

What the Pilot sites Said...

Jerry Houston, RN, PCT D, Augusta, Georgia, says, "the CREW experience has been great! It is a wonderful stress reliever and you can tell that staff is more conscientious about other people's feelings. People really think about the impact of what they are going to say before they say it."

Kenneth Gwartz, MD, Chief Anesthesiology, Indianapolis, Indiana- "The presence of CREW has a drastically increasing multiplier affect. When people are treated well, they treat other people better, they treat the patients better, and they have a sense of self-worth. And once they have a sense of self-worth, very often a lot of the conflicts that people seem to have, become...start to dissipate."

Deborah Wakefield, Social Worker, PCTC, Augusta, Georgia, says, "CREW is fun and allows us to unleash our creativity! The work environment is a much happier, lively and supportive place. People smile more and are more helpful and supportive of one another. It has been great and gives us the opportunity to respectfully express our thoughts and feelings to co-workers and management."

"Quality Veteran Care,
through Quality Team Work"

CREW

"Civility, Respect and Engagement
in the Workplace"



What is CREW?

CREW stands for Civility, Respect and Engagement in the Workplace. It is a national initiative based on all-employee satisfaction survey findings and hundreds of personal interviews with staff, contributing to the larger goal of cultural health in VHA.

What does Civility, Respect and Engagement Mean?

- **Civility** is an essential behavior of all employees in all organizations. These are the interpersonal “rules of engagement” for how we relate to each other, our patients, and our stakeholders; the fundamentals of courtesy, politeness, and consideration.
- **Respect** connects us at a personal level. It reflects an attitude developed from deep listening and understanding, cultural and personal sensitivity, and compassion. It honors all the participants in an interaction by creating a safe place to have difficult conversations and leads to an environment of honesty and mutual trust.
- **Engagement** is the result of respectful relationships within an atmosphere of trust. It provides all staff with the charge, the parameters, the training and the support to make decisions “on the spot” in the best interest of the veteran.

Why was CREW created?

Through a number of sources, employees have told us that VHA does not exhibit a consistently respectful work environment. Extensive data demonstrate a strong statistically significant correlation between civility in the workplace and EEO complaint rates, sick leave usage, combined inpatient and outpatient satisfaction and success

in meeting performance measures. CREW not only improves the work environment but also makes excellent business sense. In 2004, VHA spent \$24.6 million in EEO complaints and experienced 16.5 million hours of sick leave at a cost of \$540.6 million. Embracing a culture of civility, respect and engagement can help VHA to improve employee satisfaction and meet our mission of providing safe, effective, efficient and competent care for veterans.

What are the benefits of CREW?

VHA is facing unprecedented challenges in the demand for care, fiscal stewardship and expectations of returning service people and their families. CREW is just one of several initiatives to help us achieve our mission goal. By improving our teamwork, we can reach and exceed VA's strategic goals.

Pilot sites have indicated - both anecdotally and statistically - that CREW has resulted in:

- better communication
- improved teamwork
- higher levels of trust
- an atmosphere of mutual respect
- reduced sick leave usage
- improved patient satisfaction
- improved staff satisfaction
- heightened staff engagement
- reduced EEO complaints

What are the criteria to introduce CREW in a workgroup?

- Have support of senior leadership.
- Have support of local labor partners.
- Be willing to dedicate a significant amount of time to this effort. A key factor for success is intensity: recurring weekly meetings, ongoing follow-up, and overall sustainability.
- Be willing to remain focused on the aforementioned efforts for a minimum of six months. While the work should not end after six months, the majority of the efforts fall within that period of time.



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