

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

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

514-01-006	Knows how to involve staff in identifying and establishing performance expectations and measures for their jobs.
514-01-007	Knows how to create job activities, expectations, and performance measures that reflect mission-critical agency and unit outcomes and best-practice standards.
514-01-008	Can use supervisory conference to initiate and encourage dialogue with staff members about performance expectations and measures.
514-01-009	Can determine if staff understand performance expectations and measures, and can help staff become invested in achieving these expectations.

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

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

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

Practice Sheet

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

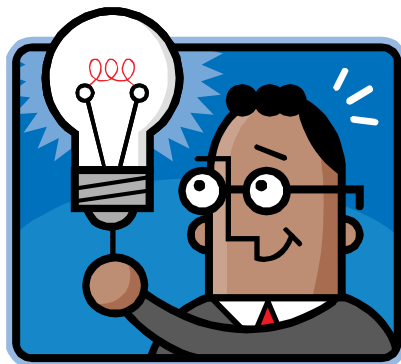
Job Task #2

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

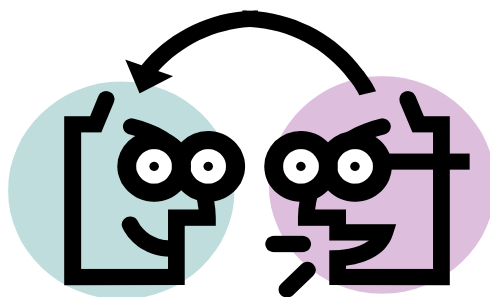
- Informs staff of the specific duties, tasks, and/or responsibilities of the job.
- Provides a list of the qualifications (skills, training, education, abilities) necessary for the job.
- Identifies the person to whom the staff person is accountable.
- Provides performance expectations for each job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

Your Identified Staff

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.*

Writing SMART Descriptions

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:

Your Identified Staff

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.

	Job Task #1: Level of Performance	Job Task #2: Level of Performance
Most Challenging Staff		
Least Competent Staff		

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:

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

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:

Progressive Discipline

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:

Top-Performing Staff

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.

