

Supervisor Core - Module 4

## IMPROVING INDIVIDUAL STAFF PERFORMANCE

Supervisor Core, Module 4, Improving Individual Staff Performance  
Written by IHS for the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, 2010 Revision

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Supervisor Core  
Fundamental  
Elements

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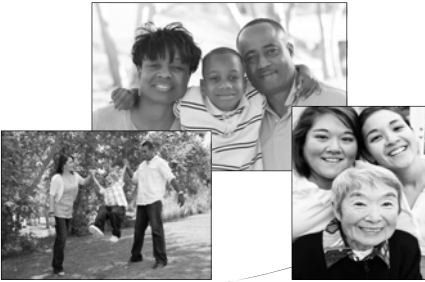
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**Competent, confident, and committed staff ensure the highest quality of services to children and families.**



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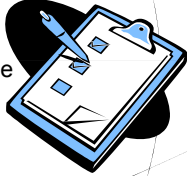
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### Supervisors Must First Understand

- ✓ What staff are supposed to do and why
- ✓ How each staff position fits into the entire organizational scheme
- ✓ The unit's role in helping the agency achieve its mission and objectives
- ✓ The importance of their own role



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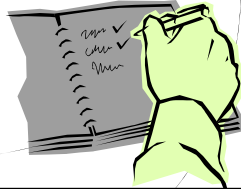
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### Supervisors Must Also:

- ✓ Know exactly what their unit must achieve
- ✓ Identify unit objectives
- ✓ Communicate necessary levels of performance
- ✓ Help staff stay focused on their unit's contribution
- ✓ Hold staff accountable



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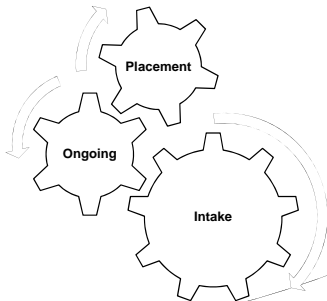
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### The Agency System



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**It takes the *best* efforts of *all* staff to improve the safety and permanence of maltreated children and the well-being of their families.**

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**Agency Mission**

- Provides purpose or reason for being
- Guides activities and decision making
- Spells out the overall goal
- Provides a sense of direction



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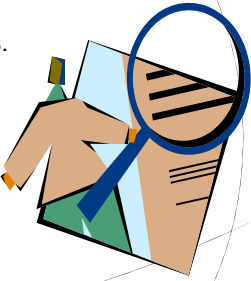
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**Agency Objectives**

Define the areas of focus.

Example:  
***Achieve permanency for children who come into the child welfare system.***



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### The Agency System

Supervisors must ensure their unit is doing its part in moving the agency toward achievement of its mission/goal.



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### Unit Objectives

What the unit does to help the agency achieve its mission/goal and objectives.

Example: ***Finalize adoption placements within 12 months.***

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### Job Tasks

What job tasks are required to achieve unit objectives?

What are the performance expectations for each job task?

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### Small-Group Activity

1. Choose a mission statement
2. Create an agency objective, a unit objective, and two job tasks required to achieve the objectives.
3. Document these on flip-chart paper.

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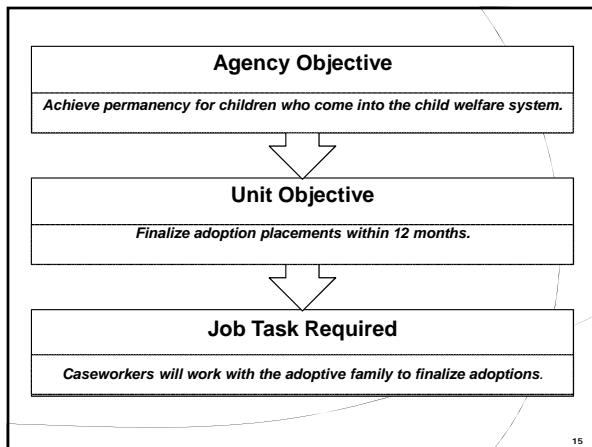
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### Basic Job Descriptions

- Inform staff of the specific duties, tasks, and/or responsibilities of the job
- Provide a list of qualifications necessary for the position (skills, training, education, abilities)
- Identify the person or position to whom staff are accountable

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### Job Description Activity

Review the job description and assess whether it has all the basic components



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### Good Job Descriptions

Provide the individual performance expectations for each job task. These are statements that are:

- quantifiable
- observable
- objective

What it looks like if done "right."

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### SMART Criteria

To develop individual performance expectations, use the SMART criteria:



**Specific**  
**Measurable**  
**Achievable**  
**Results oriented**  
**Timely**

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### Small-Group Activity

1. Remain in the same groups you were in during the previous activity
2. Practice writing SMART individual performance expectations appropriate to the tasks developed earlier

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### Supervisors Are Responsible For:

- Periodically reviewing current staff job descriptions
- Making certain all staff have a copy of their job description
- Reviewing job descriptions with new staff, and annually thereafter
- Ensuring staff understand their job descriptions
- Providing a description of the expected level of performance
- Assessing whether staff meet the job expectations

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## Reviewing Job Descriptions

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the job descriptions in your group?
2. Which job description does the group like best? Give reasons for choice.

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## Competence or Performance?

- ⦿ Competence is the ability, skill, and knowledge needed to do job tasks
- ⦿ Performance is the behavior; actually doing the job task

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## For Example...

***“Staff person completes investigations of suspected child maltreatment.”***

Two types of statements can be derived from this task.

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1. Competencies, or statements about the knowledge and skills needed to complete the task:

- ***“The caseworker understands how strength factors of family members may mitigate risk to children.”***
- ***“The caseworker knows how to use various interviewing techniques in interviewing children who may have been maltreated.”***

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2. Behavioral statements describe behavioral expectations of the job task:

- ***“The caseworker completes intake investigations according to required protocol.”***
- ***“The caseworker completes investigation activities and associated documentation within XX days of receiving the referral.”***

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**Activity Instructions**

1. Using Handout #7, identify two job tasks that are common for your least competent and most challenging staff
2. Write one SMART individual performance expectation for each job task
3. Did you find this difficult to do?
4. Do you think using SMART criteria will help you be more explicit in communicating the expected performance on job tasks?

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**3** Levels of Performance

1. Above standard
2. Standard
3. Below standard
  - Supervisors should write levels of performance statements for each individual performance expectation
  - The levels of performance should also be written using SMART criteria

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**Example:**

Individual Performance Expectation (Intake)  
*Caseworker accurately identifies family safety and risk factors, uses behavioral language in communicating these factors verbally and in written documentation, and meets required timelines.*

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**Below-Standard Performance Level**

Misses some important safety and risk factors.  
Documentation is sparse and needs correction.  
Verbal communication about risk factors is vague.  
Misses required deadlines.



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### Standard Performance Level

Accurately recognizes safety/risk factors; uses behavioral language and gives understandable summaries of safety/risk factors in documentation and verbal communication in at least 80% of cases investigated. Meets deadlines unless there is a reasonable barrier to doing so.

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### Above-Standard Performance Level

Accurate in assessing risk; precise in documentation and communication of factors. Can assist other staff in assessing risk and safety factors and preparing documentation; could review other caseworkers' work.



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### Individual Activity - Part 1

1. Use one of the individual performance expectations developed in the previous exercise
2. Use the SMART criteria to describe what it would look like if staff were performing above standard and below standard on their job task
3. Use Handout #8 as an example and record your work on Handout #9

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### Individual Activity - Part 2

1. Take out Handout #10
2. Determine the level of performance (standard, above standard, below standard) for your staff for the other job task written on Handout #7

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### Performance Problems

are like locks



Solutions are like keys

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### Mager's Diagnostic Matrix

- A tool to help supervisors analyze performance discrepancies and determine a cause
- Separates discrepancies of knowledge, skill, and awareness from discrepancies of execution



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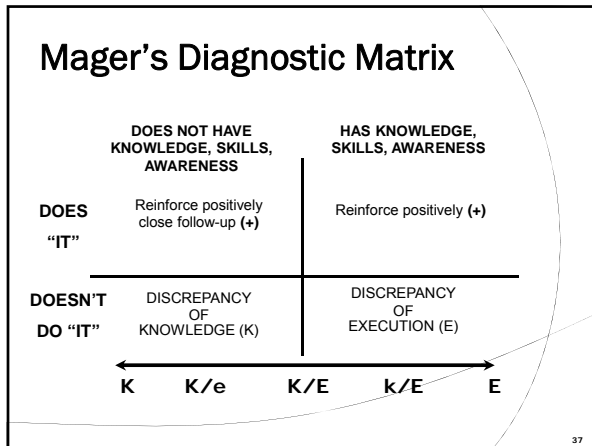
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### Performance Discrepancies

- ⦿ There may not be a clear deficiency of knowledge *or* a deficiency of execution
- ⦿ Example: some staff may have some knowledge of how to do a task, but may not be doing it correctly
- ⦿ Performance problems can potentially include any combination of discrepancies of both knowledge/skill and of execution

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Supervisors can ask themselves:

- Has the staff person performed this task adequately in the past?
- Does the staff person articulate understanding of the dynamics related to the job task in case conferences and/or other individual staff conferences?

If the answer to either of the above questions is "yes," supervisors should proceed as if there is a deficiency of execution.

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### Reasons for Performance Discrepancies

- Lack of motivation
- “Burnout”
- Personal or family illness; problems at home
- Lack of understanding that the task is important



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### Organizational Barriers

- Heavy workload
- Lack of resources needed to do the job
- Inadequate supervision
- Negative result for good performance
- Positive result for non-performance
- Lack of positive reinforcement for performance



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### It Is Vital for Supervisors to...

- ◎ Identify deficiencies of knowledge vs. deficiencies of execution
- ◎ Explore non-training barriers to performance with staff



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### The Role of Training

- Training will only help a performance problem if staff do not know how to do the job tasks
- Training is the “golden key” to performance improvement only if the “lock” to the performance problem is a lack of knowledge and skill



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### Individual Activity Instructions

1. Use Mager’s Diagnostic Tool to analyze performance discrepancies of the challenging- least competent staff
2. Determine whether the performance deficit is due to lack of knowledge/skill/awareness or a deficit in execution
3. If performance deficit is due to a discrepancy in execution, identify the apparent reason
4. Record assessment on Handout #11

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After completing performance analyses, supervisors should consider where staff are along a continuum (i.e., mostly knowledge with some execution deficits; equal knowledge and execution deficits, etc.) For example:

K Deficiency \_\_\_\_\_ Staff X \_\_\_\_\_ E Deficiency

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### Clarification of Terms

<b>Performance Analysis</b>	<b>Performance Evaluation</b>
Looking at performance execution to pinpoint where problems might occur	Formal communication with staff about how they perform on job tasks as revealed in the performance analysis

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### Performance Assessment

- A process that involves *both* performance analysis and performance evaluation
- Both must be done in order for performance improvement to occur

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### Performance Assessment: An Ongoing Process

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graph TD; OBSERVE[OBSERVE] --> CONFER[CONFER]; CONFER --> REVIEW[REVIEW]; REVIEW --> OBSERVE;
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### Performance Evaluation

A specific event conducted by supervisors at least once annually with every staff person in their unit



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### Performance Evaluation Goals

1. Provide objective appraisal of staff's total job functioning over specific period of time
2. Identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in assigned job duties
3. Give strengths-based feedback about performance in relationship to job expectations



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### Performance Evaluation Goals

4. Clarify agency expectations, policies, and procedures as needed
5. Develop plan to address training needs and professional development
6. Develop plan for performance improvement
7. Motivate staff



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### Preparing for the Annual Performance Evaluation

1. Communicate with staff about the process
2. Set date for actual review a month in advance
3. Provide staff with previous evaluation
4. Request staff complete a self-appraisal
5. Provide staff with specific criteria that will be used and explain how the evaluation will be conducted
6. Gather and analyze data

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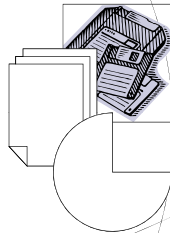
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### Data to Review

- Supervisory conferences notes
- Notes of staff participation in unit meetings
- Case reviews (or other work documentation review)
- Coaching reports
- Recorded observations of staff



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### Data to Review

- SACWIS, DART, CPOE data for casework staff
- Specific data for other programs and functions
- Staff's job description
- Performance expectations
- Staff's Performance Improvement Plan
- Staff's Individual Development Plan

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### Conducting the Annual Performance Evaluation

1. Review job tasks; ensure staff understand individual performance measures and how they are being evaluated
2. Ask if staff have questions or comments about evaluation
3. Request staff sign their name and current date to evaluation form
4. Provide copy of evaluation to staff person
5. File original evaluation in staff person's personnel record.

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### Feedback

The principal means of maintaining and improving staff performance. It ...

- Confirms desired results
- Identifies gaps between what staff are doing and what supervisors expect
- Provides information on how to improve

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### Effective Feedback

- ◉ Useful
- ◉ Specific
- ◉ Frequent
- ◉ Well-timed
- ◉ Direct
- ◉ Supportive
- ◉ Behavioral
- ◉ Clear

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### Strengths-Based Feedback

Parallel Process:

Caseworkers are expected to be strengths-based with clients but still must identify and deal with issues of risk.

Supervisors must identify performance discrepancies in staff but can still address the performance in a strengths-based, solution-focused manner.

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### Strengths-Based Feedback

Directive

- You are doing well when...
- You can improve further by...
- This is a challenge because...
- IF, you do...
- THEN, I will do...

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### Strengths-Based Feedback

Non-directive

- Where are you doing well?
- Where can you improve further?
- Why is this a challenge? (\*Never ask "why" if they are competent but uncommitted.)
- What, where, when, how? (will you do)...
- How can I help/what can I do?

(Mark Hartford 2008)

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**Strengths-Based Feedback**

**Evaluative**

Given after supervisors have directly observed staff performance. It can be positive or corrective.

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**Examples**

- Corrective  
*“Jane, I observed you rolling your eyes when Mr. Smith was talking to you.”* This is corrective evaluative feedback because it addresses a performance the supervisor wants to correct.
- Positive  
*“Jane, I reviewed your court report today. You submitted it three days early, and it contains a comprehensive, behaviorally-specific, and detailed account of the child’s interaction with the grandmother.”*

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**Strengths-Based Feedback**

**Developmental**

Given by supervisors after evaluative feedback is offered. It entails providing staff with information about behavior supervisors want to continue and what changes supervisors expect. It can be positive or corrective.

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### Corrective Developmental Feedback

*“Jane, please use effective nonverbal communication skills when talking to clients. I observed your behavior as Mr. Smith was talking. This may communicate to Mr. Smith that you don’t believe him or don’t value his statements. Please show your interest in and your value for Mr. Smith by making intermittent eye contact as he is speaking.”*

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### Positive Developmental Feedback

*“Jane, I really appreciate that you finished your court reports before the deadline. You also provided a comprehensive detailed account of the grandmother’s interaction. This is excellent work.”*

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### Optional Activity

1. Use Handout #15
2. Compare CURRENT to DESIRED behavior of your most challenging and least competent staff persons
3. Restate a performance expectation
4. Write an evaluative feedback statement and a developmental feedback statement
5. Remember to be STRENGTHS-BASED!

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### Ways Staff May Communicate Resistance

- Avoiding responsibility for the problem
- Flooding supervisors with details
- Changing the subject
- Being unusually silent
- Showing premature compliance
- Attacking supervisors verbally
- Pressing for solutions rather than trying to understand the problem
- Claiming that supervisors do not fully understand the situation

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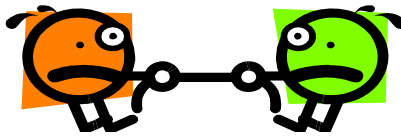
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**Because resistance is an emotional process, logical problem solving will often not work to resolve it.**



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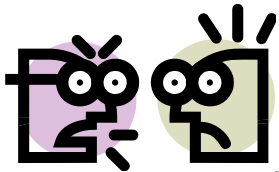
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**Staff defensiveness and resistance do not necessarily imply a personal attack on the supervisor.**



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### Discussion Questions



- Have you experienced staff resistance when discussing performance problems?
- Did you recognize and acknowledge staff's feelings?
- Did this work to reduce staff's resistance?
- How have you handled resistance before when discussing performance issues with staff? What worked or did not work?

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### Managing Resistance

- Avoid trying to give logical explanations or offer solutions
- Deal with the emotions first
- Identify what form the resistance is taking
- Listen to the words and to the underlying message
- State in a neutral, non-punitive way the form the resistance is taking; focus on the feelings of staff, not the content
- Remain silent. Let staff respond to the statement
- Acknowledge and deal with the resistance and the feelings

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### Applying Kadushin's Model

**Administrative supervision** identifies performance problems (e.g., unmet timelines, poor documentation, or requisite tasks that have not been accomplished).

**Educational supervision** helps staff understand how to correct performance problems. This may involve coaching or other educational techniques to help staff correct deficiencies.

**Supportive supervision** is used to help staff manage their feelings about performance problems and be open to changing their work practice.

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### Managing Resistance

- Use strengths-based language
- Maintain composure
- If staff refuse to sign evaluation, explain their signature merely conveys they've seen a copy
- If resistance continues, request staff sign back of the document
- If resistance continues, document nature of resistance and add that information to the evaluation document

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### Large-Group Discussion



- ⦿ Have any of you experienced resistance from staff during a performance evaluation?
- ⦿ What happened?
- ⦿ How did you feel during the experience?
- ⦿ How did you handle the situation?
- ⦿ Was the strategy successful?

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### Progressive Discipline

- ⦿ Process for addressing staff behavior or performance that does not meet the expected and communicated standard
- ⦿ Primary purpose: to assist staff in understanding that a performance problem exists but that opportunity for improvement also exists
- ⦿ Goal: to improve staff performance
- ⦿ Not intended as punishment

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### Progressive Discipline Process

- Talk with staff about performance
- Resolve issue if possible
- Explain acceptable performance standard; give staff reasonable amount of time to comply
- Inform staff of consequences if they fail to comply
- Provide verbal warning; document it in personnel file
- Provide written warning; place copy in personnel file
- Recommend suspension without pay
- Recommend termination

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### Important!

- It is critical that the chain of documentation be provided to demonstrate the entire process
- If the agency does not adhere to the process, it may be liable for faulty termination of an employee

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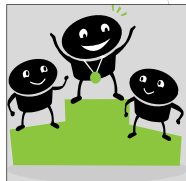
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### Top-Performing Staff

Staff who consistently perform their job tasks well will likely have no discrepancies of knowledge or execution. However, they require supervisory attention, encouragement, and support to ensure this continued level of performance.



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**Caution**

- ⦿ Don't punish staff who consistently perform their job tasks well; use their skills judiciously
- ⦿ Don't overburden these staff with more work than they can accomplish
- ⦿ Don't always give the top-performing staff the most difficult work. Even the most committed staff will become frustrated, and the excellent performance may fade

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**The Supervisor-Staff Relationship**

- ⦿ The supervisor-staff relationship is THE most important factor in determining staff success, satisfaction with the job, professional development, and retention
- ⦿ It provides a foundation that allows for openness and trust
- ⦿ When staff feel respected by their supervisors, they feel appreciated and empowered

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**The Supervisor-Staff Relationship (cont'd)**

- ⦿ Effective supervisors understand the importance of constantly nurturing the relationships with their staff. They realize this contributes to the sense of importance staff feel about their place in the unit and the work, and their value as people and professionals

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### Small-Group Discussion

1. Discuss the three staff you have been considering throughout the workshop
2. How would you describe the relationship you have with each of these staff?
  - Is there trust and respect?
  - Do staff feel empowered and appreciated?
  - Are staff satisfied in their jobs and professional development?

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3. Have each of these staff participated in developing their performance improvement plans?
  - If so, how would you describe their commitment to the plan?
4. Are you currently practicing situational leadership with these staff?
  - Based on what you have learned in this workshop, is there anything you would do differently in your supervision with each of these staff?

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### Practical Application

- Role-play the following situations in your small groups:
  1. Providing feedback about a performance deficit
  2. Using strengths-based feedback with a resistant staff person
  3. Incorporating the three types of supervision when giving feedback
  4. Having the performance improvement conversation with the most challenging staff person

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### REMINDER...

- ⦿ Pre-training assignments need to be completed prior to attending classroom trainings
- ⦿ To access these materials go to [www.ocwtp.com](http://www.ocwtp.com); link to *For Trainees*; link to *Resources* and then scroll down to *Supervisor/Manager Core Tools*

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### Helpful Resource

#### **New Employee Orientation**

- ⦿ Check OCWTP website for comprehensive orientation checklist
  - <http://ocwtp.net/Orientation.html>
  - Topics
  - Resources and links
  - Worksheets and activities

**Orientation Coach available – contact your RTC for more information**

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