What is CREW?

Civility, Respect, and Engagement in the Workplace (CREW) is a culture change initiative. First launched by the VA in 2005, it has since been utilized by over 1,200 VA workgroups to establish a culture of respect and civility in their organization.

The National Center for Organization Development (NCOD), a VHA organization dedicated to supporting healthy workplaces, oversees the CREW initiative. Federal Occupational Health’s (FOH) Center for Organization Development and Leadership (CODL) has partnered with the NCOD to bring CREW to non-VA locations.

Civility is essential and expected behavior for all employees, regardless of what organization they belong to. Some fundamental behaviors associated with civility include 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 fosters 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 customer.

How does CREW work?

Trained facilitators meet regularly at your site with selected workgroups for approximately six months. These voluntary meetings allow time for employees to have workgroup-level conversations about civility and their work environment, have positive experiences with each other, and practice new behaviors that can become the cultural norm. Facilitators come to meetings prepared to encourage problem-solving efforts and conduct activities that can help improve employee relationships.

Does CREW look the same at each site?

There is no manual for CREW, so the content of CREW meetings may look very different at each site. However, the initiative is structured similarly in that each site will identify a CREW coordinator to organize the initiative, CREW facilitators to run CREW meetings, and workgroups to participate in the meetings.
What are the benefits of CREW?

CREW not only makes intuitive sense, but it also makes excellent business sense. Research suggests a strong correlation between civility and important outcomes such as:

– Reduced EEO complaints
– Reduced sick leave usage
– Increased patient satisfaction
– Improved employee satisfaction
– Higher retention
– Better productivity and performance

What types of workgroups benefit from CREW?

CREW is not a quick fix for a very troubled team, nor is it a substitute for good supervision. In general, CREW works best with groups that:

– Aren’t in crisis or undergoing formal investigation
– Are not extremely understaffed with little time to participate in CREW meetings
– Are open to participation in CREW

How can leadership and labor partners support CREW?

There are many ways leadership and labor partners can support CREW, such as:

– Dedicating time for employees to participate in CREW
– Providing a budget for the purchase of small items to use during CREW meetings
– Maintaining and encouraging regular communication with the CREW coordinator and facilitators
– Providing visible support of CREW throughout the organization

What resources are available to us as we implement CREW?

FOH’s CODL offers ongoing support to help successfully implement CREW, including:

– Facilitators to conduct CREW workgroup meetings
– A variety of resources and materials tailored for CREW workgroups
– Support and follow-up between workgroup sessions to gauge progress
– Regular CREW facilitator meetings with leadership

How do we become involved in CREW?

For more information about CREW, please contact the FOH Center for Organization Development: 301-594-9026 or Priscilla.Clark@foh.hhs.gov.