



Improving Institutional Corrections Training Academy: A National Scan

December 2024



THE MOSS GROUP, INC

Experienced Practitioners Committed to Excellence in Correctional Practice

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Throughout this project, the site visit team was comprised of experienced corrections professionals with various backgrounds. Their collective work ensured an outcome of integrated themes representing the full correctional workforce. A special thanks to Dr. Tracy L. Reveal, who was the site lead for the on-site observations.

Finally, while not named specifically, TMG also wants to thank the new cadets and non-custody staff, the tenured institution staff, training personnel, and executive leaders who participated in focus groups and discussions. This information helped inform TMG about current training practices within the agency.

Curriculum Review

- Arizona Department of Corrections Rehabilitation and Reentry
- Connecticut Department of Correction
- Iowa Department of Corrections
- Illinois Department of Corrections
- Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services
- Maine Department of Corrections
- Michigan Department of Corrections
- Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction
- South Carolina Department of Corrections
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice
- Virgin Islands
- Washington State Department of Corrections

Site Observations

- Arizona Department of Corrections Rehabilitation and Reentry
- Connecticut Department of Correction
- Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services
- Maine Department of Corrections
- Michigan Department of Corrections
- Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction
- South Carolina Department of Corrections
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice
- Washington State Department of Correction

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Training is a part of every correctional agency. Several factors influence agencies' organizational and budgetary priorities for training, such as staffing levels, overall agency funding, and changes in the population served. The critical issues of the last 30 years create the need for an expanded set of skills, knowledge, and abilities that correctional staff are often required to exercise. In addition, funding for training has been reduced, and training technologies have rapidly changed.

There is significant variation in the curricula and the approaches agencies use to train and educate today's correctional workforce. This report examines four key aspects of training to inform the development of more uniform and comprehensive training programs for correctional staff to increase public safety and outcomes. These four areas were identified through interviews and recommendations by steering committee members. The summary presented here briefly describes each aspect of training curricula with recommendations based on survey findings, curriculum reviews, on-site observations, and focus groups. The full report details the observations and evidence to support these recommendations.

Section 1. Curriculum Design and Integration of Emerging Challenges

This first section covers how curriculum design can address emerging challenges, the importance of integrating adult learning and hybrid learning styles, enhancing trainers' ability to meet the needs of a multi-generational workforce, and revisiting physical agility training (PAT) requirements.

Observations

- Lack of integration of adult learning
- Inconsistent needs assessment
- Unstructured on-the-job training
- Ineffective staff-to-student ratios
- Unbalanced instructional focus
- Curriculum development gap
- Inconsistent, if any, physical training requirements
- Varied responsiveness to staff and population

Recommendations

1. Develop an annual agency-wide and institution-specific training program needs assessment that aligns with the agency's vision, mission, and values.
2. Align training goals with the agency's strategic plan.
3. Conduct a position-specific job task analysis on the largest staff classification every five years.

4. Integrate adult learning styles into training lesson plans and facilitation.
5. Develop a consistent on-the-job (OJT) observation checklist with structured tasks to ensure consistency in learning experiences. Incorporate a tour of the assigned facility, structured shadowing, and continuous evaluation and feedback.
6. Develop a training program for OJT coaches and mentors to coach recruits through a five-step process of skills attainment.
7. Incorporate scenario-based training situations. Debrief scenarios to ensure skill acquisition.
8. Include risk-needs-responsivity and motivational interviewing styles of correctional supervision during basic training.
9. Develop a T4T program to include regular refresher training for instructors entering the training field.
10. Evaluate trainers for consistency and fidelity to the curriculum.

Section 2. Building Capacity and Expanding The Training Audience

Part of the successful implementation of a training program involves an examination of the how, where, and why behind the effort. This section examines the pros and cons of residential versus nonresidential models, virtual and hybrid models of delivery, and technology resources as well as expanding training across all areas of the corrections workforce to include non-custody and civilian staff.

Observations

- Onboarding challenges with residential training
- Inconsistent application of virtual training
- Ineffective training environments
- Insufficient funding
- Lack of job task analysis that compromises OJT
- Imbalanced influence on training councils or boards
- Varied training audience
- Varied training hours

Recommendations

1. Evaluate the delivery mechanism and the content of residential versus nonresidential and in-person versus virtual training to determine effectiveness on recruitment and retention.
2. Consider opportunities for staff to test out of some competencies.
3. Advocate for training budgets to be considered in budgetary decisions.
4. Conduct and maintain an inventory of supplies, such as cuffs, weapons, and radios, to ensure each student is sufficiently supplied with the necessary tools.
5. Consider a blended training model, bringing uniform and non-custody staff together to

train for common topics and develop tracks for each classification.

6. Review the training catalog for non-custody personnel in-service opportunities derived from the annual training needs assessment.
7. Integrate special populations training that targets the variety of classifications and supervision of both uniform and non-custody staff served.

Section 3. Evaluating Training Outcomes

Effective training programs require an evaluation methodology with a feedback loop to make improvements. This section covers policies and practices that support trainers and employees, offers suggestions for evaluating participants eligible for advancement, and considers transformative professional development initiatives that benefit the field of corrections.

Observations

- Lack of training evaluation
- Lack of trainer development
- Lack of professional development

Recommendations

1. Modify the training director position requirements to include formal education in adult learning. Evaluate recommendation credentialing for this position through national agencies like the National Institute of Corrections or the American Correctional Association.
2. Establish criteria for training directors, trainers, and curriculum development personnel positions.
3. Identify and create course programs that allow staff to develop supervisory, management, and leadership skills.
4. Offer tiered, structured leadership training series for staff.
5. Develop a system to evaluate the curriculum for annual updates that address multiple levels of evaluation beyond training satisfaction.
6. Develop a continuing education process for trainers.
7. Develop and utilize a training matrix to meet the significant training areas in various classifications.
8. Develop a shared information network system for training staff to stay current on research and trends in corrections.

Section 4. Wellness and Fitness for Duty

Corrections work of today is about a lot more than safety and security. Many systems, realizing a role more significant than mere incapacitation, emphasize rehabilitation and reentry for

people who are incarcerated or in their custody, but to achieve that mission, correctional officers need specific training and knowledge. This section discusses how understanding each phase, from intake to reintegration, contributes to better mental and emotional outcomes for both staff and people who are incarcerated and how self-care is pivotal to correctional work.

Observations

- Misalignment of training opportunities and agency mission
- Lack of formal wellness programs
- Lack of supervisory training
- Reduced hiring requirements

Recommendations

1. Ensure training opportunities represent rehabilitative aspects of corrections.
2. Implement wellness programs that address the impact of stress and trauma on uniform and non-custody staff.
3. Review opportunities for supervisory and leadership professional development.
4. Collaborate with the human resources division and evaluate recruitment requirements to include age at hire, process for hiring, and a cognitive skills assessment.
5. Evaluate staff wellness programs for available self-care opportunities and support systems. Engage families and friends of staff in the wellness programs.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Description of the Issue

In 1993, the American Correctional Association (ACA) published its *Standards for Correctional Training Academies*, which stated that while training and staff development are the “keys to excellence,” they have too often been “relegated to a low organizational and budgetary priority.”¹ According to the RAND report prepared for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), quality training resources are limited, and corrections professionals must perform safely and effectively in a highly stressful, potentially dangerous, and constantly changing work environment.² The critical issues over the 30 years since the ACA publication have created the need for an expanded view of the skills, knowledge, and abilities that correctional staff are often required to exercise. In addition, long-standing resources that fund training for practitioners have been impacted by budget cuts, and training technologies have rapidly advanced.

Recruitment and retention of staff are critical concerns of correctional administrators. While correctional staff oversee more than 2.1 million people in facilities across this country, another 4.5 million United States citizens are under community supervision. Some state departments of corrections include community supervision division staff who are trained within the same correctional academy with officers and civilians, and therefore these staff, including contractors and volunteers, are part of the training academy’s responsibilities.

“*We need to be more prepared mentally for the job. I do not ask my sergeant questions because I do not want to look weak.*”

- Recent graduate from a Correctional Training Academy

Pre-service basic correctional training (BCT) models vary in duration requirements, with some academies providing as little as one to four weeks and others as many as 16 to 20 weeks. The same is true for in-service, field training, and specialized training, which is typically far from the continuous, just-in-time skills-building model shown to be essential for success in a constantly

changing profession. There is a definite need for more frequent specialized in-service training, along with more extensive fieldwork under the supervision of an experienced correctional professional educated in effective training and instructional design.

Studies reveal that BCT training content needs to be more evenly divided between hard skills, such as investigations, defensive tactics, physical restraint, and technology deployment, as well as soft skills, such as active listening, conflict resolution, and effective teamwork.³

Because corrections professionals are responsible for rehabilitation and reentry of people in their custody, curricula should cover pathways that lead people into the correctional system, with an opportunity for students to better understand strategies that result in positive outcomes upon release. For example, training academies might consider offering coursework in evidence-based strategies for responding to mental and physical health conditions among their population and techniques for managing officer stress during those challenging situations.

According to a 2018 report prepared by the RAND Corporation for the NIJ, correctional supervisors across all settings must have more formal and informal leadership training, given the critical role they play in staff development. But as it stands, the investment in cultivating effective corrections leaders at every level is limited at best. One study reveals that 90 percent of newly appointed wardens did not receive a basic orientation about the facility, population, and/or system before assuming their positions.⁴

Our project team observed dated training development and instructional delivery strategies. Many corrections training academies are still utilizing classroom-based, instructor-led learning models with very inconsistent, limited, or nonexistent professional development of the trainers. According to best practices in adult learning, this approach to training is time- and cost-intensive and ineffective; the average individual retains less than 25 percent of what they learn this way. Research conducted by neuroscientists in brain-based learning demonstrates that high-quality, high-impact training for adult learners should be active, authentic, relevant, measurable, competency-based, and immediately applicable.⁵ This is particularly important considering that Millennials and Gen Z comprise a growing percentage of the corrections workforce and are accustomed to using technology for education. This project resulted in a better understanding of what is effective and which jurisdictions have become more innovative in their training models and technologies.

Addressing special populations and further implementing changes in long-held social and correctional practice requires knowledge of implementation science, instructional design, and an array of other subject matter expertise. Implementing policy, for example, to reduce or eliminate restrictive housing and responding to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) populations requires training beyond the topics and structure of the training academy of earlier decades. Transformative training practices are needed in addition to transactional, operational skill-building information.

Many people in prison are likely to be coping with mental health issues, communicable diseases, and other serious health problems, all of which elevate the probability of serious conflict if dealt with incorrectly. Staff at every level must be ready to access a variety of de-escalation skills, ranging from counseling and mediation to restraining and isolating individuals. Experience from site visits and review of curriculum supports a need for high-quality training and technical assistance to support all corrections practitioners to this end, including custody and civilian, facility, and community-based staff.

INTRODUCTION

In response to the Bureau of Justice Assistance's (BJA) 2019 Comprehensive Corrections Training and Technical Assistance solicitation, The Moss Group, Inc. (TMG) was selected to conduct a national scan as part of the *Improving Institutional Corrections Academy Training* cooperative agreement.

As trusted partners in criminal justice and corrections, TMG has spent 20 years dedicated to helping state, local, federal, and private organizations achieve organizational excellence in corrections. This includes developing strategic solutions to sensitive issues facing correctional administrators, executives, and leaders. The training necessary to prepare all staff for a working environment that is highly stressful, potentially dangerous, and constantly changing requires high-quality, comprehensive BCT, and in-service training needed to perform their jobs safely and effectively. Corrections professionals (custody, civilian, facility, and community-based staff) respond to increasingly diverse corrections populations, often with little or no additional specialized training.

This project was designed to include the training needs of custody and non-custody staff who are critical to day-to-day operations. Training all correctional staff will augment the effectiveness and integration of an agency's mission and supports consistency in practice. Staff feel pressure to accept and implement policy changes that accompany many reform efforts, such as restrictive housing, Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Standards, and a focus on reentry. The ongoing reform efforts place even more importance on the need for agency-wide training. The ability to recruit and retain these staff and address the importance of their wellness is at the forefront of correctional administrators' concerns as well. Despite this, staff development is still relegated to low-priority status in many agencies, leaving training academies with limited resources to provide training models, curricula, and instructional methodologies in line with workplace realities, skills, and development needs.

The BJA initiative proposed a comprehensive national scan of training academies to document the current state of staff training. The outcomes of this scan produced examples of best practices and identified gaps, providing BJA with potential areas for technical assistance and guidance to assist agencies in enhancing training resources and supporting staff. TMG, in collaboration with BJA and a national steering committee, collected and reviewed national qualitative and quantitative data elements to help develop guiding principles.

This document presents the results of a 48-month national scan from inception in 2019 to completion in 2023. It is intended for both corrections and non-corrections audiences. It outlines the main themes and areas of consideration that were examined and discusses the methodology used to ensure complete coverage of the national scan, including survey data received and analyzed, a review of selected curriculum by field experts, information from countless focus groups and onsite observations, and a review of research.

In today's correctional setting, significant variation exists in the curricula, and the approaches agencies use to train and educate the correctional workforce. In an effort to increase public safety and improve outcomes by creating more uniform and comprehensive training programs for correctional staff, four key areas were examined in this report.

The four key areas of this report were developed after interviews with and recommendations by steering committee members. See figure 1.

National Scan

Key Areas

Curriculum Design and Integration of Emerging Challenges

1

Emerging challenges and the obstacles they create must be examined, and specific recommendations must be developed for all staff to assist in meeting each challenge.

Delivery and Building Capacity

2

Training delivery includes the interdependent mix of financial, space, time, and technological resources for maximum capacity-building.

Evaluating Training Outcomes

3

Evaluate training by measuring change in knowledge, skills, attitudes, job performance, costs, and the quality of the training facilities to determine whether the programs are accomplishing their specific training objectives and are delivering the knowledge effectively.

Wellness and Fitness for Duty

4

Expectations and desired outcomes have evolved beyond security.

Figure 1 - National Scan Key Areas

Section 1 examines emerging challenges and the obstacles they create. This section contemplates how adult learning is integrated into the curriculum and meeting the needs of a diverse, multi-generational workforce and is rounded out by physical agility training (PAT) requirements. Section 2 is focused on building capacity and effective delivery in training and includes a discussion on training environment and associated approaches, such as residential

training academies and effective virtual training. The report goes on to discuss the expansion of training opportunities within and across organizations. Section 3 considers the inclusivity of various staff employed in a correctional facility, addressing their training needs and providing a balance between security and behavioral-based training. Section 4 focuses on the evaluation of training outcomes, ranging from policies and practices that support the efficacy of trainers as well as the development of assessments and evaluations of professional development initiatives. The report ends on wellness to include leadership and professional development, as well as a focus on recruitment and retention.

Methodology

During project initiation, a team of experts was established to guide the project. The National Steering Committee, comprised of twelve experts in the field, provided the following:

- Strategic insight to inform the methods for conducting the national scan.
- Identification of high-quality curricula and gaps in available resources.
- Guidance for building key skills and knowledge needed for the corrections workforce.

Three activities inform the national scan - a survey of training directors, a curriculum review, and on-site observations.

Survey

A survey was sent to the training directors of all fifty states and three large metropolitan departments of corrections. Responses were received from forty-four states and all three large metropolitan departments of corrections and provided quantitative outcomes.

The survey consisted of five focus areas:

1. Academy funding resources.
2. Instructors and curriculum development.
3. Training hours.
4. COVID-19 pandemic impact.
5. Recruitment process and recruits.

Curriculum Review

In addition to the steering committee, twelve other experts in corrections curriculum development and training volunteered to review curricula submitted by eleven states and one territory. This group developed the considerations for effective instructional design ([appendix I](#)) and reviewed the curriculum submitted in the areas of restrictive housing, use of force, mental health, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. The results from this review were quantified for analysis.

On-site Observations

The last piece of the national scan consisted of a qualitative dive into the survey and curricula through on-site observations of state correctional training divisions. Many states were willing to be a part of the observation's protocols, consisting of an in-depth document review, focus groups and interviews with recruits, line staff, program staff, supervisors, and executive leaders, and on-site observation of classes and training in action within the facilities toured. Nine states were selected based on representation from Correctional Leaders Association (CLA) regions. A non-site observation protocol was developed for this purpose and followed consistently with each agency, covering the areas of leadership, course observation, physical space, personnel retention and wellness, and evaluation.

SECTION 1

Curriculum Design and Integration of Emerging Challenges

This first section covers how curriculum design can address emerging challenges, the importance of integrating adult learning and hybrid learning styles, enhancing trainers' ability to meet the needs of a multi-generational workforce, and revisiting PAT requirements.

Curriculum Design to Address Emerging Challenges

To ensure academies assess emerging challenges, an agency-wide training needs assessment is recommended annually. Each institution should also be encouraged to conduct a localized training needs assessment to bridge any training gaps for its facility, particularly when preparing for in-service training. When managed in conjunction with the senior administrative team, the academy can ensure that the needs assessment asks relevant questions specific to all operational areas. A survey of national training directors showed that 71 percent of respondents complete this type of assessment annually. Over a quarter of the state correctional training academies still do not complete a needs assessment to determine and assess the curricula provided for correctional training. Additionally, when conducting onsite observations, the sites were unable to produce the needs assessment, nor were they able to describe the process by which they completed the assessment.

Most importantly, when assessing training, it is critical that the program aligns with the agency's vision, mission, and values. New hires should leave BCT with a thorough understanding of what the agency strives to do each day for the citizens of that jurisdiction, as well as for those confined. A lack of alignment between training and agency mission was evident during several site visits. When managed in conjunction with the senior administrative team, the academy can ensure that the needs assessment asks questions relevant to all operational areas to better align training goals and the department's strategic plan. It was evident for several state agencies visited during this scan, that the most impactful training academies had the agency director consistently involved.

The model of correctional training programs varies across states. Some states adopt and reflect a paramilitary style of training, much like those conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), police, and law enforcement academies. These models are characterized by strict physical requirements, including military bearing and fitness regimens, and sometimes the intent to break down individuals to obtain a group identity and an esprit de corps among the students. There was very little indication that the trainers understood "breaking someone down" other than the military experience some trainers have in their background. Whatever

model agencies adopt, it should align with their vision, mission, and values. As reflected in one large state, the paramilitary approach in the training academy was reported to be highly distracting to the agency's mission and not in alignment with its vision. Another state correctional academy supported the paramilitary approach, despite receiving feedback from participants that the environment in the academy did not reflect the environment they worked in, and the approach was counter to the agency's mission. If the purpose of a paramilitary model is to build discipline and teamwork, our project team suggests this be done in alignment with the expectations of a correctional officer's duties. As is demonstrated later in this report, the students reported a lack of scenario-based job-related training.

The trainee may develop unrealistic expectations once they are assigned to a shift. These unrealistic expectations may contribute to a cognitive dissonance between what was deemed important in training and the realities of their newly assigned role. This dissonance was reported in focus groups, with a recruit brought to tears when discussing the paramilitary approach experienced in the academy. Today's multi-generational workforce, with the predominance of Generation X and Millennials, does not support a paramilitary classroom. Within a doctoral dissertation focused on an evaluation of an adult state training academy's program in the southeastern United States, Dr. Wendy Williams (2013) found that students did not favor the paramilitary style the academy was operating under and recommended changes to said program.⁶ Students reported frustration when the training environment did not replicate the actual work environment. During focus groups, several staff reported that they could appreciate the esprit de corps of a paramilitary-style, but when the work environment was different, there was often confusion or a staff that was militaristic on the job, which is counter to the expectation.

Aligning training goals with the strategic plan also offers the academy the ability to obtain buy-in for the BCT academy subject matter. Often, the use of an agency training advisory council comprised of representatives from all major operational and non-custody areas will provide input into developing a comprehensive annual training plan while also ensuring the BCT contains the proper material to provide new employees with sufficient information upon entering the organization. Legislative mandates and other external stakeholders that establish requirements for the agency are also excellent resources to offer input when updating BCT and all training curricula. In short, as an agency's mission changes and policies are revised, training should adapt. In a few observations, it was

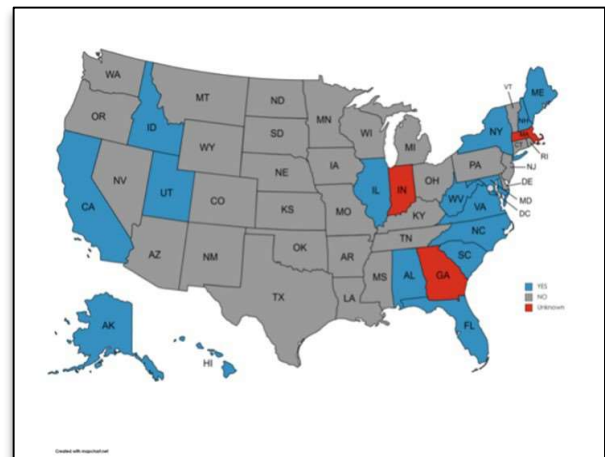


Figure 2: States with law enforcement oversight or influence over correctional academy (blue) and states that did not respond (red)

noted that the advisory council consisted of, or was led by, law enforcement officers with limited or no knowledge of the challenges faced by corrections. A survey showed that 36 percent of states had either law enforcement oversight or influence on their correctional academy. See figure 2 for the states with oversight reflected in blue. One of the states reviewed was comprised of 16 percent state correctional representation versus 63 percent representation of law enforcement. State correctional academies can be hindered by unbalanced membership and guidance, as witnessed in the state agencies observed in the scan. Corrections agencies must have autonomy and flexibility in developing curriculum that is responsive to their unique training needs.

Similarly, to stay current with the ever-evolving nature of the corrections field, (for example, due to technology and new devices and equipment), a position-specific job task analysis should be performed at least once every five years, primarily on the largest classification of staff: correctional officers. This in-depth review of core tasks that a correctional officer performs daily should include both the skills learned during the BCT academy as well as the more focused, structured OJT a new officer receives while working at their assigned facility. The lack of this job task analysis was a consistent gap across the nation. Analysis further suggested that a review of all staff positions, and not just corrections officers, would be beneficial. This could be on an expanded review schedule and tied to specific core tasks of the positions being reviewed to develop impactful onboarding.

Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services maintains an instructional staffing ratio of 1:10 throughout the BCT academy.

Key elements to an overall successful training program include a review of the implementation timeline and an ongoing assessment of class size. The curricula must be created before the implementation timeline, so ample time is provided to conduct pilot training and make necessary revisions as needed. It is also critical that lecturers within a training program are well-versed in the importance of the program and the intended goal for incorporating topics into the curricula. In addition, class size is a key factor in curriculum design. The NIC presented a maximum class size capacity dependent on strategy. Figure 3 shows the various teaching strategies and best practice class sizes.⁷

Strategy	Best Practice	Maximum
Lecture Only	20-24 students	50 students
Lecture/Discussion	20-24 students	45 students
Lecture/Discussion/Small Group Activities	15-25 students	25 students
Lecture/Discussion/Small Group Activities/Skill Practice	15 students	15 students
Lecture/Discussion/Small Group Activities/Physical Skill Practice	10-12 students	14 students

Figure 3 - Teaching Strategies and Class Size

As staffing levels and numbers change, training needs to reflect the changes to ensure fidelity is not lost. As was found within the 2013 Williams study of a southeastern corrections training academy, placing 80 to 100 new correction staff into one basic training class does not yield sufficient training.⁸ Instructors who facilitate online basic corrections training courses have also said that when more than 60 students are online, it is difficult to see all students on the computer screen, much less determine which ones are actively engaged in the discussion. There is wide variation in class sizes across state correctional agencies and only three of the sites visited set a staff to student ratio. Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services maintained a 1:10 ratio throughout BCT, the lowest set ratio observed. Other states managed an effective size class by offering BCT more frequently. It was clear in all states visited that maintaining an effective class size was important to the trainers but was not always supported. Given staffing vacancies, the push to onboard staff quickly and as many as possible was witnessed.

“ The demands of getting people on post as soon as possible has always been the driving factor that has dictated policy and practice. What if there was a different model as an option? ”

- Dr. Mary Livers

Integration of Adult Learning Styles

Correctional academies train adults, many of them young adults, who come to the correctional environment with a diverse background of academic achievement, individual learning styles, and generational bias. It is well established in educational research that adults and children learn in different ways. Specifically, it is widely recognized that adults take more ownership of their learning and are more self-directed. Adults are also shown to be more engaged in problem-solving learning environments.⁹ Further, adults are often motivated to learn for intrinsic reasons other than external control, and they incorporate their own life experiences into what they are learning. These research findings suggest that adult learning models that include a multitude of learning techniques is effective in addressing the learning needs of adult learners that come with a range of individual experiences and differences.

Twelve states volunteered their curriculum to be evaluated by subject matter experts for instructional design and adherence to the adult learning model. The team of experts evaluated the curriculum submissions based on the considerations found in appendix I. A submission met the criteria for instructional design if it satisfied all conditions, standards, and expectations set forth by applicable laws and the ACA and was graded on a point system. This review found that most of the curricula submitted for evaluation did not incorporate adult learning methods in their instructional design. Only two of the twelve states achieved more than half the points available for instructional design. See figure 4. These

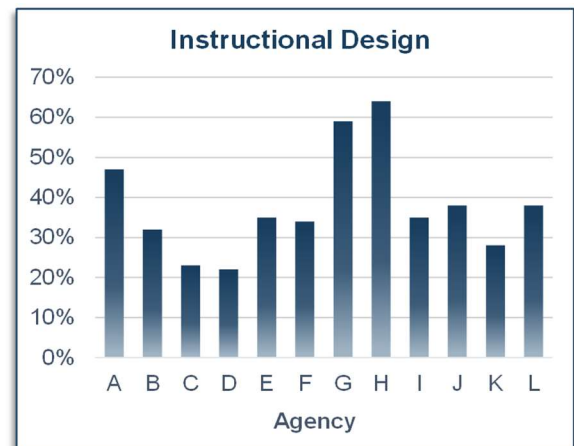


Figure 4 - Percentage of Criteria Met on Instructional Design Review by Agency

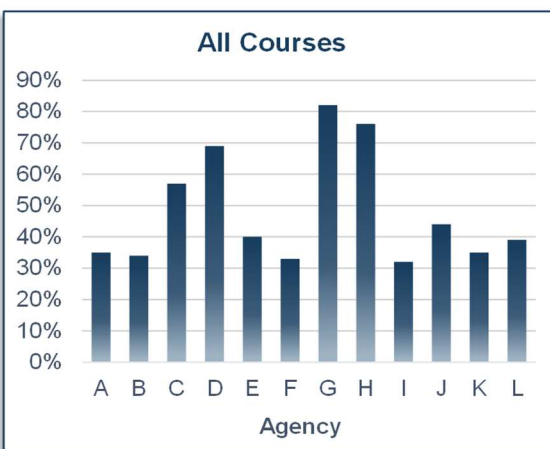


Figure 5-Percentage of Criteria Met on Combined Course Content Review by State Agency

deficiencies were validated during onsite observations. Though some individuals tried to incorporate adult learning concepts, the majority of lesson plans did not reflect adult learning principles.

In addition to instructional design, four areas in the curricula submitted were reviewed for content: use of force, mental health, restrictive housing, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. The content presented fared better upon review, with four of the twelve states achieving over 50 percent of available points. See figure 5.

Survey results evaluated with the same criteria also revealed a deficiency in instructional design, as 50 percent of respondents require instructional design training or certification for the position of training director, and 52 percent require training or certification in adult learning theory. The survey also provided insight into the minimum requirements for the position of training director at each facility. Most respondents require a high school diploma and less than three years of correctional experience. None of the respondents noted a post-high school degree or certification requirement. While education and experience cannot predict success in the training director position, it would provide insight into the needs of the training audience.

50%

of states that responded to the survey require instructional design training or certification.

70%

*of respondents reported training staff **spent less than one hundred hours annually** on curriculum design, development, or research.*

Survey responses from training directors indicated that nearly 70 percent of respondents reported that training staff spent less than one hundred hours annually on curriculum design, development, or research but over three times that on basic correctional training for custody staff. Though basic security is vital, further emphasis should be placed on developing impactful training for correctional staff.

Based on the curricula evaluation, survey results, and site observations, one would conclude that the deficiencies in educational curriculum and instructional design are a significant gap and may be negatively impacting training effectiveness.

Meeting the Needs of a Diverse, Multi-generational Workforce

Agencies must understand how to involve the workforce in decisions that foster well-being and productivity, given the increasing diversity of the correctional workforce. Turning to corporations that have been effective as a guide, correctional agencies have started to address the workforce in various ways.

Responsiveness

A key strategy to address emerging concerns and challenges in corrections is for an agency to be responsive to feedback as well as to changing trends and events. Merriam-Webster defines responsiveness as “quick to respond or react appropriately or sympathetically.”¹⁰ When preparing an effective workforce, this definition is critical to an agency’s strategy.

Themes emerged from focus groups across the nation. The agencies that were responsive to feedback from staff fostered the most dedicated and passionate staff. The converse was also true; agencies that were not responsive to staff needs had more frustrated employees, consistent vacancy issues, and high turnover. Internal focus groups, surveys, pulse surveys, or conversations while touring are key methods for agencies to gain feedback and insight into staff needs.

“*Involving the workforce in decisions about their workplace helps to build an inclusive culture, while ensuring that plans support the behaviors that will lead to increased productivity.*”

- Peter Cox
Associate Director for Project Management.

Simple changes can have a significant impact on the workforce. One simple change that was found to positively influence recruit attendance was the date on which BCT started, as one state reported. Another simple change that many focus group participants desired was the structure of their on-the-job training (OJT), indicating that a consistent observation checklist with structured tasks listed would benefit the learners as well as ensure consistency between the trainers and observers.

Overwhelmingly, the most common theme from focus groups of staff in BCT or recently completed BCT was the desire for more real-world scenarios to better prepare them for the prison environment. Agencies that provided scenario-based training received glowing remarks from new recruits. Even then, staff still wanted more real-world training. In the agencies where scenario-based training was limited or nonexistent, staff reported feeling unprepared and, in some instances, afraid to do their job. Several states integrated skills practice into their courses. One state implemented an entire day of scenario-based training within the academy

to ensure skill acquisition. Another agency conducts monthly scenario drills for every shift. All agencies that utilized real scenarios ensured there was a debriefing that occurred for continued learning, sometimes recording the event to better evaluate the trainee's response.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice shared how the start day for BCT being on a Wednesday was derived from past research wherein the agency found new hires had a show rate of 78 percent when the class began on Mondays. Changing the first report day to Wednesday improved the show rate to 84 percent.

Another area of responsivity lies with the population being served. Dr. Alexander Burton stresses the importance of training correctional officers in diverse population management, which is rooted in behavioral science.¹¹ While several states do this well, almost half of the states visited would benefit from integrating the risk-needs-responsivity (RNR) model into their training. Similarly, Burton found that only half of the states train in the use of cognitive behavioral interventions within the population they serve.¹² While interpersonal communication (IPC) is a course recommended by the ACA, IPC is defined broadly enough that not all courses are consistent, and few state training academies are accredited. Motivational interviewing (MI) is a research-based practice that aligns with the RNR model, which aims to improve engagement and reduce recidivism. Several states integrate MI concepts to include de-escalation into their course requirements. One state specifically required the four-day MI training for all staff within the agency.

Focus groups found that staff desire to learn about and understand how to effectively engage with the custodial population. Specifically, staff did not feel prepared to engage effectively with people with mental health and substance abuse issues, but reported that many challenges occur with this population on a typical shift. Every state observed offered training on substance abuse and mental health, however, staff reported these to be lacking application to the day-to-day job. Another topic of concern for correctional staff was gender responsivity. Although several states had training on gender responsivity, it was typically reserved for staff that were assigned to the women's facilities and not offered to all correctional staff. It was a significant observation that there were state correctional training academies that did not have any gender-responsive training, and few provided any training on trauma and its effects on the population. One state focused on training on trauma for both the male and female population and extended the information to the correctional staff. As mentioned previously, national standards for training have not been updated in some time, though correctional training academies could refer to PREA standards, which require training to be tailored to the population served.¹³

Shadowing

As correctional agencies struggle with vacancies nationwide, trying to hire the right person and retain them becomes a priority. Several states recognize that they must do things a bit differently with respect to onboarding, and job shadowing has become a practice that several states have implemented to hire the recruit before the training academy class starts. However, a set shadowing timeframe has not been established. Rather, the agencies using shadowing tend to assign new recruits based on how it fits in with the rest of the agency's training structure and schedule rather than using a deliberate process.

At a minimum, new staff benefit from a tour of the facility they will be assigned to and an introduction to the peers they will be working with. One state provided a video tour of the assigned facility, which was well-received. However, being physically present onsite was valued by new recruits. Tenured staff and new recruits were all very supportive of a formal shadowing process. It is important for this process to be formalized and consistent to avoid frustrating new staff and teaching inconsistent methods. Utilizing a formal skills checklist, ensuring training for the tenured staff that are being shadowed, and continued evaluation are all imperative in developing an effective shadowing structure.

The Ohio-Ross Correctional Institution piloted recruits shadowing veteran staff for two weeks before sending the recruit through the correctional training academy. The warden wanted the recruit to understand what the job entailed and to determine if the job was a fit. The results of the two-week shadow period reflected a 44 percent increase in the retention rate after one year.

Training-for-trainers

The most effective strategy to enhance skill development for trainers engaging with a diverse workforce is to ensure they are provided with comprehensive training-for-trainers (T4T) programs and regular refresher training for trainers. Individuals selected to become trainers within a correctional agency are recommended to complete a 40-hour instructional skills program or equivalent that is designed to educate them on the basics of being a correctional trainer, classroom management, adult learning strategies, using lesson plans, and legal liabilities. According to Bennett 2020, T4Ts are a “cost- effective and sustainable method for improving access to and accuracy of teacher-implemented training.”¹⁴ Further understanding generational differences, including how individual adults learn differently, is merely another component of being an effective instructor and knowing how to connect with one’s audience.

Retention

Retention, an ongoing problem for most agencies, is another primary reason to provide structured OJT following the BCT academy. One state implemented a structured OJT program for new correctional officers. This program consisted of training prison staff as coaches who would partner with new officers when they arrived at the prison. This process involved at least two weeks in which the core job skills for that position, as identified through a job task analysis, were reviewed. The coach would then collaborate with a trained supervisor to evaluate the new officer. This program was implemented and studied for a period when turnover had been 36 percent for new officers. After running the program for over one year, officer turnover was reduced to 19 percent. According to the training director, the agency could not identify any significant external factors that could have otherwise contributed to this decrease in turnover other than the implementation of the OJT program.

All states observed had a T4T process, but there was a gap during the evaluation of the trainers due to inconsistent training for those to become trainers. It was commonly observed that leadership hand-picked the personnel specific to that person’s skill set. In one state, there was an organizational structure that supported an evaluation process. This state had three levels to this process: instructors, instructor trainers, and program managers. Most states do not have a program manager that oversees all aspects of training assigned to them. A program manager provides oversight and review of the instructor trainers to ensure consistency and fidelity.

On-the-job Training

As part of a structured OJT program, those participating in the role of a job coach or mentor must receive training to prepare them for those responsibilities properly. Initiating such a program involves focusing on one job classification and conducting a job-task analysis or the Developing a Curriculum ([DACUM](#)) model to identify the key knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) one must be proficient in to perform in that role effectively. Explaining how the job-task analysis was derived becomes a part of the structured training for OJT coaches and mentors. Those responsible for training new hires on the key aspects of a position must know the position's KSAs. From that, they will receive instruction on a five-step process whereby they will first explain how to perform a task and then demonstrate the completion of the task. The third step entails the trainee repeating the steps, while the fourth step provides the trainee an opportunity to practice the skill. The fifth and final step is where a trainee will demonstrate their knowledge, skill, and ability to perform that task in front of a supervisor or manager. This five-step process provides a step-by-step approach to teaching new employees how to do their jobs at their specific work location. In addition, coaches and mentors are instructed on how to develop site-specific modules to meet the unique needs of each facility's work location.

Three-quarters of the survey respondents reported that there was a structured OJT with trained coaches available. OJT programs were observed on-site, however, many states observed did not have a formal process established, which resulted in inconsistencies in training and frustration among the staff. Structured task and observation checklists were not common, and when checklists were available, they were not consistently utilized. A field training officer (FTO) is the person who helps identify and address gaps in skill and knowledge to ensure the staff is prepared for success, but a lack of a formal feedback loop from the FTO during OJT to the training departments was consistently reported in focus groups.

An effective OJT program utilizes job coaches and mentors throughout BCT as well as throughout the first year of employment. These coaches should have training specific to the KSAs for the position, as well as the expectations for the required documentation and assessment requirements. Coaches should allow the new employee to discuss, practice, and perform job tasks prior to demonstrating proficiency.

The selection of the FTO is important and is completed through an application process. The training academy should conduct the certification process of all agency personnel who are instructing agency courses and OJT. The eligibility criteria should be documented in policy, and updated certification rosters for all agency instructors should be maintained.

Physical Agility Testing Requirements

PAT for correctional officers is a common element in the hiring process and, in some states, a potential area for litigation. Several states have addressed this challenge through creative and

effective means that impact the well-being of the employees and provide some measure of task replication for the staff. One state in particular went through a validation process for the PAT. There were mixed comments in the focus groups held, as many staff were concerned with the lack of fitness in the new recruits and about the staff being able to meet the physical demands of the work. However, other comments did not support general physical testing requirements, as they do not reflect the job skills.

PAT requirements commonly include sit-ups, pushups, running, and other physical activities, and have an associated minimum requirement or time limit as a condition of employment. Half of the states observed had a pass/fail requirement for PAT. One state assessed physical improvement and simulated realistic scenarios versus traditional calisthenics. The course incorporated exercises such as pulling a dummy across the floor for a specific length of time, holding a dummy up to replicate assistance to someone hanging, falling on the ground, and getting up quickly. To measure improvement, a baseline was established on day two of BCT and was compared to a test at the end of the academy. One state had an interesting, comprehensive approach, where students were provided with an in-depth physical assessment at the beginning of the onboarding experience. The health check consists of the following parameters: blood pressure (systolic and diastolic), heart rate, blood sugar (glucose), total cholesterol, HDL cholesterol (good), LDL cholesterol (bad), triglycerides, liver enzyme (AST), liver enzyme (ALT), abdominal circumference, and body mass index.

Participants' tobacco use and their level of physical activity were also noted. This free health check provided students with baseline information upon which to make lifestyle decisions as they pertained to using the agency's wellness program. Additionally, the health check was linked to the trainee's PAT within the BCT program. Training participants spend the first three weeks at the academy taking part in the agency's PAT to evaluate an individual's endurance and simulate true aspects of an officer's daily activities.

The PAT is unlike most assessments of its kind, as it has no minimum standard or requirements for a holistic health check. Further, participants in this state's program will not fail the BCT program if they do not complete the PAT in a specific amount of time, but those who do are recognized with a Physical Excellence Award to wear on their uniforms. The time threshold is 1.12 minutes or lower for males and 1.26 or lower for females. The benefits of participating in the agency's health initiative encourage support for the PAT and the subsequent PAT assessments that occur as part of each staff member's required annual in-service training.

Recommendations:

1. Develop an agency-wide and institution-specific training program needs assessment that aligns with the vision, mission, and values of the agency annually.

- a. Assess the need for topics that address wellbeing and productivity.
 - b. Include feedback from trainers and participants.
 - c. Obtain feedback from trainers to assess the fidelity in the delivery of training message.
 - d. Review of class size.
2. Align training goals with the agency's strategic plan.
3. Conduct a position-specific job task analysis every five years on all classifications of staff.
4. Integrate adult learning styles into training lesson plans and facilitation.
5. Develop a consistent on-the-job observation checklist with structured tasks to ensure consistency in learning experiences. Incorporate the following experiences:
 - a. Tour of the assigned facility
 - b. Shadowing
 - c. Continuous evaluation and feedback
6. Develop a training program for OJT coaches and mentors on how to coach recruits through a five-step process of skills attainment.
7. Incorporate scenario-based training situations into training. Debrief scenarios to ensure skill acquisition.
8. Include risk-needs-responsivity and motivational interviewing styles of correctional supervision in basic training.
9. Develop a T4T program to include regular refresher training for instructors entering the training field.
10. Evaluate trainers for consistency and fidelity to the curriculum.

SECTION 2

Building Capacity and Expanding the Training Audience

Part of the successful implementation of a training program involves an examination of the how, where, and why behind this effort. This section examines the pros and cons of residential versus nonresidential models, virtual and hybrid models of delivery, and technology resources as well as expanding training across all areas of the corrections workforce to include non-custody and civilian staff.

Residential versus Nonresidential

For some time now, corrections agencies have had a challenging time maintaining an adequate workforce to safely operate correctional facilities and community supervision. The residential training model, where students travel across the state or jurisdiction and are housed away from their families for weeks at a time, makes it challenging for many potential applicants. Correctional agencies are hiring a diverse workforce, including single parents and multigenerational applicants, for which the traditional residential training model does not allow for alternate living, and further the need to schedule childcare for weeks at a time and is a hurdle for some worthy applicants. Many potential hires may lose interest in a position within the agency solely on the residential requirement; thus, its use should be reassessed.

On the other hand, the current residential system of training academies offers some appropriate models of learning. One benefit of today's training model is the ability to blend cohort groups, wherein new classes combine new correctional officers and non-custody personnel, such as community corrections personnel. By having all personnel at one centralized location, individuals learn the importance and interdependence of each job within the system, regardless of their individual classification or placement at a particular prison office. This collective experience helps new hires learn one consistent message about the vision, mission, and values of the organization and the agency's expectations. In addition, many general yet significant topics (such as Equal Employment Opportunities laws (EEO), personnel, PREA, labor relations, and unions) can be covered and documented. When this type of information is shared via a decentralized strategy, it can lead to varied interpretations and inconsistent application of the information and, consequently, issues for the agency. Additionally, instructors can engage participants in a face-to-face environment and work with varying learning styles more readily through the residential model. For some soft skill topics, virtual training is an acceptable platform; however, much about corrections is based upon human interaction. As such, being able to develop thorough interpersonal communication and relationship skills is important in a safe training environment.

Additionally, when training is conducted onsite, students can apply theory to practice. For example, when learning about cell searches and contraband, students can travel to a nearby prison and participate in contraband searches. When done virtually with no modification to the classroom-based curricula, there is no application of exactly how to conduct and document searches until they must do it for the first time on the job.

Virtual versus In-person Training – Strategies that Make Sense

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many state training academies have transitioned from classroom-based BCT programs to a virtual environment. However, this adjustment incorporated little to no changes to the existing curricula or student assessment process. In one state training academy, new correctional officers and non-custody staff receive 95 percent of BCT online, including all physical skill requirements, such as defensive tactics training (except firearms training).

Physical skills are most effectively taught when a skill is first explained and demonstrated by the instructor, then the student explains and demonstrates the skill, and then the student performs the skill independently. The current online training process does not allow for this more effective one-on-one assessment, especially when class sizes commonly exceed sixty students. Further, new employees do not have an opportunity to physically practice defensive tactics and are left unprepared for real-world situations. This represents a significant area of liability, given that the inexperienced staff member has never physically practiced or demonstrated proficiency with the required technique, yet the academy score sheet shows the individual has demonstrated proficiency online. An officer trained in defense tactics online may lack the confidence and competence needed to properly defend themselves should the occasion arise and are thus inadequately trained.

Leadership may propose the continued use of virtual BCT due to cost savings, but the agency should first research the impacts of doing so, especially given that online onboarding training is a new process that is not evaluated for effectiveness or efficiency. Before concluding that online learning saves money, agencies should determine if turnover costs exceed the travel savings of staff and students. One valuable way to determine if any correlation between turnover rate and training failures exists is through exit interviews.

Agencies have options consistent with adult learning models that provide alternatives to face-to-face classroom training. Depending on the curriculum content, learning can be structured to incorporate both classroom and virtual learning, since much of the curriculum can be covered virtually and provides more flexibility for the trainee. Quizzes and tests can be administered virtually as well, providing further flexibility for a diverse workforce. For skill-building exercises, classroom instruction can be scheduled into training days, and instruction can be blended with outside projects and assignments. For example, students can be scheduled for one classroom day per 32 hours of online training as a check-in with the training staff. There are many

advantages to this blended training approach, as it is consistent with diverse learning styles of students; it allows students to manage their schedule and offers them flexibility; it reflects the adult learning model; it is cost-effective for both trainee and staff; and it avoids the false dynamic that the academy culture is aligned with correctional operations. Some content areas lend themselves well to online training. For instance, in-service training can be considered for incorporation into online training, particularly for subjects that are recurring from year to year with little to no change in content (e.g., ACA-mandated in-service topics). Offering employees the opportunity to do a pre-test of some of these topics, wherein they can test out by demonstrating their knowledge and proficiency of the material at the beginning, is a way to motivate staff to stay current with the information being presented. Whenever policy updates or changes in one of these topics occur, the test-out option is removed. Overall, staff appreciate the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge online compared to sitting in a classroom and being lectured on a subject with which they are already familiar. However, engagement is key. Focus groups consistently reported that annual in-service training becomes very boring and ineffective when it is the same information with no updates or ties to current work. Many states resort to annual in-service training being conducted completely online, leaving the staff disengaged. However, the virtual platform can be designed to provide a better experience and interactive learning, ultimately benefiting staff. A balanced approach to virtual and in-person is desired, based on focus-group results.

One state made an effort to provide an effective virtual learning environment by collaborating with local community colleges to develop an online orientation for all employees. This addressed the gap that can occur between the time of hire and the BCT academy. The new hire can take this orientation prior to attending the academy and be better prepared to start. The training can track the time it takes the staff to complete the initial training (estimated to take 40 hours) in order to better inform the training staff as to whether the new hire needs additional support or if they clicked through the content quickly and did not take time to understand the content. Several states from the study offered generalized informational topics appropriate for all new hires via e-learning.

Training Environment

The training environment is unlikely to be the first thing correctional leaders think of when addressing training academies. While the content should be a focus, the environment is also important, including the physical space as well as tools and resources provided in order for the training to be effective. If attention is not paid to the physical and cultural environments, the facility will not run well.

Realizing that funding is often out of the correctional administrator's control, it is imperative that training academies be considered in budgetary decisions. Training is the front end and most influential piece of employment. Prioritizing the training division and the resources and support

they need will pay dividends. Lack of funding was a notable gap, as the survey found that only 28 percent of respondents felt the budget was adequate to meet the needs and goals of training.

Upon observation, most training academies are held in vacant buildings that were once correctional facilities. While this can be a cost-effective reuse of resources, the space needs to be functional for its new purpose. There should be adequate training rooms to accommodate the size of classes, multiple classroom spaces, and the infrastructure to support the virtual demands of training academies. There should also be adequate and appropriate space for PAT and scenario situations.

During the early 2000s, many academies sought to obtain laptops or tablets for BCT students given that the multi-generational workforce wanted to incorporate technology. However, once the technology was introduced into the classrooms, many students did not find it productive due to the limitations of the devices. For example, in one academy students wanted printed notes to review, but they were not available unless they took them separately since the tablet only contained the PowerPoint presentation. The tablets did offer access to policies, but there was often insufficient time in the session to read and discuss the policy in any detail beyond what was covered as part of the lecture. One agency did not have network access on the laptops, so uploading documents one laptop at a time was a daily manual chore that needed to be completed. Because students were not permitted to leave the academy with the tablets, those who commuted were unable to study for tests without the device unless they had taken separate notes, defeating the purpose of incorporating them in the first place. Information could be downloaded onto thumb drives (if encrypted), but this required a systems-access request and supervisory approval. These issues can be addressed, but it is relevant to note that providing technology without a careful review of how to integrate it can produce more issues than anticipated.

Other tools such as cuffs, weapons, and radios need to be in adequate supply to ensure that each student has access to their own resources to effectively demonstrate the skills being taught. It was sometimes observed that recruits had to share the required equipment, which impacted the availability of time needed to practice and demonstrate effective proficiency in the skill. In addition, at one location, recruits did not have access to radios and had to ask for other staff to transmit the message while they were on OJT, which is not only a resource issue but also a safety concern. A notable practice in one state was the use of an equipment check-out procedure in the training academy. As cadets enter the latter half of their BCT, they are given the opportunity to "sign out" a radio and a set of cuffs each day. At the end of the day, the items are checked back into the simulated control area. This activity is intended to assimilate their work duties once they are on-site within the prison to get cadets in the habit of signing out property and being responsible for maintaining the property all day.

Expanding the Training Audience

One potential deficiency in today's training academies is the tendency to develop and deliver curricula to segregated training audiences and functional groups, as uniformed staff are segregated from case managers, teachers, counselors, medical, and support staff. Fifty-five percent of the sites observed provided separate training to uniform and non-uniformed staff. Additionally, the number of training hours received was considerably different, with uniformed staff receiving over 100 more training hours than their counterparts. As a result, these employees perceive their roles and how they meet the agency's vision, mission, and values very differently and display a lack of unified vision. Oftentimes, these differences are accentuated throughout the facility culture, creating continual challenges for operation managers who try to balance philosophical differences between the two groups while also finding the best route to the safe and humane treatment of persons in custody. Organizational leaders advocate a team approach, yet the practice of integrating these groups from the beginning facilitates an unconscious divide among staff types.

“ *The goal is the right people, with the right mindset – beliefs about rehabilitation and emotional intelligence – the right training, and the right tool belt to impact recidivism over time.* **”**

**- Dr. Beth Skinner, Director
Steering Committee Member**

In light of these challenges, a blended training model provides better cohesion between staff types. Treatment or civilian personnel could be combined with correctional officers during training, but each group would not be required to participate in the same training sessions to keep position-specific training at the forefront. When structuring the curricula for the BCT program, the program manager could frontload the course with broad topics applicable to all employees at the beginning of the program when the staff are together as one cohort. When logical, both cohort groups could participate in exercises that support teamwork and excellent communication.

In-service training offers another opportunity to expand curriculum options to civilian personnel. In addition to offering mandatory in-service topics for officers, the academy could include other e-courses in the catalog that would meet the needs of the non-custody personnel. With over two hundred classifications that often exist within correctional departments, the potential for topics to incorporate is quite vast. This is another instance when training needs assessment

would be beneficial, as constituents can provide insight into their training needs to improve training outcomes. For the most impact, annual training needs assessments should be specific to job classifications, build upon the BCT curriculum, and be performance-based. Position-focused training offerings were not witnessed in any state in the scan, as annual training was mostly online and needed to be updated.

There is much debate about the appropriate number of hours to be allocated for BCT. The national survey revealed that most institution respondents (51 percent) provide access to over three hundred hours of training prior to the first shift. However, ten percent provide less than one hundred hours of training prior to the first shift. On-site observations from this study reflected a range of training hours provided to new hires, with the high being 384 hours, the low being 160 hours of training, and the average being 249 hours. Burton recommended a minimum of three hundred hours of BCT to ensure adequate time to cover the necessary courses for a correctional officer to do the job effectively.¹⁵ However, the specific number of hours is less important than the ability for the training to effectively prepare staff for the job. It is also vital that the training aligns with the agency's mission and reflects it. There is an imbalance in training between the necessary hard security practices and targeting what behavioral science shows to be effective in managing behavior, such as effective communication and de-escalation skills. The Stanford Research Institute International and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation found that 75 percent of long-term job success depends upon soft skills proficiency and only 25 percent on technical skills.¹⁶ Other research from LinkedIn in 2018 identified soft skills as the number one training priority among CEOs.¹⁷

Recommendations:

1. Evaluate residential versus nonresidential and in-person versus virtual training content to determine effectiveness on recruitment and retention.
2. Consider opportunities for staff to test out of some competencies.
3. Advocate for training budgets to be considered in budgetary decisions.
4. Conduct and maintain an inventory of supplies, such as cuffs, weapons, and radios, to ensure each student is sufficiently supplied with the necessary tools.
5. Consider a blended training model, bringing both uniform and non-custody staff together in training for common topics and developing tracts for each classification.
6. Review the training catalog for non-custody personnel in-service opportunities derived from the annual training needs assessment.
7. Integrate special populations training that targets the variety of classifications and supervision both uniform and non-custody staff serve.

SECTION 3

Evaluating Training Outcomes

Training programs will not be successful in the long-term without effective evaluation methodology. This section covers policies and practices that support trainers and employees, offers suggestions for how to evaluate participants eligible for advancement, and considers transformative professional development initiatives that benefit the field of corrections.

Policies and Practices that Support Efficacy of Trainers

Training directors within agencies have a daunting responsibility. Contemporary agency leaders recognize the importance of training BCT staff of all disciplines within the correctional agency, however, agencies often hire or promote trainers without adequate training or core competency skills to effectively manage their job duties. Corrections agencies should invest in a person who has knowledge and skills in administering a training unit based on effective practices in adult education.

To ensure training directors are suited for the position, agencies need to modify the position requirements to include formal education in adult education and staff development, as well as require professional credentialing in this field. Implementing a formal education may bring about potential candidates who do not currently work in the field of corrections, which is not unusual and possibly beneficial. The training director's position is vital to the success of the program and should be filled by someone who possesses subject matter expertise in developing, adapting content, delivering, and assessing efficacy in training programs. Content professionals from the field of corrections can optimize the content of the design and delivery of training. This paradigm shift will enhance the transfer of knowledge necessary to prepare and sustain best practices in corrections, rather than focus solely on pedigree. To ensure training quality, the National Steering Committee recommends that state agencies establish criteria for the positions of training director, trainers, and curriculum development personnel, inclusive of staff that develops e-learning programs.

One reason it is important for training directors to have a strong background in curriculum development is to ensure students have courses and tracks for professional development and promotion that align with the job expectations. Course programs need to be designed to allow staff to develop supervisory, management, and leadership skills before being promoted into these higher positions. It is also important that union-level staff have access to these types of programs so that an avenue for continuous professional development exists for the entire workforce and to develop the core competencies needed for promotion. Topics within these programs can range from how to be a more effective communicator to a better time manager.

In some organizations, it is necessary to have a college education or degree to be eligible for promotion. To help employees gain the education needed to advance in their careers, one agency partnered with colleges and universities to develop articulation agreements, wherein the partners reviewed the academy's BCT and in-service programs and associated specific college credits for training completed within the agency. The employee could then contact the school, enroll, and work with that school to obtain college credit based on the training hours obtained within the agency. This offering, which included tuition assistance, provided significant motivation for employees to obtain a college degree. Exempt employees could also take advantage of this, as they also had a similar reimbursement program. Another way to ensure that employees are qualified for promotion is to offer a tiered, structured leadership training series for staff. Offering a mid-manager program gives the employee another level of competency, one that is more complex than those addressed within the basic supervisor's course.

None of the states that responded to the survey require a degree for the training position, and just under 12 percent have other non-degree requirements, such as a certification. The survey also showed that training directors spend limited time on curriculum development since most of the time is spent on delivering the training to custody staff. Although 70 percent of survey respondents reported that they update the curriculum annually, this could not be confirmed during on-site observations. In fact, it was typical to see a curriculum that had not been updated by the agency for over five years.

Along with training directors, the trainers need to have a continuing education process in place to keep their skills current with operations. Trainers could be specific staff hired at the training academy or subject matter experts who are brought in to train in a particular subject. Either way, providing an opportunity for development to remain current on the subject matter and refine skills is important. A quality assurance process should be established and integrated into the agency's efforts in training.

Assessment Development and Evaluation of Professional Development Initiatives

Transformative professional development may require a true change in thinking. What if training and continuous learning in a correctional agency were reinvented? What if programs were structured the same way that colleges manage coursework? For example, there could be major areas designated for each classification of the employee, such as custody staff, medical, industry, direct care support (food service, maintenance), and professional support (social workers, teachers, training managers, and counselors). Each major could require core courses. As training becomes more specific to specialized areas, classes could be narrowed a bit more by common core subjects for areas. These specialized classes could also be considered electives and would be open to anyone who wanted to learn more in an area

outside their employee group.

This model gives employees a chance to learn outside their current job classification and more freedom of choice over subject matter learning. The concept is consistent with the adult learning model, which recognizes the importance of self-directed learning. This model also allows employees to discover the areas they are interested in and want to develop skills in further. Many electives can be driven by interest as well as the needs of the agency. Examples of electives that could be created based on some of the majors listed above include effective communication, tools for de-escalation, maintaining healthy relationships, professional boundaries, and principles of leadership. The list is endless and could transform the learning environment that exists today.

It is critical that not only the training director stays up to date on current research and trends, but all staff involved in training, be it curriculum development or relaying a message within a classroom, need to stay current on research and trends. In academies where staff are permanently assigned, there is a tendency to refer to anecdotal experiences inside a facility; however, those stories become dated after so many years, and policies and practices have since changed. As such, it is critical that academy staff are not teaching old practices.

Promising Practice: Iowa

Iowa Department of Corrections, in collaboration with the Bureau of Justice Assistance through Second Chance Act funding, developed a comprehensive matrix that identifies core competencies for various levels of staff. Job descriptions and hiring practices were tied to this matrix to provide a comprehensive onboarding process for staff and ensure the training received prepares all levels of staff to be successful in moving the agency mission forward.

Staying current on research and trends also helps ensure curricula are up to date, and updating statistics is key to accurately representing the agency's population, recidivism, and other data points. It is good practice to review in-service curricula annually, and if academy staff are assigned topics to coordinate programs for, then they can be the ones responsible for program updates to keep the content current.

Knowing what courses to offer within training is a challenge for many state correctional training staff. One approach is to develop a matrix of courses that address the needs of the agency while offering continual skill development. While the process of developing a training matrix

can be intensive, the benefits far outweigh the tedium. What courses to offer and to whom and when becomes a guidepost for agencies and addresses the need expressed by staff in focus groups who wanted options or electives that they could take to support their professional development. The Iowa Department of Corrections developed a comprehensive matrix that outlines core competencies for multiple levels of staff within the agency. Iowa's matrix is tied to hiring practices, job descriptions, and performance management. While this is a promising practice and a potential gold standard for agencies, starting with a simpler matrix development process would be impactful as well.¹⁸

To develop curricula that support the effectiveness and efficiency of agency operations, agencies must define appropriate performance objectives when creating a program and then measure the program's impact once it is implemented. Using Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation¹⁹ and the Phillips ROI model²⁰ collectively, curriculum specialists can create needs-based training programs and then evaluate whether the program meets its intended goal. This evaluation also involves determining if the money spent to create and implement a training program had a positive return on investment for the department.

Evaluate the following:

- **Satisfaction:** Did the learner enjoy the training?
- **Learning:** Did knowledge transfer occur?
- **Impact:** Did the learner's behavior change because of training?
- **Results:** Did the training have a measurable impact on performance?
- **Return on Investment:** Did the training investment provide a positive return on investment?

Few agencies observed in this scan had this comprehensive level of evaluation. There were attempts to go beyond the first two questions listed above, but site observations did not produce any further evaluation beyond discussions on how to improve. However, survey responses indicated that a majority of the agencies utilize either student feedback or supervisory evaluations to understand learning outcomes.

Recommendations:

1. Modify the training director position requirements to include formal education in adult learning. Evaluate and recommend credentialing for this position through national agencies like NIC or the ACA.
2. Establish criteria for the positions of training director, trainers, and curriculum development personnel.
3. Identify and create course programs that allow staff to develop supervisory,

management, and leadership skills.

4. Offer tiered, structured leadership training series for staff.
5. Develop a system to evaluate the curriculum for annual updates that address multiple levels of evaluation beyond training satisfaction.
6. Develop a continuing education process for trainers.
7. Develop and utilize a training matrix to meet the major areas of training in the variety of classifications.
8. Develop a shared information network system for training staff to stay current on research and trends in corrections.

SECTION 4

Wellness and Fitness for Duty

Corrections agencies have taken responsibility for more than safety and security. Many systems have placed emphasis on rehabilitation and reentry for people in prison, but correctional officers need appropriate training and knowledge to achieve that mission. This section discusses how understanding each phase, from intake to reintegration, contributes to better mental and emotional outcomes for both staff and people in custody, as well as how self-care is critical to correctional work.

Training Focused on Today's Rehabilitative Environments

Managing today's corrections population requires knowledge of an array of topics. Understanding count, key, and tool procedures is a small aspect of what a correctional professional needs to know to effectively perform their job. To be effective, BCT must take a comprehensive approach to educating new hires about the complex life issues impacting people who are incarcerated, as those are the issues that staff will manage. Prisons in the United States have seen an increase in the amount of mental illness of those in their care, and it is generally accepted they are the largest mental health provider in their communities. To be effective, staff must adopt trauma-informed approaches given the experiences people bring with them to and experience during incarceration. Specialized mental health units are often available but not standard in every prison, and the need for mental health services at many institutions far outweigh available resources. The same can be said of many risk-based programs, such as those pertaining to people convicted of sex-related and substance abuse offenses. The gap between the needs of today's special populations and the availability of the resources and training to understand and meet the needs of the diverse populations means more pressure on staff to facilitate behavior change through the basic communication and training they have received.

By educating staff about the mental health needs of people in prison and the programs available to address said issues, correctional staff will be better able to manage the population. One prime example is building awareness of how and why pursuing job training or education to handle the needs of these populations is important, as it could lead to better risk management and better care for inmates.^{21,22} With a foundational understanding of mental illness, staff can better support those who experience it and effectively encourage engagement in prosocial activities. Further, educating inexperienced staff about the role of volunteers working with people who are incarcerated, including those with faith-based initiatives, is also key to understanding how they can positively impact the development of relationships with those in custody, particularly in instances when the person has no family or community support and when nearing release or being considered for parole. Including people who were formerly

incarcerated into pre-service training to provide examples of successful reintroduction was one promising practice.

All of these topics represent the rehabilitative aspects of corrections. As such, the BCT curriculum needs to place importance on mental health and behavioral support. By taking a comprehensive approach to building the training program and emphasizing that every section within the department has a responsibility to achieve this mission, the BCT can reach beyond simply teaching methods to maintain a safe and secure environment and also work toward providing a rehabilitative environment. Both aspects have broad implications in terms of public safety. The intent is to improve upon correctional officer training and create strong, evidence-based academies that will equip officers with the skills needed to manage and support the rehabilitation of people in their custody.²³ This goal of shifting to a more normalized environment was put into practice in a couple of sites visited during this scan. These states should be commended for the shifts already made in their program and the commitment to integrating the vision into all aspects of training. The normalized environments are impactful not just for the population served but also for staff. It cannot be overstated that the conditions of confinement are the same conditions of employment, and support needs to be provided accordingly.

Testimony to Blue Ribbon Commission

“There's an eight-hour wellness training every year, once a year, 8 hours. Okay, very good. I took a 40- hour crisis intervention class to teach me how to talk, to de-escalate individuals incarcerated, 40 hours. But they gave me 8 hours to go home and say, hey, you know, I know you just did CPR in the shower on that kid and he's dead, and thank you, but we need you to work another shift, and then when you go home, try not to yell at your kids because we didn't give you the tools to process what you just saw.”

*-William Young
Correctional Officer*

The previously mentioned integrated BCT program approach, wherein all classifications of inexperienced staff are together in a class, is one way to effectively educate staff about their roles in contributing to this rehabilitation mission. Any opportunities students have to learn evidence-based practices and procedures increase their professionalism, particularly for practices that further underscore the ethics and task expertise correctional officers uphold as important characteristics of this human services profession.²⁴ Having a comprehensive curriculum that encompasses security and rehabilitative aspects of what is done within the agency will provide the employees with a more accurate picture of what is expected of them in their respective roles and the importance of working together to achieve that result. A couple of states were observed in the process of transformational change in their programs, shifting from containment to rehabilitation resulting in the development of a normative culture for the population they serve.

By providing a consistent message to new employees about the agency's expectations, the BCT provides a platform to convey the importance of the profession in public safety and public service. An on-site BCT allows new hires the chance to learn information about the agency

Connecticut, South Carolina, and Utah are a few states that use support dogs with staff who have been assaulted or experienced job-related trauma or stress, a promising practice.

and their roles and further provides the opportunity to network and begin to understand how it takes a multitude of classifications to make the complexities of a corrections system work effectively. It is during BCT that inexperienced staff learn the relevance of their jobs in the bigger scope of the criminal justice system. The more information that can be shared with the employees during BCT, the better foundation the staff member will have to build upon to grow a career in corrections, as well as retain hires.

The first statement of the World Health Organization's Constitution is "health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."²⁵ The promotion of staff health and wellness must start with BCT. Training academies address health risks such as potential physical victimization as well as potential exposure to infectious diseases. Currently, there is adequate training on how to respond to these situations, but limited attention is paid to the lingering aftermath of corrections work. Critical incident and stress management is taught in many BCTs; however, the audience is typically uniform staff and does not always include the non-custody or civilian staff that are also affected by these incidents. Therefore, physical and mental health must be a significant part of BCT. Some attention was paid to staff health, emotional and physical, in several states, yet it was not a prominent topic based on focus group feedback. One state developed an employee service team initially tasked to train in trauma-informed care. Though this unit has taken on the

task of staff wellness, it is still in its infancy. Other states have implemented the use of service canines for emotional support in response to debriefing a crisis and supporting staff during the complex stress that builds over the course of a person's career.

A review of correctional practice indicates that many of the well-being programs currently implemented in corrections have been adapted from related occupational fields, rather than developed with an eye to the specific needs and challenges of correctional staff.²⁶ Dr. Caterina Spinaris is the founding director of Desert Waters Correctional Outreach (DWCO) and has experience with correctional staff and the impact of the work on staff members. She developed a data-driven model to explain the impact of stress on the correctional employee, termed the Corrections Fatigue Model.²⁷ Some correctional agencies have received training through DWCO and have adopted a wellness program that centers around Dr. Spinaris' research.

The 2022 Blue Ribbon Commission Hearing on Correctional Officer Wellness Report from One Voice United reported that, on average, three correctional officers died by suicide weekly; the rates of post-traumatic stress disorder are higher than any other profession in the United States; and that correctional officers have a life expectancy of about 59 years as compared to about 75 years for the average American.²⁸ Dr. Spinaris argues that living conditions in prison must change if there is to truly increase the health and wellness of corrections staff. "It is very hard to be a healthy fish in an unhealthy, polluted pond."²⁹

Leadership Training and Professional Development

Leadership training and ongoing professional development encourage self-directed learning and personal motivation, which are key principles for adult learning. On-site observations and focus groups indicated the need to add leadership and professional development to BCT. Many states rely on leadership courses provided by NIC, but the perceived financial costs associated with sending staff to the leadership series had hindered participation. Most of the agencies observed have executive-level training, but do not have robust front-line supervisor training. This supports the perception that leadership is focused on position and pedigree, rather than developing leadership skills within highly capable people.

“ *Training new employees to become contributing members of the team has a lot to do with the respect and treatment of new hires. ”*

-Dr. Reggie Wilkerson

It is not just the executive level that sets a tone for team rapport, but every supervisor and tenured staff person are pivotal in carrying out the mission of the agency by motivating and inspiring others. A strong culture encourages effective role modeling that demonstrates the values of the agency. Unfortunately, focus groups and individual conversations revealed that positions of authority were not typically skilled in leadership and lacked basic communication skills. Transitioning from a front-line staff to a first-time supervisor is difficult when there is not sufficient training to assist in that transition, resulting in ineffective supervision and leadership. One state did have front-line supervisory training that included skills practice, professional development, and the key concepts for effective supervision. Only one state visit provided multi-level supervisory training to front-line supervisors and was quickly identified as a need for executive-level staff as well. The initial rollout is in process for that state. The shift from correctional staff to supervisor is a key transition that needs to be formalized and better supported. Ongoing mentoring and professional development support are desired, and specialized in-service training for supervisors and managers would be beneficial, emphasizing on communication skills, empathy, and civility in the workplace. The importance of supervisory relationships is well recognized, and it is vital that corrections prepare the next level of supervisors to engage staff and increase job satisfaction.

An additional area that often gets overlooked in correctional training is ongoing and easily accessible professional development opportunities. As stressed earlier in this report, having opportunities for staff to grow is important and can increase overall job satisfaction and retention. However, if staff do not find these opportunities on their own, such as taking college courses, attending outside training at their own personal cost in most cases, or finding other educational opportunities on their personal time, continued development typically does not happen. Two impactful data points from a 2018 LinkedIn survey illustrate this point: fifty-four percent of employees would spend more time learning if they had a specific course recommendation to help them reach their career goals, and ninety-four percent of employees would stay at a company longer if it invested in their career.³⁰ It is imperative that agencies develop a professional development process and support this development through all staff.

Recruitment and Retention

Nationally, the conversation most common among correctional leaders is one of recruitment and retention. High vacancy rates have plagued corrections recently. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts a ten percent drop in prison staffing in the next ten years, with about 33,000 officer openings on average each year for the next ten years.³⁰ While efforts to recruit correctional staff have been a priority and have included increased wages, bonuses, and changes in marketing, vacancy rates remain high in several states. While recruitment efforts were well established, retention efforts were just getting started in many places. What was observed on-site and heard in focus groups was the need to adjust the approach and environment to retain the staff already working and to reevaluate the loosened hiring

requirements to fill vacancies. A Corrections1.com 2022 poll of corrections officers supported this conclusion. Fifty-two percent of respondents were most concerned about correctional officer retention, with recruitment being significantly lower priority.³¹

The Arizona Department of Corrections Rehabilitation and Reentry addresses the onboarding process with an efficient new hire assessment process. They also monitor turnover rates at each facility and add a Career Advisor to facilities with a high turnover rate.

Throughout the focus groups and discussions with correctional staff, there was growing concern about the caliber of recruits being hired. As a result of lowering the hiring age requirement, peers are concerned with the immaturity of the recruits and their ability to adjust to the requirements of the job. The rationale for reducing the age limit to fill vacancies is understood by correctional staff but not fully supported. Several other hiring requirements have been adjusted that have been similarly met with concern, such as the cognitive skills assessment to ensure the applicant has the requisite skills for the job. Many correctional staff felt that safety and security were put at risk for the sake of getting a body in the door. Training staff felt the pressure as well, noting that they did not have the ability or authority to hold a person back for more training or share with leadership that the person was not fit for the agency.

The changes made to recruitment by corrections executives were valid and helped the recruitment efforts. The onboarding changes may appear to some to be too quick; however, a 2018 RAND Corporation report showed that compared to other industries, government jobs have a lengthy interview process. The hiring process for correctional staff is almost four times longer than aerospace and defense. Several states reported a gap between different state agencies that made recruitment and onboarding difficult. Human resources may be a separate agency in state government, also creating a gap that correctional agencies are trying to address.³² One state made significant strides in shortening its hiring process while maintaining all testing. Within one day of the hire's arrival, the following processes are completed: the Wonderlic Contemporary Cognitive Ability test, the California Psychological Inventory (the CPI), a fitness evaluation with a Fit Pro member who demonstrates the skill prior to the applicant being asked to complete, and fingerprints. The remaining steps are to obtain the results of the background check and medical evaluation by an outside physician. With 85 to 90 percent of the hiring process and evaluation being completed on that day, the total time is reduced significantly and is mostly dependent on the applicant getting the results of the physician's assessment.

The issue of retaining the recruit once hired remains a challenge, but effective BCT and

orientation of all staff can have a significant impact in this area. As mentioned in a previous section, the wellness of staff is a priority. The correctional environment is difficult, at best. Staff are concerned for their physical safety and do not always understand the long-term impacts of the trauma they experience daily. Attending to the culture is as important as attending to the physical demands of the job; Therefore, training should introduce stress management and self-care techniques.

Assisting those who work in correctional agencies in establishing a support system outside of work is another priority area, as it is difficult for families to understand the experiences of corrections employees. Engaging families early and often in the employee's career allows a better context for the stress the employed family member is experiencing and helps the family build a natural support system. It is key for someone who reaches out for help to have social support. One state developed a promising practice within BCT by providing an opportunity for the family and friends of new corrections staff to learn about the responsibilities and the stressors that new staff experience.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure training opportunities represent rehabilitative aspects of corrections.
2. Conduct a review of staff wellness programs that address the impact of stress and trauma on uniform and non-custody staff.
3. Review opportunities for supervisory and leadership professional development.
4. Collaborate with the human resources division and evaluate recruitment requirements:
 - a. Age at hire
 - b. Process for hiring
 - c. Cognitive skills assessment
5. Evaluate staff wellness programs for tangible and available self-care opportunities and support systems. Engage families and friends of staff into the wellness programs.

APPENDIX I: Considerations for Effective Instructional Design

Is there a lesson plan for the designated course?

- ✓ Course learning objectives are stated clearly and written from the learners' perspective.
- ✓ The course learning objectives, or course/program competencies, describe outcomes that are specific, measurable, attainable, and relevant.
- ✓ Module or unit-level objectives align with the course-level objectives.
- ✓ The relationship between learning objectives or competencies and learning activities is clearly stated.
- ✓ Training materials are developed, evaluated, and updated annually.

Are there course content materials that go with the lesson plans?

- ✓ Instructional materials are provided that contribute to the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.
- ✓ A variety of instructional materials and technologies are used in the course.
- ✓ The cognitive load in the course supports information retention.
- ✓ The training incorporates a wide range of sources and uses recent or seminal information in its creation.
- ✓ Relevant agency policy is referenced in the course, and participants are given copies of the policies.
- ✓ Course materials become increasingly complex throughout the course.
- ✓ Participants are provided with library and reference services to complement the training.

Is clear information provided on the instructor-trainer role and requirements?

- ✓ The individual conducting the training is qualified and has specialized training that supports their position as an instructor.
- ✓ The instructor is positioned as a coach rather than an expert focused on helping to build skills and competencies in the learner.
- ✓ Instructors provide less guidance as learners build competencies and skills.
- ✓ The student-to-instructor ratio ranges between 15:1 to 30:1.

Does the information provided assist in assessing the instructional methodology?

- ✓ Learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.
- ✓ Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction and active learning.
- ✓ When teaching skills, the course includes both lecture and simulation activities.
- ✓ Learners are provided with opportunities to be self-directed in their learning process.
- ✓ Adult learners are invited to share their experiences and integrate those experiences into the learning process.
- ✓ The course requires critical reflection, which involves challenging assumptions and exploring alternatives.
- ✓ Instructional methodology focuses on personal development and internal motivation.
- ✓ Participants can work in small groups to learn and process information.
- ✓ Participants are encouraged to explore and make mistakes as they are learning the information.

Is there a learning assessment or course evaluation?

- ✓ The course provides learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress.
- ✓ Participants are provided with opportunities for self-evaluation throughout the training.
- ✓ Assessments are provided that measure the achievement of stated learning objectives or competencies.

APPENDIX II: References

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APPENDIX III: Acronyms

ACA	American Correctional Association
BCT	pre-service basic correctional training
BJA	Bureau of Justice Assistance
DWCO	Desert Waters Correctional Outreach
EEO	equal employment opportunities
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FTO	field training officer
IPC	interpersonal communication
KSA	knowledge, skills, and abilities
MI	motivational interviewing
NIC	National Institute of Corrections
NIJ	National Institute of Justice
OJT	on-the-job training
PAT	physical agility testing
PREA	Prison Rape Elimination Act
RNR	risk-needs-responsivity
T4T	training-for-trainers
TMG	The Moss Group

APPENDIX IV: Promising Practices

Arizona

- Efficient and thorough new hire assessment process
- Career advisors added to facilities with high turnover rates
- Basic leadership academy for multi-level supervisors
- Correctional officer training academy graduation ceremony
- Equipment check-out process in the academy

Connecticut

- Inclusion of people who were formerly incarcerated into the pre-service training
- Monthly scenario drills for every shift
- Family night for the family and friends of new corrections staff to learn about the responsibilities and stressors new staff experience
- Statewide collaboration with colleges and universities for continuing education and specialized training opportunities
- Validated physical agility test

Maine

- Collaboration with local sheriffs
- Skills practice within training and emphasis on effective communication
- Maine Model of Corrections – normalizing and humanizing approach and vision for corrections

Maryland

- Online pre-service training
- Impressive training academy campus with a positive learning environment
- Collaboration with local colleges for curriculum development and delivery of regional training academy

Michigan

- Motivational interviewing training provided to all agency personnel
- Female mentoring initiative
- Design and retrofit facility for a new training environment
- Active recruitment and retention efforts

Ohio

- Organizational structure to include curriculum development unit
- Formal process and structure for the development of trainers
- Employee service team with a trauma-informed focus
- Job shadowing pilot

South Carolina

- Daily briefing for on-the-job training
- Development of subject matter experts
- Dedicated basic training program for contracted security staff employed within the agency
- A four-day scenario-based training for staff working in a restrictive housing unit

Texas

- Collaborative effort for physical agility testing and the wellness program
- College partnerships and collaborations that host a learning management system, provide training, and assist in curriculum development
- Recruitment efforts and mobile correctional officer teams (MCOT)

Washington

- Provides new employees with time at their assigned work locations prior to attending BCT at the academy. Allowing new staff to meet the people they will be working with, and job shadowing could be another way of making them feel welcome in the agency and enhance retention.
- The use of a spiral-bound notebook was found to have been used by many new correctional officers as part of on-the-job training
- Providing specific training (AMEND) to employees, based on the Norway approach to corrections, focuses on normalizing the atmosphere people who are incarcerated live while improving the work environment and self-care of employees

APPENDIX V: Summary of Recommendations

Curriculum Design and Integration of Emerging Challenges

1. Develop an agency-wide and institution-specific training program needs assessment that aligns with the vision, mission, and values of the agency annually.
 - a. Assess the need for topics that address wellbeing and productivity.
 - b. Include feedback from trainers and participants.
 - c. Obtain feedback from trainers to assess the fidelity in the delivery of training message.
 - d. Review of class size.
2. Align training goals with the agency's strategic plan.
3. Conduct a position-specific job task analysis every five years on all classifications of staff.
4. Integrate adult learning styles into training lesson plans and facilitation.
5. Develop a consistent on-the-job observation checklist with structured tasks to ensure consistency in learning experiences. Incorporate the following experiences:
 - a. Tour of the assigned facility
 - b. Shadowing
 - c. Continuous evaluation and feedback
6. Develop a training program for OJT coaches and mentors on how to coach recruits through a five-step process of skills attainment.
7. Incorporate scenario-based training situations into training. Debrief scenarios to ensure skill acquisition.
8. Include risk-needs-responsivity and motivational interviewing styles of correctional supervision in basic training.
9. Develop a T4T program to include regular refresher training for instructors entering the training field.
10. Evaluate trainers for consistency and fidelity to the curriculum.

Training Delivery and Building Capacity

1. Evaluate residential versus nonresidential and in-person versus virtual training content to determine effectiveness on recruitment and retention.
2. Consider opportunities for staff to test out of some competencies.
3. Advocate for training budgets to be considered in budgetary decisions.
4. Conduct and maintain an inventory of supplies, such as cuffs, weapons, and radios, to ensure each student is sufficiently supplied with the necessary tools.

Expanding the Training Audience

1. Consider a blended training model, bringing both uniform and non-custody staff together in training for common topics and developing tracts for each classification.
2. Review the training catalog for non-custody personnel in-service opportunities derived from the annual training needs assessment.
3. Integrate special populations training that targets the variety of classifications and supervision both uniform and non-custody staff serve.

Evaluating Training Outcomes

1. Modify the training director position requirements to include formal education in adult learning. Evaluate and recommend credentialing for this position through national agencies like NIC or the ACA.
2. Establish criteria for the positions of training director, trainers, and curriculum development personnel.
3. Identify and create course programs that allow staff to develop supervisory, management, and leadership skills.
4. Offer tiered, structured leadership training series for staff.
5. Develop a system to evaluate the curriculum for annual updates that address multiple levels of evaluation beyond training satisfaction.
6. Develop a continuing education process for trainers.
7. Develop and utilize a training matrix to meet the major areas of training in the variety of classifications.

8. Develop a shared information network system for training staff to stay current on research and trends in corrections.

Wellness and Fitness for Duty

1. Ensure training opportunities represent rehabilitative aspects of corrections.
2. Conduct a review of staff wellness programs that address the impact of stress and trauma on uniform and non-custody staff.
3. Review opportunities for supervisory and leadership professional development.
4. Collaborate with the human resources division and evaluate recruitment requirements:
 - a. Age at hire
 - b. Process for hiring
 - c. Cognitive skills assessment
5. Evaluate staff wellness programs for tangible and available self-care opportunities and support systems. Engage families and friends of staff into the wellness programs

APPENDIX VI: Endnotes

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