to burn, and BIC's Play safe-Be safe. These programs like most are targeted for fire safety and not preventable injury prevention, which includes fire prevention. NFPA has a prevention program that target's preventable injuries called Risk Watch. Risk Watch can help educate children and their parents on the most common preventable injuries to assist in leveling the playing field on the odds (Donahue, 2000).

The Risk Watch curriculum is taught in schools by professional educators (Donahue, 2000). Risk Watch allows the teacher to present the prevention material while still keeping their

autonomy (Lloyd, 1997). Depending how the program is set up, Risk Watch can be incorporated into Health, Physical Education or English class (Peterson, 2001).

The Risk Watch curriculum focuses on the most common issues that kill or injure children yearly. The most common are motor vehicle crashes, fires and burns, choking, suffocation, strangulation, poisoning, falls, unintentional firearms incidents, bike and pedestrian hazards and water hazards, most all of these areas can be addressed with simple education. Sadly, most people do not have basic safety education (Wolf, 1997).

The great thing about Risk watch is that it is fun for the students as well as the teachers. The teachers present the information and the younger kids “police” each other and their families (Appy, 1997). Then the older children help teach and mentor the younger students. It is thought that this mentoring will help teach both groups as well as place the older children in a role model position at an early age (Wolf, 1997).

Risk Watch addresses the eight most common issues. The National Center for Health Statistics (2007) report for unintentional deaths in the eight addressed issues in children 14 years old and less were:

- Motor vehicle crashes – 11,974
- Fires and burns – 457
- Choking, suffocation and strangulation – 1,210
- Poisoning – 69
- Falls – 129
- Unintentional firearms incidents – 175
- Bike and pedestrian hazards – 495
- Water hazards – 1,234

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (2008) report for nonfatal injuries treated in the hospital emergency departments in the eight addressed issues in children 14 years old and less were:

- Motor vehicle crashes – 138,023
- Fires and burns – 59,809
- Choking, suffocation and strangulation – 12,404,608
- Poisoning – 283,608
- Falls – 2,250,165
- Unintentional firearms incidents – not reported
- Bike and pedestrian hazards – 1,581,116
- Water hazards – not reported

Does the program really work? From 1998 to 2006, Risk Watch program as has saved at least 71 people (Araujo, 2006). Paradise (2002) narrates a story about nine-year-old Daniel Kelly, whom due having Risk Watch training saved his mom's life. Daniel and his mom were going bike riding when he noticed that she was not wearing a helmet. He insisted that she be safe and wear one while riding. They had not gotten very for when Daniels mother ran into the back of a school bus. She was banged up but, her helmet saved her from serious injury.

The next step is implementation. The first step is to publicize the problem and get the department and community on board (Wolf, 1998). Next, a coalition needs to be formed. This coalition can be as big as the imagination. It could include the fire department, police department, hospitals, Red Cross, Poison Control, Emergency Management, local businesses,

local chapter of Safe Kids, National Safety Council, and teachers and so on. The list could be near endless (Seaton, 2000).

Implementation should be slow, giving the school systems a chance to buy into the curriculum. The coalition should be raising awareness of injuries and how Risk Watch can help eliminate them. The coalition should also be out trying to raise money to help fund the project. The coalition will be the driving force to get the curriculum into the schools. Once there, the teachers will need to be supported. Without the teachers support, the program will fail (Seaton, 2000).

To have a successful prevention program of any type, the Public Fire Education Planning five step process needs to be followed. The five step process is: conduct a community risk analysis, develop community partnerships, create an interactive strategy by using education/engineering/enforcement, implement a strategy and evaluate the results (FEMA, 2008).

After reviewing the literature it is evident that one of the most needed prevention programs is one that addresses preventable injuries. The fire service needs to be a champion in their community and start a coalition to attempt to implement these preventable injury programs. It was proven that the statistical data is there to warrant these programs. By following the five step process to help make your efforts easier.

Procedures

After the Risk Watch curriculum was selected, a pilot program needed to be completed. The best way to get the Risk Watch curriculum implemented in all District 6 schools was to have a successful pilot program. The National Fire Protection Agency was contacted and the teacher's instructional manual was ordered.

Westview Elementary was chosen to be a where the pilot needed to be held. An appointment was made with principle Shawn Wooten to explain the Risk Watch Curriculum and how the pilot would work. After the first fifteen minutes of the presentation, she loved the curriculum and the pilot idea. She approved the pilot program and was going to set up a meeting with the Physical Education/Health teacher.

Several weeks went by and finally Joseph Lorenz called and wanted to set up a time for a meeting. Joseph Lorenz is the Physical Education teacher for Westview Elementary. The meeting started out well with Coach Lorenz praising the Risk Watch Curriculum. This was short lived when he voiced his concern over the time constraint issue.

Coach Lorenz articulated that he would love to teach the curriculum as part of physical education/health but, with increase in content from the South Carolina School System and the reduction of fifteen minutes from the physical education/health curriculum, he felt that it was an impossible venture. Principle Wooten agreed with Coach Lorenz but, organized a committee to figure out an implementation strategy. Contact was made monthly with no progress.

A teacher orientation was planned to familiarize the teachers to the Risk Watch Material. A PowerPoint presentation was going to familiarize each teacher with the Rick Watch curriculum and philosophy. It would step through some of the statistical data and clear up myths about unintentional injuries in children 14 years old and younger.

This was where the teachers would learn their role in the curriculum and why it was taught in the school environment. The program manual would be reviewed completely. The teachers would find out that each grade level would have a character role and how this works.

The curriculum manual parts would be discussed. Each of the eight programs has a common layout. The lesson cards would be discussed first. These lesson cards contain the lesson plan, lesson objectives, procedures and activities. Caregiver letters are next. These letters are sent home to the caregivers to let them know what their child(ren) is learning and how to help reinforce the concepts. Next would be the evaluation instruments. The pre-test and post-test would also be discussed. And lastly, information would be given on how the teachers could access other resources that may be useful to augment the lesson plan.

Community partnerships were created. Several organizations were contacted and agreed to help with the Risk Watch curriculum on the practical portions. Those organizations that were willing to help were: South Carolina Highway Patrol, Local Safe Kids chapter, Spartanburg EMS, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office, Westview-Fairforest Fire Department, and the South Carolina department of Natural Resources.

There were limitations to the research. Due to a lack of data on unintentional injuries in children 14 years old and less locally and in the state, national data had to be used. The goal of the research was to capture specific geographical information and not representative of national statistical data.

Results

The first research question asked: What, if any, are the costs for District 6 to include the National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum in the District 6 curriculum? The cost to Westview Elementary School, the pilot program institution, was nothing. Westview-Fairforest Fire Department purchased the manuals needed from the community education budget.

The seed had been planted and two funding sources were identified. The first funding source was the Spartanburg County Fire Chief's Association. If the project gets a majority of support, the association will either fund it themselves or find an outside funding source.

The second funding source would possible be ServePro of Spartanburg. The owner of ServePro is funding different fire prevention projects in Spartanburg County to give back to the community. The marketing director, Richard Haus was advised of the Risk watch pilot program and was very interested in the results. He felt that ServePro could aid in funding the project after a successful pilot program.

The second research question asked: What, if any, are the cost to Westview-Fairforest for introducing and supporting the National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum in District 6? The monetary cost was very low, seventy-five dollars. That purchased the Risk Watch instructional manual for the teacher.

The biggest "expense" that Westview-Fairforest Fire Department would incur would be the man hours involved. These man hours would include setting up different public service organizations to present each month after the monthly topic is covered and covering three to four of the programs topics. Westview-Fairforest Fire Department would cover burn and fire prevention, chocking/suffocation/strangulation prevention, poisoning prevention and fall prevention.

The third research question asked: What are the instructional requirements that would be required of teachers who taught the Risk Watch curriculum in District 6? There would be a two hour Risk Watch orientation for all teachers involved.

The orientation would be mandatory for every teacher involved in the program. The orientation would consist of a PowerPoint presentation and manual overview. The orientation would familiarize each teacher with the Rick Watch program and philosophy. It would step through some of the statistical data and clear up myths about unintentional injuries in children 14 years old and younger.

This is where the teachers learn their role in the program and why it is taught in the school environment. The program manual will be reviewed completely. The teachers will find out that each grade level will have a character role and how this works.

The curriculum manual parts will be discussed. Each of the eight programs has a common layout. The lesson cards will be discussed first. These lesson cards contain the lesson plan, lesson objectives, procedures and activities. Caregiver letters are next. These letters are sent home to the caregivers to let them know what their child(ren) is learning and how to help reinforce the concepts. Next will be the evaluation instruments. The pre-test and post-test will be discussed. And lastly, how they can access other resources that maybe useful.

The fourth and last research question asked: What, if any, are the requirements for implementing the National Fire Protection Association's Risk Watch curriculum into the District 6 school curriculum? The pilot program was going to be taught at Westview Elementary School which is part of District 6. A presentation was made to the Principle at Westview Elementary School about the Risk Watch pilot program and she loved it. The Principle can give authorization for any extra program to be taught at their school and she did. If this pilot program was

successful, a presentation would be made to the District 6 superintendent for the Risk Watch curriculum to be implemented in all elementary schools in District 6. If that were successful, a presentation would be made to Districts 1-5 and 7 for the Risk Watch curriculum to be implement in all elementary schools. If all seven districts agreed then Risk Watch would be implemented in all Spartanburg County elementary schools.

Discussion

The need for Westview-Fairforest Fire Department to be a champion in implementing a functional risk reduction curriculum for children under 14 years of age was the basis of this research. It seemed from the completed research that the Risk Watch curriculum would be a perfect fit.

Like many other fire departments around the county, Westview-Fairforest Fire Department has always focused on just fire prevention. These prevention efforts include station tours, safety demonstrations at birthday parties held at the station, career fairs and school talks during fire prevention week.

When the statistics were analyzed, it shows that fire injuries alone are a small percentage of the whole problem. With that being said, our prevention efforts should focus on the most common preventable injuries in children 14 years old and less. This would give the community more well rounded education instead of a very small subset. The community expects the Fire Department to be an all hazard service which would include a risk reduction curriculum that covers the most common preventable injuries.

The author understands that the schools are mandated by a number of objectives in class that only has a certain amount of time. But, it would be very beneficial to the school district as

well as the community to adopt this curriculum to augment the requirements that are already in place. The teachers feel pressured to teach the South Carolina standard curriculum without any deviation.

Adapting the Risk Watch Curriculum insures that all children in the selected grade(s) will receive the training and has an opportunity to learn injury prevention information. It would be insured that a professional educator would be teaching the cognitive portion to be reinforce with a hands-on portion taught by public service professionals.

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Recommendations

As stated earlier, the Westview-Fairforest Fire Department does not have an effective preventable injury program in the local school district. The purpose of this applied research project is to implement the Risk Watch curriculum in the district 6 schools. The pilot program was to be held at Westview Elementary School to serve as a roadmap for the other schools in District 6.

The literature review has shown that fire is one of the top preventable injuries for children 14 years old and under, but not the only one. The paradigm of “fire prevention” needs to be changes to “preventable injury prevention”.

The author has short-term and long-term recommendations. The following are the short-term recommendations:

1. Continue to develop the relationship with Westview Elementary School.
2. Continue to build partnerships with other organizations for stakeholder support.
3. Build support from all members of Westview-Fairforest Fire Department through education of preventable injuries in children 14 years old and less.
4. Promote an organizational culture that promotes risk reduction in children.

The following are long-term recommendations:

1. Continue to build the relationship with the other public service organization that assist in the Risk Watch curriculum
2. Search for grants to help fund the Risk Watch curriculum.
3. Search for other funding sources.
4. Implement a data collection system to track local statistics to be able to target the program to the local needs.

If there are continued roadblocks regarding the implementation of the Risk Watch curriculum at Westview Elementary School, the following are possible recommendations:

1. Approach the District 6 Schools Superintendent for recommendations on how to implement.
2. If all other attempts fail, develop a one day Safety Village program that the school district can send kids to for a field trip.

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