

The Redwoods Group Insurance Program

RISK MANAGEMENT ALERT

TOPIC: How to Keep Your Locker Rooms Safe

Locker rooms pose a risk management challenge for customer organizations because they are intended to be private, they may be infrequently monitored, and adults and children may be nude. These conditions sometimes converge to allow inappropriate interactions between children or between adults and children. Following the five steps below will help keep your locker rooms safe:

1. **Identify**
2. **Eliminate**
3. **Train**
4. **Solicit and Respond**
5. **Install**

Step 1: Identify

Identify high-risk circumstances and times. The three highest risk circumstances and times for sexual misconduct to occur in locker rooms are 1) when groups of children change into or out of swimsuits together; 2) during busy times, such as after work, when adult and youth may share facilities or adults may be lingering in the sauna, shower, or locker area; and 3) when a young child must travel through a locker room alone to meet a waiting instructor or parent. When such circumstances or times exist at your facility, schedule and instruct your employees to be visibly present in the locker room. Documenting that presence with a highly visible Locker Room Monitoring Sheet provides a visual reminder of their presence even when they are not physically there. **This step is critical – if you can only implement one step or must implement them in phases, this one is the most important.**

Step 2: Eliminate

Eliminate blind spots inside locker rooms. Configure lockers so that all areas are readily viewed by others and there are no out-of-the-way spaces. It is best if the layout can be arranged with no dead-ends (i.e., traffic can come from two directions). Make alcoves as shallow as practical. Install inexpensive ceiling mirrors or convex mirrors to provide visibility into areas that otherwise are obstructed from view.

Step 3: Train

Train employees to monitor frequently locker rooms and other areas that allow privacy. Staff's use of locker rooms instead of rest rooms will increase their visible presence. Employees should know to watch for individuals who loiter or who behave immodestly (for example, unnecessarily parading nude around the locker room). Perpetrators often linger, waiting for the right opportunity to engage in sexual misconduct. If they know someone is watching or that they are likely to be noticed, they will leave. Thieves show a similar behavior pattern. If an employee identifies someone engaging in suspicious conduct, simply letting the person know s/he has been identified and is being watched will be a significant deterrent (e.g., "Hi. My name is John; I work here – may I help you?").

Step 4: Solicit

Solicit and respond to reports from your employees and guests about inappropriate or suspicious locker room conduct. Employees and members are often reluctant to "make a fuss" until after an incident occurs. For example, in one case, a YMCA member was arrested for sexually molesting an 8-year-old child whose mother was waiting outside the men's locker room for him to join her after family swim night. Investigators later discovered that YMCA employees knew the member shaved his genitals in the sauna, lingered for hours in the locker room, and had asked a front desk employee if anyone had turned his female g-string underpants into lost and found. Let your members and employees know that you need their help to keep everyone safe and that their attention and information can prevent abuse.

Step 5: Install

Install obvious video cameras outside the entrance to locker rooms. Situate them so that they get clear views of the peoples' faces. This practice has also been shown to decrease locker room thefts, property destruction, and inappropriate interactions between adults and children.