



Office of Safety and Security Services

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Essential Elements of Fire Safety Training

OVERVIEW

Buildings may be constructed to the highest building code and life safety standards but in reality, they are only as safe as the behaviors of their occupants. Staff at all OMRDD residential and day facilities must know and practice fire prevention and fire safety. Should a fire should occur, occupants must have practiced and be thoroughly familiar with evacuation procedures to maximize the benefits of the building's fire safety features. Fire Safety Training is the single most important element to ensure everyone is safeguarded in case of a fire emergency.

The following guidelines, practices and recommendations have been taken from the current fire safety training practices of various DDSOs and COMPASS agencies, the NFPA 101 (Life Safety Code) and NFPA 1 (Uniform Fire Code) as well as the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Codes.

Those who train others in fire safety must be totally committed to the importance of fire safe behavior, have the necessary knowledge to communicate accurate fire safety information and model fire safe behavior.

Staff training curricula for fire safety should reflect the following content and characteristics:

CONTENT

1. The **properties of fire** (what is the fire 'triangle', (Oxygen, heat, fuel), causes and effects of fire and smoke, what is flashover and its dangers, fire spread, etc.)
2. **Understanding human behavior** during fire emergencies; overcoming common misconceptions
3. **Fire safety systems** and their proper uses
 - fire alarms/pull stations
 - fire extinguishers, sprinkler systems, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, etc., fire doors
4. Fire **Safe Practices** (i.e. How to prevent fires from happening in the conduct of staff assigned duties)
5. Site specific evacuation plans and **R.A.C.E.** (Rescue, Alarm, Confine, Evacuate)
 - Fire drill training should reflect the philosophy that drills are not only for staff but for residents as well.
 - Evacuation plans have components for, and are understandable to consumers as appropriate (e.g. large pictures or other audio/visual devices for fire and/smoke for training in alternate exiting locations, symbols, etc.)

6. Knowledge and identification of **potential hazards**
 - Electrical hazards
 - Fuel loading
 - Candles and open flame devices
 - Cooking
 - Halogen lighting
 - Live Christmas trees and vegetation
 - Impact of individual behaviors on the safety of others
 - Smoking inside and outside the building

CHARACTERISTICS

1. Staff conducting fire safety training should consider the need to include **outside experts** such as fire department personnel, local code enforcement officials, fire alarm and sprinkler consultants
2. **Multi modal instruction techniques** (in person training, videos on fire safety from NFPA and other sources, hands on equipment use and demonstration), use of real life examples
3. **Hands on** training with fire safety equipment as appropriate
4. **Evaluation of training** effectiveness and testing (e.g. there are systems in place to ensure that all staff have received training and understand the concepts of Fire and fire safety)
5. **Refresher training** occurs on an ongoing basis with attendance records maintained.