

PREPARING FOR THE WORST

Active Threat Trainings Bring Peace of Mind

By Matt Ottinger

Indianapolis-based Vantage Point Consulting launched in 2015 and provides strategic vision for emergency management and preparedness teams in health care, commerce, industry and other sectors.

President Troy Jester says it primarily served hospitals initially and began to broaden its scope of services and set up the company in different branches including safety, security, hazardous materials, health care and cybersecurity.

Jester noticed requests for conflict de-escalation and active threat training picking up about a decade ago, with increases coming annually except for a reduction of in-person requests during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most of Vantage Point's clients are in Indiana, but Jester shares it also serves organizations in surrounding states, on the East Coast, Colorado and recently traveled to a university in Missouri. Contact points are generally facility managers, human resources professionals and even C-suite executives.

Finding the weak spots

When asked what weakness most plagues companies in active threat and conflict preparedness, Jester replies, "probably their budget."

"We see this across the board that organizations and corporations

are not providing a line-item budget for emergency management, emergency preparedness as a whole – not just for active threat, but tornado or flood or whatever the emergency is," he imparts. "And I think they try to piecemeal their programs together, and it really sets them up for failure."

He invokes the saying, "An ounce of preparedness is worth a pound of response."

Jester explains it's important for someone with a law enforcement background to teach the class on active threats, pointing to his colleague, vice president and security branch director Dwight Frost, who served over two decades as a police officer and firearms instructor in addition to being a trained SWAT team sniper.

"I think that just provides a higher level of credibility as well; if there are questions that come up about situations, they can pull from their experiences and things to help relate to staff and make it more meaningful," Jester asserts.

Calming things down

De-escalation is another focus, and the health care industry – like hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers and long-term care facilities – has been a key partner in that realm. Jester expresses mild surprise there aren't more inquiries from the retail industry.

"But I think it's because you can appease someone very quickly by saying, 'Okay, we're just going to return that,' or 'if you don't want



While it may seem ominous, in-person active threat training sessions help businesses educate their employees on the proper protocol should such an event occur – an endeavor that can literally save lives.

it, don't buy it' – that type of response," he surmises. "And that person leaves and it's much easier to get back to the 'customer's always right' way of thinking."

He contrasts that with the emotional circumstances surrounding health care, an increased expectation for focused attention and the fact that families are involved as ingredients for more combative situations in that industry.

"The other aspect I think is with staffing the way it is, health care organizations have really figured out they need to protect the staff and they have to make the organization employee friendly or employee focused to provide the tools necessary to do the job safely," Jester believes.

On the active threat side, predicting where or in what types of industries it can happen can be difficult to isolate.

"It's just somebody somewhere has a gripe about something, whether it's in your organization or not, and they're going to come and they think they're fixing the problem by creating an active threat situation," Jester states.

Domestic issues also are discussed in trainings as employees' home lives can be an impetus, as are staff terminations. He thinks some may be driven to "make a name for themselves" too as events become publicized on television and online.

"I think the media attempts sometimes to try to limit how much face time the threat actually gets, but I still think we could probably do a better job with not giving them the highlight of the emergency," Jester offers.

Art of communication

While violence prevention takes precedence in crisis response, another component of response is communicating the threat both internally and externally. This is why Vantage Point offers a certification in crisis and emergency risk communication.

Initially developed by the Centers for Disease Control, lessons provide guidance in talking to the community and media about emergencies. The certification includes an overview of the role of a public information officer related to working with the media, but it's also relevant for other members of staff tasked with communication. Jester notes county emergency managers and health department staffers also benefit.

"It's really meant for anyone in any type of organization to be a person that could speak to the media, could be designated to speak to the public or just internally to their staff," he adds. "It's more of a workshop where the attendees are given a scenario and they're able to write releases and those type of things."

Jester agrees that everyone hopes they never have to use knowledge gained in these types of courses, but sharing the information with co-workers, fellow church members, school officials or in their communities can add peace of mind for attendees and others in their lives.

"They seem to really be able to apply both of the courses and the things they've learned to their work life and then their personal life," he concludes.

RESOURCE: Vantage Point Consulting at www.vantagepointc.com



CareNotes
A Work of Saint Meinrad Archabbey

Our wellness-focused booklets address real-life emotional needs in a compact, easy-to-read, relatable format.

Offer caring support with our affordable resources

- Mental Wellness
- Grief and Loss
- Spirit Care
- Family Care
- Teens' and Kids' Topics

Order online at
www.carenotes.com

CONTACT US FOR A FREE SAMPLE

AS LOW AS 51¢ EA

Overcoming Everyday Anxiety

Responding to Life's Challenges that are Out of Your Control

Healing Your Body, Mind, and Spirit Together

Climbing Up From Depression

Easing the Burden of Stress

200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, IN 47577
800.325.2511 | info@carenotes.com | www.carenotes.com



INDIANA RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

One Million Hoosiers

Public health. Accessibility. Transportation. Insurance. And more.

Rural health challenges – markedly different from large urban areas.

Join us in supporting frontline rural hospitals, clinics, and providers.

INDIANARURALHEALTH.ORG/1MHOOSIERS