

Professionalism and Ethics Three-Tiered Assessment Plan

Rebecca E. Patterson

Trevecca Nazarene University

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A course has been developed, designed to assist corrections professionals in the Missouri Department of Corrections learn more about professionalism and ethics and how they apply to their everyday work. The course provides a brief overview defining professionalism and ethics and providing the benefits of each. Three different interactive assessments are provided within the course, including a pre-survey to determine participants' feelings on the subject, categorizing elements of each, and a discussion on the topic.

To determine the needs for the target audience, a needs assessment was conducted. During the needs assessment, it was found that more conduct violations, uses of force, and staff-on-staff complaints were occurring at Southeast Correctional Center and throughout the Department. It was felt and expressed that these issues needed to be corrected to maintain safety and security within our institutions while also becoming more successful and working towards our mission: Improving lives for safer communities.

Several interviews were conducted with custody staff including corrections officers, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, and the major at Southeast. Interviews were also held with non-custody staff such as case managers, functional unit managers, and the warden. Questions were asked regarding the current state and what each participant felt could be done to help alleviate the problem. Rating scales were also used during the interviews to help rank the issues and the solutions.

The data collected showed an issue with how staff are communicating with offenders and with each other. Staff often did not know what their purpose was within the institution and did not know what was expected of them. Many believed there are staff who do not know or

understand how to be professional. Many also were not sure how to be ethical while also being authoritative with the offenders.

This data helped to determine something needed to be done to address the issues of professionalism and ethics. Various options were considered, such as job aids. It was decided a training would be the most beneficial option to ensure understanding. It was also decided that all staff should attend this training as it is needed at every level. Staff also felt something needed to be done to assist the newly hired staff.

For the gamification that was created to help guide new hires into a having a thorough learning, understanding checks were put in place to ensure the material needed to advance was being learned. These checks included writing summaries, interviews, demonstrations, and tests. Each level required at least one of these assessments to be completed in order to advance. Connoisseur-based and objectives-based strategies were used in the game.

The professionalism and ethics class included formative assessments as well. Learners begin the course by participating in a survey that shows their level of knowledge about professionalism and ethics, and their attitude towards learning about them. A quiz was also used to test for the knowledge learned in the form of a matching game. Finally, a discussion relating a situation to professionalism and ethics was required of participants to show how they relate professionalism and ethics to their experiences. These assessments fall within decision-oriented and objectives-based strategies.

To help assist with remediation, the online course is available to all staff with the option to review the course multiple times if needed. Learners will also have the option to meet with supervisors who have successfully completed the course to gain more insight into the topic. Job aids could also be created if necessary. With the data collected from this course and the game,

the course will be modified however necessary to ensure satisfactory understanding is achieved by all learners. The course will be required yearly as part of core training for all staff.

A summative evaluation will be used to determine the effectiveness of the course after final production. The following provides an overview of how each step of the summative evaluation process will be addressed.

1) Specifying Program Objectives

- a. Understanding of the definition of professionalism
- b. Understanding of the definition of ethics
- c. Benefits of professionalism and ethical behavior in corrections
- d. Reducing the number of conduct violations, uses of force, and staff-on-staff complaints.

2) Determining the evaluation design for each objective

- a. Interviews with staff
- b. Pre-course—Post-course survey

3) Developing data collection instruments and procedures for each objective

- a. Post-course test regarding definitions of professionalism and ethics
- b. Post-course survey regarding feelings on how course has helped them
- c. Interviews with randomly selected staff

4) Carrying out the evaluation

- a. Post-course test gathered after course is completed by learner; Post-course survey completed after course completion; Interviews every two weeks with staff who have completed course

- b. Data collected after course completion and every two weeks for interviews

5) Analyzing the results from each instrument

The results will be compiled in a database so that all factors can be reviewed, including knowledge gained, attitude, and usefulness. Data will also be sorted into job categories, so inferences can be determined based on different departments and levels.

6) Interpreting the results

Using the formative data collected, it will be compared to the summative data regarding knowledge gained and attitude. The formative data will be used to help revise the course while the summative data will determine if the course is successful in reaching its objectives.

7) Disseminating the results and conclusions

- a. An evaluation report will be provided by the training department to the administration of Southeast Correctional Center. This data will be reviewed by Southeast's administrative staff and provided to the department administration for review.
- b. A meeting will be held after the data is given to all parties to thoroughly review and determine how to proceed with the course: if further changes should be made or if the program is ready for statewide dissemination.
- c. Individual discussions will be conducted as needed with the training department and learners.

This summative plan provides a way to thoroughly investigate if the program is working at Southeast Correctional Center and if the program would be effective at all institutions within the state of the Missouri. Throughout the evaluation, the focus is placed on staff and their perceptions of the program. How staff perceive the program and its usefulness is a determining factor for the Department on whether the program will be accepted at other institutions.

The pre-course survey combined with the post-course survey provides an idea as to how the learners felt and the knowledge they had before the program compared to the knowledge and feelings after the course. This relational data helps give the administration a better understanding of the staff participants and the content of the course. Randomly interviewing staff will also provide more knowledge about their suggestions for the course. Conducting these interviews every two weeks gives learners time to complete the course at their own pace while also maintaining and compiling data in an efficient manner.

The formative assessments will be useful in comparing our summative assessments. Both sets of assessments will be maintained in a database that will help show the comparisons of each data set while also showing a complete picture of the before and after of learning. Data will also be categorized by job title to show how the learning effects different departments within the institution. This will also help to determine if one department is in need of more in-depth training.

Using the summative evaluation will be beneficial to determining the effectiveness of the course. The formative assessment provides us only a small part of the picture while the summative assessment will help us to learn more about how our program is working and if it is beneficial to staff, the objectives, and our mission as a department. The data collected from the summative assessment will help determine if the program is ready for the entire department.

To determine if the main objectives for developing the course were met (decrease the number of conduct violations, uses of force, and staff-on-staff complaints), a confirmative assessment will be needed. The confirmative assessment will take place one year after the completion of the course by all staff. This time frame allows for a sufficient data set with the numbers while also giving ample time for the material to be applied in everyday work.

The confirmative assessment will consist of interviews with staff from each department and each level of supervisors, surveys and questionnaires to all staff, and review of the data (conduct violations, uses of force, and staff-on-staff complaint numbers). These assessments will give evaluators an idea of how the knowledge learned has been used, if it has been effective, if and how the attitude has changed about the course, and if the objectives have been met.

To focus on the learners, evaluators will conduct interviews with at least two staff members from each department and at least two supervisors at each level. All administrative staff will also be interviewed. Interview questions will be evaluating how the course has affected the learner's everyday work life, how the knowledge has helped or hindered, what changes they have made because of the knowledge, and what they feel will improve from the course. Surveys and questionnaires will be given to all staff to complete addressing these same questions, so staff can self-rate their changes in performance. Some questionnaires will be given to supervisors to gather information on how they feel their subordinates are performing.

To focus on the context of the course, a collection of the number of violations (total and amount for each rule), number of uses of force, and number of staff-on-staff complaints (total and by category) will be reviewed for the past year. These numbers will be compared to the previous year before the course was implemented to all staff. A review of the characteristics of the staff including retention rate, how many learners have left the Department since the course

was implemented, and years of service will also be reviewed to determine if these play a part in determining the effectiveness of the course.

The results of the confirmative assessment will be compiled and presented to the administrative staff at Southeast Correctional Center. The results will then be reviewed by each staff member and provided to the Department administration. A group meeting will be conducted to review the major findings of the evaluation and the recommendation for any modifications, continuation, or termination of the course. If the program is recommended to continue, this confirmative assessment should be completed every year to ensure effectiveness of the program and to make any changes that are needed.

The confirmative assessment will be continuous in that it will be conducted each year the course is in use. The evaluation methods will be related to on-the-job work and the participants everyday use of the material at work. Reviewing the number of conduct violations, uses of force, and staff-on-staff complaints will help emphasize the performance of the course. Through the interviews and surveys, the learners will have an opportunity to provide feedback for how the course could be improved to address changes in context, such as policies, so it remains effective and useful. Using only two people from each department helps eliminate the cost of the evaluation due to lessening the number of hours evaluators spend waiting on participants and requiring overtime so interviews can be conducted. Using indirect measures will also help the assessment be easier to conduct and provide a better picture of staff performance.

This assessment plan will help ensure the professionalism and ethics course meets its objectives and the objectives for creating the course. The formative assessment will allow for changes to the course before final production while also assessing the attitudes and knowledge of learners before and after the course. The summative assessment will provide evaluators an idea

of how the course is working and if it successful in meeting its objectives and ready for statewide use. The confirmative assessment ensures the course is still effective and useful each year of its use and that the main objectives for creating the course are being met. Together, this assessment plan will help transform the professionalism and ethics course for the Department of Corrections.