MODULE 4
Skill Sets and Competencies

TOPIC: 514
FUNDAMENTALS OF IMPROVING INDIVIDUAL STAFF PERFORMANCE

Skill Sets

514-01 Ability to develop and communicate clear, measurable, mission-critical performance expectations for staff

514-02 Ability to identify the developmental level, culture, personal strengths, and learning needs of individual staff members

514-03 Ability to complete performance evaluations and to develop performance improvement plans with individual staff

Skill Set 514-01: Ability to develop and communicate clear, measurable, mission-critical performance expectations for staff

<p>| 514-01-001 | Knows the importance of formalizing performance expectations into clear, consistent, and standardized job descriptions. |
| 514-01-002 | Knows the importance of establishing challenging but attainable performance expectations for all staff. |
| 514-01-003 | Understands how activities, performance expectations, and measures are derived from organizational mission and desired outcomes. |
| 514-01-004 | Understands how clearly defined performance expectations can motivate high levels of staff performance and successful achievement of outcomes. |
| 514-01-005 | Understands how organizational factors including poorly defined mission, unclear job roles and activities, lack of supervision, and shifting priorities undermine staff performance. |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>514-01-006</td>
<td>Knows how to involve staff in identifying and establishing performance expectations and measures for their jobs.</td>
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<td>514-01-007</td>
<td>Knows how to create job activities, expectations, and performance measures that reflect mission-critical agency and unit outcomes and best-practice standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-01-008</td>
<td>Can use supervisory conference to initiate and encourage dialogue with staff members about performance expectations and measures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-01-009</td>
<td>Can determine if staff understand performance expectations and measures, and can help staff become invested in achieving these expectations.</td>
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**Skill Set 514-02: Ability to identify the developmental level, culture, personal strengths, and learning needs of individual staff members**

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<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>514-02-001</td>
<td>Knows the importance of ongoing staff development for effective job performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-02-002</td>
<td>Understands how personal, interpersonal, organizational, cultural, and environmental factors interact to increase or impede staff motivation to achieve high levels of performance excellence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-02-003</td>
<td>Understands how skill sets and competencies are organized and used to assess individual learning needs and to shape individual development plans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-02-004</td>
<td>Understands the difference between deficiencies in knowledge and skill and deficiencies of execution, and how these interact to affect job performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-02-005</td>
<td>Knows how to use supervisory conferences, unit meetings, case reviews, and observations of caseworkers as ongoing strategies to identify staff’s developmental needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-02-006</td>
<td>Can involve staff in assessing their strengths and developmental needs and in developing plans for personal and professional growth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-02-007</td>
<td>Can work with staff to differentiate their learning needs from non-training performance problems that require other supervisory interventions.</td>
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### Skill Set 514-03: Ability to complete performance evaluations and to develop performance improvement plans with individual staff

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<tr>
<td>514-03-001</td>
<td>Knows the components of effective performance evaluation protocols and performance improvement plans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-03-002</td>
<td>Knows the potential sources and types of performance information and outcome measures needed to identify and understand performance gaps.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-03-003</td>
<td>Understands the importance of engaging staff to collaborate in performance evaluation, and of completing evaluations within an ongoing, supportive, and developmental supervisor-supervisee relationship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-03-004</td>
<td>Understands the importance of using predetermined, clearly defined, behavioral, and measurable descriptions of desired job performance as the criteria for performance evaluation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-03-005</td>
<td>Understands the personal and interpersonal factors that may increase both employees’ and supervisors’ resistance to completing performance evaluations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-03-006</td>
<td>Knows how to design performance improvement plans to enhance successful plan implementation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-03-007</td>
<td>Can engage and fully involve staff in evaluating and planning to improve their job performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-03-008</td>
<td>Can plan, design, and implement supervisory interventions that address both deficits of knowledge and skill and deficits of execution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>514-03-009</td>
<td>Can observe, monitor, and evaluate employee performance to determine if a performance improvement plan is effectively changing practice.</td>
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</table>
Instructions: Using the agency mission to guide you, create an agency objective, a unit objective, and two job tasks required to achieve the unit objective.

Agency Objective

Unit Objective

Job Task #1

Job Task #2
Writing “SMART”

Instructions: Practice writing SMART individual performance expectations appropriate to the two job tasks from Handout #2.

Job Task #1

Job Task #2
The Job Description

- Informs staff of the specific duties, tasks, and/or responsibilities of the job.
- Provides a list of the qualifications (skills, training, education, abilities) necessary for the job.
- Identifies the person to whom the staff person is accountable.
- Provides performance expectations for each job task.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:
Transfer of Learning

How will you transfer what you’ve learned so far and put it into actual practice once you’re back in your agency/unit?
Competence or Performance?

**Competence** – *the ability, skill, and knowledge needed to do the job task*

**Performance** – *the behavior; actually doing the job task*

**Example:**

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

**Competency** (Statements of the knowledge and skills needed to complete the task):

1. “The staff person understands how the strength factors of family members may mitigate risk to children.”
2. “The staff person knows how to use various interviewing techniques in interviewing children who may have been maltreated.”

These statements are written in “competency” language using intransitive verbs (a verb without a direct object) – The staff person “knows; understands; knows how to; can.”

**Performance** (Behavioral statements that describe behavioral expectations of the job task):

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

These statements are written in “behavioral” language using active verbs: “completes, visits,” etc.
Part 1: Identify two job tasks that are common to both your least competent and most challenging staff persons. Following that, write one SMART individual performance expectation for each job task.

Job Task #1:

SMART Individual Performance Measure:

Job Task #2:

SMART Individual Performance Measure:
Three Levels of Performance

Example:

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

Performance Level –

1. **Below Standard** – Misses some important safety and risk factors. Documentation is sparse and needs correction. Verbal communication about risk factors is vague. Misses required deadlines.

2. **Standard (i.e., satisfactory or adequate)** – 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.

3. **Above Standard** – Very 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.
Using one of the individual performance measures developed in the previous activity (Handout #7), use the SMART criteria to describe what it would look like if staff were performing above standard expectations or below standard expectations on their job task.

**Individual Performance Measure:**

**Above Standard Expectations:**

**Standard Expectations (from Handout #7)**

**Below Standard Expectations:**
Part 2: Determine the actual level of performance (standard, above standard, below standard) for your least competent and most challenging staff persons, for both job tasks identified on Handout #7. Support your rating with clear, objective, behavioral, and measurable data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Task #1: Level of Performance</th>
<th>Job Task #2: Level of Performance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most Challenging Staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Least Competent Staff</strong></td>
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</table>
Analyzing Performance Discrepancies

Fact: Staff person “X” is not doing what he/she should be doing.

1. What is the performance discrepancy?

2. Is it a skill deficiency?  YES  [ ]  NO  [ ]
   - The person could do it if he/she were really required to.
   - The person could do it if his or her life depended on it.
   - The person’s present skills are adequate for the desired performance.
   - The person could do the task in the past.

3. Is it a knowledge deficiency?  YES  [ ]  NO  [ ]
   - The person has been trained on this before.

4. Are there obstacles/system barriers to the staff person performing the task as expected?  YES  [ ]  NO  [ ]
5. Has this person been given adequate feedback on his/her performance of this task?
   YES [ ] NO [ ]

6. Have the expectations for doing this task been clearly explained? YES [ ] NO [ ]

7. Does this person understand the expectations? YES [ ] NO [ ]

8. What are the consequences if the task is not completed as expected?
   - [ ] There are no consequences; the task is not that important in the grand scheme of things.
   - [ ] What is the result of doing it the present way instead of my way?
   - [ ] What does this person get out of doing the task his/her way? (E.g., peer recognition, unintentional “reward” from supervisor?)
   - [ ] This person gets more attention for misbehaving than behaving.

9. Should this person receive disciplinary action for not doing the task as expected?
   YES [ ] NO [ ]

10. Conclusion: What is the possible reason for this person’s performance discrepancy?

11. What do I need to do next?
ACTIVITY: Analyzing Staff Performance Problems

1) From the previous activities, consider the below-standard performance levels of your challenging and least competent staff. Place each staff person on the continuum that indicates whether you think their performance discrepancy is the result of deficits of Knowledge (K) or Execution (E), or a combination of both.

Most Challenging Staff: Deficiency K________________________Deficiency E

K K/e K/E E/k E

Least Competent Staff: Deficiency K________________________Deficiency E

K K/e K/E E/k E

2) Supervisors should use a strengths-based approach in identifying and discussing with staff any “non-training barriers to performance.” However, for the purposes of this application activity, identify potential barriers that you believe may exist for the performances you are analyzing:

Most Challenging Staff:

Least Competent Staff:
### Checklist for Performance Evaluation Forms

Good annual performance evaluation forms contain the following information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor/Evaluator’s Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Ratings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating Scale for Each Job Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review and Rating of Previous Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals for the Next Evaluation Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Improvement Plan (may be a companion document)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Development Plan (may be a companion document)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space for Staff Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Signature and Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space for Supervisor Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor Signature and Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager/Director Comments (Dependent on Agency Policy and Practice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager/Director Signature and Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transfer of Learning

1. Think of ways you can use Mager's Performance Analysis tool with your staff.

2. What can you do to improve performance evaluations in your unit?

Additional Notes:
Optional Feedback Activity

Compare the CURRENT to DESIRED behavior of your least competent and most challenging staff persons. Considering what you’ve learned about effective feedback, restate a performance expectation, then write an EVALUATIVE Feedback Statement and a DEVELOPMENTAL Feedback Statement. Remember to be strengths based!

Most Challenging Staff

1. Task:

2. Individual performance expectation:

3. Evaluative feedback statement based on what performance you might have observed, and the identified performance level:

4. Developmental feedback statement based on what you want this staff person to do differently:

5. Two strengths-based questions you could use to discuss why the performance is below standard:
Least Competent Staff

1. Task:

2. Individual performance expectation:

3. Evaluative feedback statement based on what performance you might have observed, and the identified performance level:

4. Developmental feedback statement based on what you want this staff person to do differently:

5. Two strengths-based questions you could use to discuss why the performance is below standard:

Notes:
Think about your current practice of documenting and addressing staff performance issues. Based on what you’ve learned about progressive discipline, is there anything you should, or would want to, do differently? If so, what steps need to be taken once you return to your agency/unit?

1.

2.

3.

Notes:
Consider your top-performing staff:

“Top performers” likely have no discrepancies of knowledge or execution. However, staff with above-standard performance need to be encouraged and supported to ensure that the performance continues. What strategies can you use to support your top-performing staff?

☐ Expand their job responsibilities into an area of their interest.

☐ Invite them to be peer coaches, trainers, mentors, or internal consultants.

☐ Involve them in decision making.

☐ Delegate supervisory responsibilities to them.

☐ Provide personal and professional development opportunities; e.g., encourage them to be a conference presenter.

☐ Support their involvement in professional/civic organizations.
Advocate for them to be promoted or for a non-promotional increase in status and pay.

Put them in highly visible positions.

Acknowledge their work.

Provide evaluative feedback regularly.

Solicit their suggestions for unit improvements and improvements to their own jobs.

Additional Notes:
SELF-ASSESSMENT

This self-assessment ties some of the learning from Modules 1 and 2 with the learning in Module 4.

T___  F___ I regularly link the mission-critical importance of our work to the conversation I have with staff regarding cases, unit objectives, job tasks, and individual performance expectations.

T___  F___ During individual conferences with staff and in unit meetings, we talk about what the agency is trying to accomplish and how individual staff and the unit are contributing to that goal.

T___  F___ I know the individuals in my unit: who they are; what they bring to the table; their strengths, talents, skills, and abilities. I individualize my supervision to support the needs of each staff person.

T___  F___ I use a strengths-based approach with staff and try to use the least amount of direction needed to ensure staff performance.

T___  F___ I regularly offer attention, support, and encouragement to each my staff, whether they are the most challenging, the least competent, or the top performers.
1. When I consider my responsibility to help individual staff improve their performance, I see my best leadership/supervisory strengths as:

2. Based on the content of this module, I know I can help staff with their job performance by:

3. One concrete action commitment that I will do when I return to my agency/unit is: