

Proactive management in the special education classroom

Managers and supervisors are in a unique position to positively impact the safety and health of staff, students, and classroom visitors. Proactive planning can reduce workplace incidents and injuries, improve morale, and create buy-in for overall administrative goals.

But how do you start? Here are a few ideas to consider:

Form a review team

This dedicated team reviews all classroom incidents, whether or not they result in an injury. They can identify trends with individual students and specific classrooms so management can adjust staffing and

other resources as needed. Ideally, they can recommend early interventions, which will result in positive long-term changes.

- Other benefits of an incident review team:
- Identify hazards so they can be addressed.
- Provide quick response to issues as they arise.
- Evaluate lift and transfer needs of individual locations.
- Create staff expertise in addressing issues efficiently.
- Improve existing policies and create new ones.

Training resources

These providers offer positive behavioral support training. Conduct your own research to find one that fits your needs.

Oregon Intervention System

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- Represent different locations to provide a global view.
- Share information and ideas from different locations to improve problem solving.
- Establish an avenue for long-term injury prevention planning.

Change the environment

Many special education classrooms are assigned by school districts, making it more challenging to control the layout and environment. However, even small alterations can have a big impact. Be creative. Here are a few ideas:

- Establish and maintain clean classrooms.
- Set up classroom design to minimize learning disruptions.
- Provide a place for staff to take breaks away from the classroom.
- Manage classroom tools to ensure they are appropriate for specific students.

Support self-care

Workers in caring professions often put their own needs last. Helping employees address their emotional health can reduce the risk for injury and burnout.

- Set flexible schedules so employees can take breaks away from work and stressful environments. Ensure everyone has adequate breaks.

- Create a “safe haven” room where employees can go for a quick relaxing break. Consider stocking it with soothing music and activities.
- Offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to provide the tools employees need to navigate life’s challenges. Train supervisors to promote the program and provide instructions for accessing the benefit, so employees will know how to use it when they need it.

Invest in resources

No district has an unlimited budget, but your greatest resource is people. So don’t skimp on training, tools, and support.

- Train employees on the proper use of lift equipment or personal protective equipment. Regular safety training is another excellent strategy for minimizing workplace injuries, and it’s a great way to get employee buy-in.
- Provide the tools and equipment needed to do the job, and set clear expectations about when to use it. Check regularly to ensure tools and equipment stay up-to-date and in good repair. Touch base with employees to learn about classroom changes that may impact training or equipment.

