

WHAT IS CURRICULUM

Training curriculum is a total package of learning activities designed to achieve the objectives of the training program. In a competency-based system, the objective, or desired end, is that trainees will acquire the specific knowledge and skills (competencies) they need to do their jobs. There are three primary components to be examined when evaluating any training curriculum. They are:

- the content or information to be transmitted
- the organization of the curriculum which includes structure, format, and sequencing
- the training methods used

Training Content

Content includes the specific information, facts, attitudes, and skills to be transmitted by the training program. In a competency-based system, these are formalized in the competency statements. The following principles relate to training content:

- The scope and depth of the content of any curriculum are determined by the competencies the curriculum is designed to teach.
- Content should transmit a theoretical framework and conceptual rationale for the training.
- Content should reflect best standards of practice.
- Content should communicate a values orientation.
- In an in-service training program, the content must be applicable to direct practice.
- The content of a curriculum must be congruent and complementary both within and between sections.

Structure and Format

This refers to the construction of individual sections, and the organizations of the parts of the curriculum into an integrated whole. It includes the design of each section to achieve objectives, the sequencing of sections and activities, establishing time frames, and designing linkages between sections.

- The sequence of activities within each section and within the curriculum as a whole should be concordant with the natural learning process.
- Knowledge and skills that are conceptually related, or that are performed together on the job, should be taught together.
- Providing a broad overview of the content early in the sequence provides a conceptual framework within which trainees can organize the parts. This facilitates retention and understanding.

- Principles of sequencing are: from simple to complex, from the universal to the exception, and from fundamental to more refined applications.
- Repeating key concepts in different contexts facilitates understanding. Relating sections within a curriculum helps develop logical linkages between previous and current training content, and identify different situations in which similar knowledge and skills are applied, which helps to reinforce retention and promote generalization.
- Planning adequate time to cover the content to the desired level of depth is essential. Compression of content into an unrealistic time segment limits the effectiveness of the training. It can't be done faster than it can be done.

Training Methods

Training methods are the strategies used to transmit the content and to promote learning and retention. In an in-service training curriculum, the training methods must be appropriate for use with adult learners in an applied setting. The method that is best suited to achieve the objective of the section should be selected.

- Use presentation to quickly transmit factual information.
- Use discussion to promote greater exploration of the information and to develop understanding.
- Ask questions of trainees or use exercises that feed information back to the trainer to determine how well trainees understand the content.
- Use experiential exercises to develop self-awareness.
- When trainees have prior knowledge or preconceived ideas about the content, use an activity that challenges mindsets and motivates trainees to rethink their own beliefs.
- Use exercises and simulations to promote application of the content to job tasks, and to develop trainee skills.
- Use activities that identify solutions to potential barriers in the workplace and action planning to promote TOL from the workshop back to the job setting.
- Present the same concepts using a variety of learning strategies to help ensure that trainees with different learning styles can assimilate the knowledge. Hearing, seeing, modeling, and then practicing the training content also reinforces learning for individual trainees.