

Corrections Staff and Offender Communication

Needs Assessment Report

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Corrections employees struggle with knowing how to talk to offenders. Many employees believe offenders are below them and refuse to speak to them as they would other humans. Some employees talk with offenders in a firm matter, no matter the issue or offender. Most new staff have no corrections experience and only know what they have seen on television and movies. These staff members need to be trained on the reality of the correctional setting.

The purpose of creating this training is to create a more peaceful work environment. The way some staff address offenders has led to staff assaults in the past. This is due to the offenders feeling disrespected by staff and wanting to “show them a lesson.” With this training we would be able to limit the number of staff assaults and create a safer environment for all. The line of communication can be opened with this training as well. By knowing how to speak with offenders, how to treat them properly, a feeling of trust is created. By having this trust, an offender may be able to provide staff important information that could help save someone else.

The issue was assessed due to the higher number of staff assaults and uses of force. Many of these assaults and uses of force could have been avoided if staff had used a different tone of voice or different words. Knowing how to interact with offenders is an important part of the job.

The first goal this training can accomplish is to lower the number of staff assaults. Staff assaults make all employees uneasy and have led to staff leaving employment and potential employees not want to apply. With this training, employees’ can put their minds at ease and help ensure everyone goes home at the end of the day. The second goal of this training is to create better informed staff. People tend to apply previous knowledge and experience to address a situation, even if the experience was negative. By showing the benefits of a new type of communication staff are better informed and have more confidence to better perform their job

duties. The last goal of this training is to decrease the financial burden on the department due to assaults, uses of force, and training of new staff. This training can help to decrease the amount of staff who leave the position due to fear of being injured and decreases the cost of training newly hired staff.

The Department of Corrections has seen an increase in the number of staff assaults and uses of force due to offenders feeling disrespected and wishing to solve matters the way they know how: fighting. This solution leads to staff being assaulted, uses of force occurring, and excess financial problems. As a result, staff members tend to resign after being involved in an assault or being witness to one, causing a shortage in correctional staff.

Primary Audience (mandatory training for these employees):

- Corrections Officers
- Corrections Supervisors
- Corrections Case Managers
- Food Service Staff
- Maintenance Staff

Secondary Audience (training on a voluntary basis):

- Clerical Staff
- Administrative Staff
- Executive Staff

General Learner Characteristics

- Age: 19-65
- Gender: 55% men, 45% women (primary audience: 65% men, 35% women)
- Education: High school diploma through bachelors degree
- Work experience: None to 20+ years

Entry Characteristics Prerequisite skill and knowledge

- Most have had experience in the corrections field or around offenders
- Most have witnessed offenders being spoken to disrespectfully

Attitudinal and motivational characteristics:

- Most have witnessed the damaging effects of staff assaults
- Experienced staff believe nothing will be learned with this course
- Some staff believe this training will be beneficial in their position

Prior experience:

- Some experienced staff know the proper way to speak with offenders, however they do not always use the knowledge nor do they always share it with new staff

Common errors made by novice learners:

- Applying what they have seen on television and movies to real-life situations

- Believing offenders deserve to be spoken to disrespectfully
- Believing offenders will take being treated badly
- Not asking for help or criticism from field training officers

The learners will learn how to address offenders in a manner that is firm, but yet also still treats them with respect and dignity. Each participant will be required to participate in a role play to demonstrate they have learned the proper way to address offenders. Follow-up with supervisors and staff will be conducted to see how the learning has affected their interactions with offenders.

This training can help eliminate the misconceptions newly hired staff may have about offenders. Seasoned staff will also benefit by seeing just how they are speaking with offenders and how their actions can affect the people around them. This training will help reduce the number of staff assaults and uses of force with the department, allowing for a safer, more peaceful work environment. Staff will be better informed in their dealings with offenders and can gain the trust of an offender.