

From the CEO

Thank You

As I write this, our state and country are still very much in the middle of battling through a global pandemic that abruptly put our state and federal officials in the unenviable position of having to ask all Americans to put aside their normal daily routines and make sacrifices in order to help reduce the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on our healthcare system. It appears our collective efforts are doing just that and we are well on our way back to some normalcy in our lives. I pray, along with the rest of you, that this light at the end of the tunnel continues to become brighter.

At the NDIRF, we often talk about our “why” as an organization. At our core, we are here to protect and serve you, the brave and selfless individuals who serve and protect our communities through local government. At no time does that bravery and selflessness show through any clearer than when encountering the unprecedented circumstances that you have served through over the past few months. From all of us at the NDIRF, THANK YOU for all that you do for your communities and our state.



Brennan Quintus
NDIRF CEO

The Participator Summer 2020

Training at Your Fingertips

The past few months have highlighted how quickly your organizations can adapt to continue to provide essential services for North Dakotans. As easy as you made it look, we understand it took a lot of communication and resources to ensure limited interruptions to your operations occurred, if at all, as well as important initiatives within your organization, including employee training.



Through your NDIRF membership, your employees have unlimited access to over 1,500 professional training courses through LocalGovU, the NDIRF's online training center. These courses are offered at no cost to NDIRF members and range in topics from equipment and general safety, to HR development, law enforcement, professional development, and schools and educational – there are applicable courses for every employee within your organization! *LocalGovU also features an extensive catalogue of law enforcement courses approved for continuing education credit by the North Dakota POST Board.*

Though course lengths vary, many are one-hour long and feature narrated recordings and checkpoint quizzes to help learners affirm the new knowledge they've gained. To provide maximum flexibility, courses may also be paused, allowing learners to complete their training when it's convenient for them.

Plan your training

LocalGovU contains enhanced features for primary administrators to assign training, specify training due dates, and send automated emails to employees that remind them to complete their training. It also gives administrators an easy-to-use tool for managing personnel in groups based on rank, shift, and other custom options. LocalGovU also offers more options for running reports to monitor and track training compliance, reducing your organization's liability exposure and creating a safer, more productive workplace.

Just how many members are already using LocalGovU?

NDIRF members completed 1,936 LocalGovU courses last year, which was a 128% increase from 2018. This increase could likely be contributed to our updated member training center LocalGovU, which rolled out in Sept. 2018. In addition to

Continued on page 2

LocalGovU story ctd. from page 1

Learn how to get started with LocalGovU

the enhanced administrative features it offers, LocalGovU has an expanded course list that continuously introduces new courses as well.

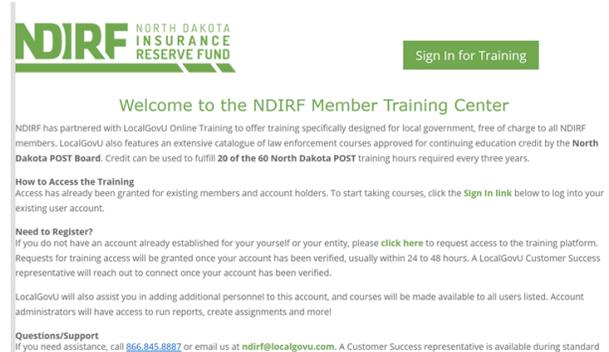
The most popular courses in 2019 were Advanced Defensive Driving Techniques, Defensive Driving Basics, Developing Effective Communication Skills, and Anti-Harassment in the Workplace as well as courses that focus on writing reports and law enforcement activities.

Get started with LocalGovU

Here's how:

- Visit <http://www.ndirf.com/>.
- Click on the [Training tab](#), then click on the Sign in For Training button.
- Enter your email address and password to log into LocalGovU. *If you're new to LocalGovU, click on the create new account link to set up your account. It usually takes 24-48 hours to verify your account, allowing you access into LocalGovU.*
- Once you're logged in, click on the Course Catalog to check out the available courses.
- Select the course you'd like to take, click Start Course, and you're on your way!

If you have any questions about LocalGovU, reach out to NDIRF Member Services Director Corey Olson at corey.olson@ndirf.com or 701-751-9107.



Home page of LocalGovU, NDIRF's online training center.

NDPHIT Update

NDIRF members interested in participating in the North Dakota Public Health Insurance Trust (NDPHIT) must have submitted their information to NDPHIT or Hays Companies by May 15, 2020, to receive pricing estimates for the upcoming term. Organizations that have not submitted their information by this time may not be eligible for coverage in the 2021 term.



Hays Companies has compiled the information received from our members and has set June 30 as its deadline for receiving pricing information from local carriers. Once pricing information is received, Hays Companies will share the information with schools in the estimated July 1-15, 2020, timeline and non-school political subdivisions in the estimated July 15-31, 2020, timeline.

Hays Companies provided an estimated timeline and further information in June via email to NDIRF members who expressed interest in participating in NDPHIT.

If your organization is interested in learning more about NDPHIT, please contact us at NDPHIT@ndirf.com.

How to Handle a Bully

Provided by Brian D. Schmidt, Attorney at Law and partner at Smith Porsborg Schweigert Armstrong, Moldenhauer & Smith

Workplace bullying comes in many different forms and it is not always easy to identify. Conduct that one employee might view as completely acceptable, might be offensive to another. However, as an employer, you cannot afford to do nothing once you receive a complaint of workplace bullying.

From a legal perspective, workplace bullying often takes the form of a “hostile work environment” lawsuit. To support a hostile work environment claim, “an employee must prove the conduct complained of is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the victim’s employment and create an abusive working environment.” Opp v. Source One Management, Inc., 1999 ND 52, ¶ 18, 591 N.W.2d 101. The work environment must be both “objectively and subjectively offensive, essentially one that a reasonable person would find hostile or abusive.” Id. There is no “mathematically precise test” and courts look at “all the circumstances” to determine whether the conduct rises to the level of a hostile work environment. Id.

How is an employer to know whether there is legal liability when the definition of a “hostile work environment” is so ambiguous? Fortunately, the law recognizes this is not an easy determination for employers to make. As a result, under both North Dakota and federal law, an employer can only face liability in a hostile work environment claim if it “knew or should have known of the harassment and failed to take proper remedial action.” Id. at ¶ 14; see also Hales v. Casey’s Marketing Co., 886 F.3d 730, 735 (8th Cir. 2018).

What constitutes “proper remedial action” depends on the circumstances and can include an oral reprimand, training, termination and everything in between. However, to assess the propriety of an employer’s remedial actions, courts consider “the



amount of time elapsed between the notice of the harassment and the remedial measures taken, including disciplinary action against the harasser, or other options available to the employer such as employee training sessions.” Horrocks v. Mechanical Breakdown Protection, Inc., 32 Fed. Appx. 159, 162 (8th Cir. 2002). In other words, an employer’s actions must be reasonably calculated to end the harassing behavior in a timely manner.

In sum, if you receive a complaint of workplace bullying, you cannot afford to simply ignore it. If you need guidance as to how you should respond, contact your attorney. Additionally, you need to document your response. If you have a meeting with the alleged bully, document it. If you issue an oral reprimand, keep note of it. If you believe additional steps (rearranging the office, training, administrative leave, termination, etc...) are necessary, keep thorough records of your actions. This includes a timeline of events. While this may seem cumbersome, it is vital to protect your political subdivision against a hostile work environment claim. Put simply, as an employer, you cannot afford to simply ignore a bully.

What is New Employee Onboarding?

Provided by NDIRF Administrative Services Manager Nancy Reis, SHRM-CP

“Organizations with a standard onboarding process experience 50 percent greater new-hire productivity,” according to LocalGovU’s Providing Effective Onboarding course. With this type of result, it’s easy to understand why organizations invest in new employee onboarding. Employee onboarding is the process of integrating and helping new employees learn about the organization, its structure, and its vision, mission and values, as well as providing them the information, tools, and training needed to become a productive member of the team.

One of the tools the NDIRF has developed to ensure our employees are effectively onboarded is a New Employee Checklist. This 51-item checklist holds us accountable for providing our employees with the introductions and information they need to feel welcome as well as the knowledge to understand how their role will contribute to our organization’s success.

Our checklist features items you would traditionally expect, including an office tour, employee introductions, information about our benefits, and training on computer/electronic communications and security procedures, but one of the items on the list is to host a New Employee Lunch. The lunch celebrates the addition of our new employee as well as gives our existing employees the opportunity to reintroduce themselves to the new employee in a casual environment. In addition to this being an event enjoyed by new and existing employees alike, it further exposes new employees to our culture which helps them fit in and begin to form relationships with their new coworkers.

New employees are also engaged in helping us improve our New Employee Checklist. After the checklist has been completed, we ask new employees for their feedback in-person or via paper survey. This engagement helps create



rapport and trust with new employees, which further demonstrates our culture of listening to feedback and our commitment to creating a positive working environment for all employees.

The four goals of new employee onboarding that are outlined and defined in LocalGovU’s Providing Effective Onboarding course include:

- 1: Reduces Time-to-Productivity.** Proper onboarding gets employees up to speed much more rapidly so that within weeks it is hard to tell the difference between new employees and seasoned employees.
- 2: Reduces Stress.** Being a new hire brings a significant amount of anxiety. By providing your employees with all the information they need to know, it can reduce the negative affects employees’ experience. Instead, they are better able to concentrate and perform their jobs.
- 3: Reduces Turnover.** Strong onboarding programs assure new employees they are valued and have all the necessary tools to succeed. Consequently, costly turnover is reduced.
- 4: Develops Job Knowledge.** While training your new employee about the mission, vision, values,



and culture of the organization, proper onboarding ensures that new employees have a full understanding of their role within the organization and how it relates to the overall mission of the organization. Upfront education prevents damaging mistakes down the road. By having an effective onboarding program, you ensure there is better assimilation of new hires into the company culture, higher time-to-productivity ratios, and higher employee engagement.

If your organization needs assistance with building or strengthening your new employee onboarding, check out Providing Effective Onboarding in LocalGovU, the NDIRF's online training center that offers free professional development courses for our members and their employees. Visit ndirf.com and click on "Training" to log in or create your free profile today.



Human Resource Guide Available

Provided by the HR Collaborative team

The HR Collaborative is very excited to announce the revised HR Reference Guide for Local Government has had a comprehensive review and is available at www.hrndgov.org. We plan to offer a webinar in late summer of 2020 to review the major changes in policies.

As local governments face many new challenges and opportunities, HR management is often at the center of the discussion. We have added a new COVID resource section on HR issues related to local government at www.hrndgov.org/covid.

Please know that we are here to help you and plan to offer resources as they become available. Thank you all for helping to make North Dakota healthy and strong.

The Sixth Human Resource Conference for Local Governments has been rescheduled for June 2-3, 2021. We are hoping to retain all our planned presenters and will add new topics as they emerge. All registrants have been sent an email regarding registration options.

In place of this year's conference, the HR Collaborative for Local Government will be organizing a series of webinars over the next six months on a range of HR topics. The first webinar offered April 17 on the federal *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* was well attended and received rave reviews. This session offered key information on the Emergency Sick Leave and Family Medical Leave provisions in the bill. If you were unable attend the webinar, it is available on the HR Collaborative's website at www.hrndgov.org.

Sign up today! Get regular HR updates by registering at www.hrndgov.org.



NORTH DAKOTA
INSURANCE
RESERVE FUND
PO BOX 2258
BISMARCK, ND 58502

PRESORTED
STANDARD
US POSTAGE PAID
BISMARCK, ND
PERMIT NO 419

North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund Board of Directors

Randy Bina, Bismarck Blake Crosby, Bismarck Ty DeWitz, Tappen Darcie Huwe, Wahpeton Burdell Johnson, Tuttle
Scott Ouradnik, Amidon Chad Peterson, Fargo Terry Traynor, Bismarck Chris West, Grafton

NDIRF Hosts Annual Meeting, Distributes Annual Report

Thank you to our members, board members, and employees who joined us for our 2019 Annual Meeting on May 20, 2020, which we hosted over Zoom.

During the meeting, we discussed 2019 activity, including giving back nearly \$3.1 million in Conferment of Benefits, types of training offered, and financials, as well as shared information about the North Dakota Public Health Insurance Trust (NDPHIT).

The 2019 Annual Report is available online at www.ndirf.com>NDIRF Info>Financials.



Upcoming Events

NDIRF Board of Directors Meeting

Sept. 10
Bismarck, ND

ndirf.com

NDLC Annual Conference

Sept. 24-26
Bismarck, ND

ndlc.org

NDACO Annual Conference

Oct. 11-14
Bismarck, ND

ndaco.org

HR Collaborative

June 2-3, 2021
Bismarck, ND

hrndgov.org