# Frontline Supervisors Handbook

## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: What is Leadership?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Finding Staff with the Right Stuff</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Coaching for Effective Performance</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Facilitating Teamwork</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: When People Don’t Do What They’re Supposed to Do</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: Accelerating Learning</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7: Employee Recognition and Retention</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8: Commitment to People with Disabilities and Quality Services</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9: Balancing Work/Personal Life</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10: Having A Vision</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback Answers</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frontline Supervisor’s Handbook

This training manual was developed by the North Dakota center for persons with Disabilities to be used by North Dakota community provider agencies participating in the Community Staff Training Project through Minot State University. We encourage the use of this publication for not-for-profit organizations for educational and research purposes. We request that appropriate acknowledgement be given.

Suggested citation:


Requests for use of this publication for any other purpose should be submitted to Minot State University, NDCPD, Community Staff Training Project, Box 131, Minot, ND 58707.

Production of this publication was supported by funding from:
North Dakota Department of Human Services, Disabilities Services Division
North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities/Minot State University

COPYRIGHT 2004
By North Dakota CENTER FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
A University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities
At Minot State University

Acknowledgements

The North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities wishes to thank the North Dakota Regional Staff Trainers, Michael Marum, and Cheryl Rystedt for their contribution to the development of this training module.

Cindy Haworth: Worth Consulting, 2990 Royal Court,
New Lenox, IL 60451 (815 462 3927)
Introduction

This module was prepared in an effort to meet the training needs of front line supervisors and other agency leaders, who affect quality of service provision through their leadership and supervisory efforts. The content was developed through collaboration with North Dakota community based developmental disability provider agencies and includes topics identified through a statewide survey of middle-management staff and the direct support staff they supervise (Mercer, 2002).

The lead author for the manual is Cindy Haworth, MS. Cindy has had direct experience with people with disabilities all her life. Having a family member with a disability, she went on to provide direct support and work as a QMRP in residential and vocational programs in the U.S. (most of her U.S. experience being in North Dakota) and Britain while attaining a bachelor’s degree in developmental disabilities and a master’s degree in psychology. While fulfilling a variety of roles in the DD services system, she has served as a QMRP and staff development specialist. Cindy currently provides QMRP and management training and consulting with community agencies through Worth Consulting and Training. Cindy has spoken at conferences across the U.S., as well as in Australia and England on topics of abuse prevention and employee motivation and recruitment.

Please note. Every effort has been made to cover information for supervisors in a manner that is considered best practice, research based, and generally accepted by North Dakota Developmental Disability providers. However, there are areas throughout the module in which you may have to defer to the policies and procedures of your organization. Supervisors need a basic understanding of agency policy in order to carry out their responsibilities.

Two icons are used in the module:

The pencil and paper icon signifies a point when you need to write something down. When learning new information or when re-thinking information, it is important to give some thought to the issue at hand and write down your thoughts. Writing things down helps increase retention and encourages us to think about things longer than we might otherwise. Get the most out of this module by completing these exercises as you work through it.

This icon signifies a point when the issues discussed can be put into practice immediately. Often, we may have the best of intentions when we plan to do something later, however in our busy workplaces, “later” may often mean
“never”. As you work through the module, take the time to complete these activities whenever you see this icon.
Chapter 1: What is Leadership?

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson the learner will be able to:

- Describe critical skills for effective leaders
- Identify their leadership skills currently being exhibited
- Identify leadership skills that need improvement
- Describe how the emotional climate affects the workplace
- Explain the importance of optimism in leadership

You have made the decision to accept a leadership position at your organization. Or perhaps, you would like to assume a leadership role at some time in your career. The social services arena is one of the most stimulating and challenging work environments. Leaders in human service organizations deal with a wide variety of daily challenges that may have long lasting results not only for employees but also for very vulnerable individuals receiving supports and their families.

This module will address leadership and supervision issues in the field of disabilities today. Unfortunately, many times people are promoted in this field, not due to a wealth of experience, but because they may have had excellent job performance in their previous role. That role may not have helped the person acquire the skills necessary for leading a team of employees. Frequently, there is a “baptism by fire” approach to supervisory training. People are expected to automatically know what to do and how to handle problem areas, when in fact, they may not have the experience or training to effectively manage these situations.

Supervisory styles, driving ambitions, and success vary widely among leaders. However, effective leaders have an acute ability to understand people and know what motivates them. This is a critical skill needed to achieve the best performance from staff. Effective leaders are also able to influence people and change their behavior. They define reality for the people who follow them. The most noble leaders also feel a deep responsibility to those that follow them.
Leadership has been defined many ways. Max Dupree may have defined leadership the best when he said:

_The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor._

Larry Spears, the CEO of the Greenleaf Center, defined leadership in this way:

_As we near the end of the twentieth century, we are beginning to see that traditional autocratic and hierarchical modes of leadership are slowly yielding to a newer model – one that attempts to simultaneously enhance the personal growth of workers and improve the quality and caring of our many institutions through a combination of teamwork and community, personal involvement in decision making, and ethical and caring behavior. This emerging approach to leadership and service is called servant-leadership._

The Gallup Organization says:

_No single factor more clearly predicts the productivity of an employee than his relationship with his supervisor._

This module will look at a wide variety of areas that a supervisor or leader needs to address, such as:

- Finding the right staff
- Coaching effective performance
- Facilitating teamwork
- Intervening when people don’t do what they’re supposed to do
- Accelerating learning
- Recognizing and retaining
- Meeting the needs of people with disabilities
- Balancing work and personal life
- Having a vision

Throughout this module, the importance of the ability to _understand and respect people and establish positive relationships with them_ will be stressed. This skill is critical in enabling you to maintain the most effective and motivated workforce. Typically, people that best understand others have a clear understanding of themselves.

**Identifying Strengths**

Strengths can often be established by utilizing anticipatory imaging. Anticipatory imaging enables one to establish a vision of how things could be, (in this instance leadership skills) in an ideal world. This is an exercise many athletes use as they envision themselves breaking
world records or performing in an exceptional way. Answer the following from the perspective of being in an ideal work environment:

- As a leader, how would you handle difficult situations?
- How would your staff feel about their jobs?
- How would staff perform on the job?
- How would your colleagues view you?

Give some thought to ways that you, the ideal leader, would interact and how you would make decisions. See yourself as the leader you would most like to be.

Take a few minutes to come up with a list of qualities you would demonstrate and behaviors you would exhibit in an ideal work environment.

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

In moments of reflection, it’s also important to consider people who you may have worked for in the past. Who has mentored or motivated you in your career? What were the qualities of the supervisors you’ve had that you most respected?

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

How many skills from these lists do you currently exhibit? Which do you not display currently or at least not to the extent you would like? List both below.

**Currently exhibit**

- 
- 
- 
- 


Could improve

- 
- 
- 

Identify two ways you can better exemplify the best leadership qualities of your most respected supervisor.

An honest and well-defined look at the ideal self is essential for lasting improvement and change. The failure of most New Year’s resolutions is a testament to the difficulty of change in our behavior. Real improvement and change comes from a strong commitment, particularly when going through times of stress and challenge amid growing responsibilities.

Establishing a relationship with someone you can count on for honest feedback regarding your performance can be one of the most helpful steps toward becoming the leader you want to be. Most people listed as motivating or mentoring forces, likely had mentors of their own. Executives interviewed in one study (Goleman, 2002) felt that the most crucial experiences in their development had been jobs in which they felt they were “over their heads,” at least initially. In their opinion, the mentors who gave them support and guidance in these circumstances proved to be a priceless contributor to their later success.

As you complete this module, reflect on the qualities listed above and how they might be incorporated or improved upon in your development as a leader. Two critical aspects will be introduced in this initial chapter – the supervisors’ ability to understand people and level of optimism.
Understanding People

Effective leaders don’t have effective teams by accident. Research has identified that effective leadership strategies revolve around understanding human behavior and the leader’s relationships with employees. Just as an airplane mechanic needs to know all the aspects of how airplane engines work, leaders likewise need to understand what makes people do what they do and not do what they don’t. Without a basic understanding of human behavior, it’s very likely that you’re negatively affecting your employees, your organization, yourself, and ultimately the people receiving services.

But don’t lose heart! Anyone can develop these skills. It is not essential that supervisors have innate charisma and polished social skills. Many of the same strategies used to assist persons with disabilities to meet personal outcomes, can be used with great effectiveness to supervise staff. These strategies will be developed more in other chapters. Briefly, the focus for supervisors is to determine why staff do what they do. Over 90 years of research on human behavior has shown that people act in certain ways because of what happens to them after they do it. When attempting to change staff behavior, the supervisor needs to identify:

- a baseline of the staff person’s current performance,
- a precise intervention, and
- a way to evaluate progress after the intervention.

In his book, *Primal Leadership*, Daniel Goleman highlighted research on the relationship between positive emotions and worker motivation. He reported that when people were in upbeat moods, they were able to think more clearly, understand information better, be more flexible in their thinking, and make complex decisions. As a leader you are a barometer for the mood of your team. When people feel good, they work at their best. Monitoring your mood is often the way employees assess whether a situation is a catastrophe or a minor hitch that can be worked out.

Emotional intelligence is an essential area for supervisors. Great leaders have the ability to drive emotions positively in order to motivate people. Emotional intelligence also makes us more aware of the ways in which we affect other people. While we may not want to admit it, research shows we are highly influenced by the moods of others around us. No one wants to work for a grumpy boss; however few people appreciate the effect this has on performance. Great leaders have an enhanced appreciation for ways in which they affect the moods of their employees. The ability to predict what will elicit emotions and the consequences that follow, both positive and negative, are critical.
Think about a time when your positive mood affected employees. Think about a
time when your negative mood affected employees. Describe the incidents
and the effects this had on the employee(s) and their ability to perform their
job(s).

**Optimism**

In recent years, studies in the area of positive psychology have grown considerably. **Optimistic people have been shown to be healthier, happier and more successful** (Seligman, 2002). While many people seem to be born more optimistic than others, Seligman shows that people can become more optimistic when given some training and knowledge of the subject. Many people receiving support from human service agencies may not have experienced optimism in their lives. Further, services and supports are provided by a workforce that is also vulnerable and, in many instances, pessimistic due to difficult life experiences.

Supervisors sometimes are faced with difficult issues. It’s not always easy to tell employees things that may not be complimentary. There may be times when a supervisor even has to let a staff know he or she needs to find another job. A certain level of professional discipline is important in these instances. Professional discipline is easier to maintain when there is an inner level of optimism that continually reminds leaders of their purpose – to create the highest quality services for people with disabilities.

To work toward that goal, it’s crucial that supervisors make an effort to hire optimistic people and lead them in a positive way, assuring they are doing all they can to allow them to maintain that optimism. The employee’s mind and attitude are his/her greatest asset. Leaders get exactly what they focus on. Positive expectations and beliefs about what is possible create what is true and possible. If managers create an environment that is supportive, upbeat behaviors will spring into action (LaPointe, 2003).
If people are your best, most highly prized resource, it makes sense to do everything you can to hire the best people. Effective recruitment and screening strategies result in less time being frustrated with staff and more time celebrating with staff.

**Building a Foundation**

The role of supervisor may look easy to direct support staff. But, supervisors who have been promoted from non-supervisory roles will have a different view. When supervisors receive promotions, it’s sometimes difficult to work with employees who were previously co-workers. Their job and the responsibility level change overnight. Whether we like it or not, the promotion changes the relationship with former coworkers. This doesn’t have to be a bad thing, it is important to establish parameters for the new relationship. By following the strategies and suggestions in this module, supervisors will be able to create environments that are positive and effective for employees and people with disabilities.

Finding the balance between issuing demands that must be followed and doing everything oneself is the key. People receive promotions because they are good “doers”. However, supervisors need to shift into a role in which they can effectively get others to be “doers”. All too often, supervisors get no training in strategies to delegate, motivate and communicate with employees. When there are problems in the work place, it’s easy for supervisors to blame the employees and lament, “What can you expect, with the kind of people we have to hire these days!” This module believes there is a lot supervisors can do.
Chapter 1: Feedback Exercises

1. List four critical skills for effective leaders:
   1
   2
   3
   4

2. What difference does it make when people are in an upbeat mood when they are at work?

3. Why is it important for leaders to be optimistic?
Chapter 2: Finding Staff with the Right Stuff

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson the learner will be able to:

- Explain the importance of the hiring process
- List strategies for improved hiring practices
- Identify alternative sources for recruits
- Describe an effective RJP (Realistic Job Preview) process
- Describe three types of effective interview questions
- Identify eight ways in which people with disabilities can choose their staff
- Explain why reference checks are important

Maintaining appropriate numbers of skilled workers is one of the biggest challenges for many supervisors. In fact, difficulties in assuring sufficient direct support staff has been identified as the single biggest barrier to the growth, sustainability, and quality of community services for people with developmental disabilities (Hewitt & Lakin, 2001).

As an increasing number of people with disabilities and their families are demanding community-based services, the demographic group that traditionally fills direct support positions is shrinking. This worker shortage means that shifts may go unfilled or staff are required to work excessive overtime as supervisors do “the best they can” to meet the most pressing and basic needs. As the magnitude of the current direct support workforce crisis becomes more complex, supervisors need to look at how they might more effectively meet the challenges of recruitment.

O’Nell, Hewitt, Sauer, and Larson (2001) recommend a comprehensive approach that includes a range of effective recruitment strategies and a selection process that is likely to identify employees who are appropriate for the job, can meet the needs of the people they support, and who are likely to stay. Their approach includes the strategies found in this unit.

Effectively Marketing the Organization to Prospective Employees

Effective recruitment plans strive to reduce the number of people who are hired but quit within the first six months. When new employees have complete information about the job and the organization’s mission, vision and values before they apply, they are less likely to quit within the first 30 days. Studies have found that people who learn about a new job from an inside source (current or former employees; board member; consumers or family members) are more likely to stay on the job for at least a year.
Many agencies provide bonuses to existing staff when they recruit friends, relatives or acquaintances. One executive director was successful recruiting people who provided good service during everyday business in his community. After complimenting a grocery store clerk, who when out of her way to be helpful, he informally invited her to consider the rewards of human service careers. He left a business card with his number and expressed confidence that she might be successful supporting people with disabilities at the agency he led. He encouraged his supervisors and direct support staff to do the same. When people recruited in this method were hired and stayed with the organization for six months or more, the staff person who referred them was eligible for a monetary bonus. Another agency included all the staff that referred new employees in a lottery drawing for a free plane ticket to Hawaii.

If the goal is to retain new employees, recruitment bonus plans should be paid after 6 or even 12 months of satisfactory job performance. For many agencies, adequate supplies of staff will mean tapping new sources of potential recruits including older or displaced employees, recent immigrants, and welfare-to-work program participants. Community education and training programs can assist with the unique training and supervision challenges presented by these groups. Networking with high school career exploration programs and serving as a post-secondary internship and practicum site are also excellent additions to recruitment plans. The information provided through volunteer or paid work experiences and internships has been associated with lower turnover rates.

Advertisements should help the applicant identify with the agency and the position, as well as appeal to the niche group the agency is trying to reach. Marketing materials should tell the applicant what sets this agency apart from the one down the street or other entry-level positions. Fringe benefits, weekend and evening hours, training and meaningful work can all be drawbacks to some prospective employees but can be attractive selling points of the job when matched to the correct target group.

Use Realistic Job Previews (RJP) as a way to prescreen employees who are not a good match for the positions you have available. Effective RJs include accurate information about the benefits and challenges of the position. Examples of RJs include:

- inviting prospective employees to a meal or recreation activity at the group home
- including people with disabilities during the interview
- preparing a photo scrapbook describing the job that can be viewed with a consumer or another direct support worker
- showing a videotape of typical household routines.

**Making Employee Selection a Top Priority**

Effective selection processes match new recruits’ skills and interests to the job requirements. This practice reduces terminations due to poor performance from under qualified employees as well as dissatisfaction and voluntary quitting for overqualified employees.
Structured interviews include questions that will reveal information about the applicant’s past behavior, one of the best predictors of future behavior. Questions should target on the job behaviors and skills that distinguish excellent performance from poor performance. This information is used to determine whether the applicant is a good match with the organization’s mission, culture, and skill needs. The most helpful question types (O’Nell, et. al., 2001) include:

- Superlative adjectives (e.g., describe the most/least, best/worst, hardest/easiest…)
- First and last questions (e.g., Tell me about the last time you…)
- Accomplishment questions (e.g., describe your most significant accomplishment in…)

Sample questions from *Removing the Revolving Door Curriculum*, a curriculum for front line supervisors, include:

- Describe a situation when you assisted an individual to recognize that he or she had several choices in how to handle a difficult problem. What was the situation, what did you do, and what was the final outcome?
- Describe a situation in which your attempts to communicate with someone were ineffective. What was the situation, what did you do and what happened as a result?
- Describe the most embarrassing situation you have experienced when you were with a person with a disability. What was the situation, what did you do, what happened as a result? What if anything would you do differently if you experienced a similar circumstance in the future?

The first step is to determine the qualities the agency/supervisor is looking for. What are the qualities of best employees in this setting? Staff who succeed in human services are kind, caring, honest and optimistic. An optimistic employee can do wonders for maintaining a positive culture, decreasing staff conflict and inspiring persons with disabilities to accomplish their goals. Some readers may question how the interviewer could tell if a prospective employee is an optimist. One agency used this question, “Do you consider yourself to be a ‘lucky’ person? Why or Why not?”

Each human service team has characteristics they consider important for the team success. Supervisors will increase moral and retention by working with staff they supervise and people served to identify and seek out specific qualities needed in each setting.

**Strengths Matching**

One of the best retention strategies is to ensure that staff work duties align with their strengths and interests. In addition, the needs and interests of service recipients will be best met when the staff who provide their support have similar interests and strengths.
Effective supervisors take time to get to know the staff they supervise. By matching interests, hobbies, skills, abilities, and dreams of both those receiving support and those providing it, the supervisor can enrich the lives of both.

One agency benefited greatly from putting a direct support professional in charge of a fitness program. The employee had a strong interest in fitness, and knew a lot about exercise programs. He devised a program that assessed the weight, body fat, and measurements of people who wanted to be in the program. He then devised individual weight loss and/or toning programs for each person. Progress was tracked regularly and people made significant strides toward meeting their goals. This agency became aware of the employee’s interest through a new survey. The survey asked each new employee about specific interests and talents. The information proved especially helpful in matching staff with their strengths and allowing the agency and people with disabilities to benefit from skills they may not have otherwise known about.

Interview four employees to identify specific strengths, interests or talents. Implement a plan to utilize the qualities of at least one of the staff in providing services to the people you support.

**Involving People with Disabilities in Choosing Staff**

When asked why they might want to get involved in recruiting new staff, people with disabilities explained that it was important for them to know if the new staff person is someone who:

- **they can get along with**
- **will respect them**
- **will value them as individuals**

It is only fair that people should have some say over who gets paid to provide support for everything from assisting with personal hygiene routines to helping them get and keep a job. There are many ways people with disabilities can be involved in hiring processes. Programs that are just getting started in the process may decide to start by involving service recipients in one or two responsibilities. When these systems are working well, they may choose to increase involvement in other steps of the recruitment process.
People with disabilities have been successfully included in the following hiring activities:

- developing job descriptions and job titles
- designing an application form
- advertising positions
- deciding which applicants to interview
- planning the interview and preparing questions
- interviewing applicants
- selecting successful candidates
- informing all applicants of the decision

Making decisions about hiring staff should not be the person’s first experience in making choices. In order for individuals with significant disabilities to be meaningfully involved in this complex process, they will need opportunities for training, practice, and preparation. Staff may need to facilitate the consumer’s involvement by translating, communicating or advocating during recruitment activities. Individuals may need support to ask questions and share their opinions as well. Towsley, Howard, Le Grys, and Macadam (1997) have developed a 26 lesson curriculum to teach people with developmental disabilities how to participate in these important decisions. Their manual is available through the Community Staff Training Resource Library at Minot State University.


**Reference Checks/Background checks**

It is vital that reference checks and background checks be completed prior to people working shifts alone. Some supervisors express apathy regarding the usefulness of reference checks, because it’s unlikely that someone would list a reference that would not be positive. Additionally, company policies have become increasingly prohibitive in respect to the release of information about an employee outside their dates of employment. However, it’s important to look at some recent statistics that show why it is important to follow through with reference checks. One study showed that 25% of job applicants included at least one major fabrication. In another, 15% of the firms listed as previous employers by nursing aide applicants had never heard of the applicants (Rosse, Levin, 1997). While obtaining reference checks may be tricky, it is vital to make a good faith effort. Some organizations have had success asking the following question, “Should I continue my background search on this person?” This question allows the previous employer to comfortably answer what can be considered an opinion and help warn the interviewer of potential concerns.

When asked to give references, if there is critical information that is not conveyed to the prospective employer by the previous employer, there can be legal liability (negligent referral). Establishing good relationships with other service providers in your area can be beneficial and also help get more accurate information in a referral. At times, it may be helpful to ask about positive aspects of the employees’ performance. This may be an area the previous employer feels more comfortable discussing and it may bring up some additional
information that would be helpful, both in what is conveyed and what is not. All information needs to be evaluated carefully for credibility. It’s possible that poor feedback from a previous employer is more related to irritation with the employee for leaving or other biases rather than actual performance issues.

In most states, background checks can now be accomplished quickly through the Internet. There are many companies who specialize in providing employee background information at a nominal fee. Employers working in the disability field have an obligation to do all they can to ensure people working in settings don’t have histories that might indicate poor judgment or an increased possibility of harm for the person receiving services. Some states have registries which track people who have a history of substantiated abuse or neglect. While these systems are commendable, it often takes a substantial amount of time for a perpetrator’s name to appear on the registry. An employee may leave an agency under allegations of abuse and quickly obtain employment with another social services provider. When the new employer checks the registry, the applicant’s name may not yet posted. Some state systems have no way to notify future employers if the person’s charges are later substantiated. Some agencies check state registries for new hires after a period of employment, perhaps six months or more, as a precaution. Remember, it’s legally unacceptable to ask for information that is not relevant for the job, such as credit reports or driving records (unless they do apply to the position requirements).

**Background Check Requirements for North Dakota Providers**

Licensees and license applicants must obtain a criminal background report and complete a check of the North Dakota Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry for all prospective employees and forward the results to the Department of Human Services Developmental Disabilities Unit for any person who is found to have a record. Additionally, checks should be made with the North Dakota Health Department and North Dakota Board of Nursing for sanctions for persons who may be registered with either as a Certified Nurse Aide or Nurse Assistant. The Department will determine if an offense has a direct bearing on the person’s ability to provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities and if the person is sufficiently rehabilitated.

Criminal background checks may be obtained directly from the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) or from an agency licensed by the North Dakota Private Investigation and Security Board. For prospective employees who have not lived in North Dakota continuously for 5 years, a criminal background check must be obtained from the person’s state(s) of previous residence. BCI does maintain a list of agency contacts in other states and will provide that information upon request (Marum, 2004).
Equal Opportunity Hiring

While we advocate for acceptance of people in the community, it certainly behooves us to do everything we can to be considered an equal opportunity employer. This means we would not discriminate based on age, gender, sexual preference, religion, ethnicity and certainly not disability. The most obvious form of discrimination is disparate treatment – treating a staff member differently based on the previous mentioned categories. Examples of this would include:

- asking only women about attendance issues because of concerns that they may be or become pregnant
- refusing to hire older applicants because you think they don’t learn as fast
- asking only “foreign looking” or “foreign sounding” people to prove they are eligible to work in the United States

By developing questions and practices in your hiring procedure that focuses on job related capacities, organizations can avoid complications surrounding discriminatory hiring.
Chapter 2: Feedback Exercises

1. What are two reasons the hiring process is important?

2. Why are people more apt to stay at a job when they have been told about it from an inside source?

3. What are three groups of alternative sources of new employees?

4. Define a RJP (realistic job preview).

5. Describe the three types of effective interview questions.

6. Identify at least five areas people with disabilities could start participating in the hiring process.
Chapter 3: Coaching for Effective Performance

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson the learner will be able to:

- Explain the importance of supervisor/employee relationships
- Identify the biggest motivators to employee performance
- Explain what leads people to behave the way they do
- Demonstrate the skills of a good listener
- Teach employees utilizing example and reinforcement
- Explain the importance of positive but honest employee evaluations

Developing Others

Supervisors have many responsibilities. They have the ability to affect not only the lives of people with disabilities but also the employees who support them. The best supervisors want to help their employees grow as staff and as people. An effective supervisor asks him or herself at least annually, “How are the staff I supervise more advanced than they were a year ago? What new skills do they have? What new insights do they have?” Much of this can be accomplished through coaching and positive reinforcement. The relationship a supervisor has with each employee determines the success they will have together. Coaching can make or break the positive relationships needed for successful outcomes and excellence in service provision. Assessing personal views on employees is the first step toward establishing positive relationships with them.

Douglas McGregor, a noted behavioral scientist, developed the X vs. Y management theories. Whether a manager chooses to believe in Theory X or Theory Y dictates to an enormous degree the way in which he/she supervises. Supervisors who believe in Theory X believe that most people don’t like to work, have little motivation to do so, prefer to be told what to do rather than taking initiative, and are not creative problem solvers. These supervisors also believe that people only work as long as they’re watched, and are motivated only by money/benefits and punishment. Supervisors who believe in Theory Y don’t believe that employees are typically lazy but do believe if employees get the right amount of coaching, they can be motivated to do what they need to do to accomplish things on their own.
The essential difference in the two theories involves the **assumptions** made about employees. If employees are expected to perform poorly and require close monitoring, they will sink to the occasion and only meet these low standards. However, if it is assumed that employees will be interested in their work and have both competence and initiative, they are likely to rise to these standards. Would you act differently as a manager if you truly believed that your employees not only wanted to be great employees but also had the ability to do so?

The effectiveness of Theory Y has been proven in a variety of studies. In one study, a group of children were told they were good at math before taking an exam. **Regardless of skill level**, those children performed better on exams than other children who had not been led to believe that they were good at math (some of whom had more actual skill in math). The children who were told they were good at math also did not give up as quickly when the problems became more difficult. The same is true for adults. Adults tend to do better when they believe they are good at a task. Under these circumstances, they will also stick with it longer and try harder.

How does this apply to supervisors and coaching employees? Unfortunately, due to some bad experiences, many supervisors have developed low expectations for employees and sadly, this contributes to low performance on their part. While Theory X supervisors believe money to be the prime motivator, Herzberg demonstrated **achievement** to be the strongest motivator. When people are able to see progress, even though the steps may be small, they are more willing to attempt to try harder and more likely to be satisfied with their jobs.

Studies show the second strongest motivator is **recognition**. Even when achievement is small, the Theory Y supervisor makes this advancement clearly known not only to the employees, but to anyone who will listen. Effective supervisors frequently ask themselves, “What do the employees I supervise feel they’ve accomplished in the last month, quarter or year?” At least annually (increased frequency provides even better results), with the help of as many people as possible, they list all the things people have accomplished. This is a strong motivating tool for supervisors that want employees to continue to progress.

Even though Herzberg’s research was done over 30 years ago, many businesses are just starting to change the way they coach and supervise. In human services, when accomplishments may be slow and small at times, the capacity of the supervisor to capture what has been achieved and give recognition is critical. Progress for people with complex needs is not always obvious, especially to new staff. Making a list of positive outcomes and goal attainment by service recipients is encouraging for them as well as the staff providing support.
Reflection on progress benefits all who spend the time to look for it. Recognition will be discussed in more detail in a later unit.

Research over the last 90 years explains human behavior and why people do what they do. Whatever the popular trend is in leadership, and no matter what the latest management book says, the fact is, performance is improved most effectively by the same principles we use to support people with challenging behaviors.

People do what they do because of what happens to them after they do it. Everything that happens after a behavior affects its likelihood of reoccurring or not. If we experience a positive consequence, it is likely we will exhibit that behavior again. We change the behavior of people around us every day by our actions. People are people and what helps change or maintain behavior for people with disabilities is really no different from the strategies that change or maintain behavior in people of all abilities. Your effectiveness as a coach and supervisor depends on how well you understand and implement these concepts and the components of performance coaching.

**Case Example:** A young woman answered a Help Wanted advertisement. Almost over night, she found herself working at a direct support job for a community provider. While initially very nervous, she found she enjoyed the work and was glad she accepted a position as support staff for an elderly gentleman who had lived with his mother until her recent death. The employee’s supervisor regularly (at least once a month) wrote her notes to let her know how much she appreciated the work she was doing in helping him adjust to this incredible crisis in his life. The supervisor took great care in writing the notes, making sure they were specific and detailed. She was a master at giving feedback through the notes. Every time the staff person received one of these notes, she would be elated and would have a great day. The notes actually encouraged her to work all the harder. Eventually, the supervisor began to suggest that the employee consider obtaining a degree in the disability field. The employee had never considered or thought it was possible for her to go to college. From the support and encouragement of the supervisor, the employee went on to obtain a bachelor’s and master’s degree and has worked in the DD field for over 17 years in a number of administrative capacities. She still thinks of her first supervisor and the encouragement she provided which was instrumental in getting the young woman “hooked” into the field. She can still see the notes she used to get, both in her head and in reality, as she’s kept a lot of them. One of her goals through her work has been to use this same skill to encourage her staff.
Copy the bottom portion of this page to be used as a note to an employee. Make sure it is detailed and specific, explaining exactly what you appreciate in the way they complete their job and interact with people served and their coworkers. Deliver at least one note to one employee today. Try it again next week at this same time. Mark this time in your calendar every week (an hour a week makes an incredible difference!). Build a habit of recognizing staff for doing what you want them to do!

________________________________________________________________________

_I appreciate you because_………………….  

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Using Effective Listening Skills

Coaching is an essential skill needed to be a successful supervisor. When someone with a disability isn’t successful, support providers often view it as their failure. They ask, “What could we have noticed sooner? What other interventions should we have tried? Was this person really a good fit in the environment where they lived or worked?” Effective supervisors apply this same thought process to the people they employ. If supervisors truly believe that they need to do everything possible to help employees succeed, they believe that when an employee fails, it is a failure on the part of the coach. **Supervisors that have decided they cannot affect poor performance are relegated to the role of observer rather than coach.**

One of the most important aspects of good coaching skills is the ability to be a good listener. Often, when employees identify favorite supervisors in the past, it’s highly likely they were good listeners. Good listeners are those people who **drop everything** when someone is speaking to them. It is a huge compliment for the person communicating, when a busy person drops what they are doing to listen to them. A supervisor shows disrespect if he or she continues to shuffle papers, type emails, check the time or observe other things when employees are speaking. Multitasking is often required of supervisors. However, there needs to be clear focus at these times.

Additionally, the ability to **maintain eye contact** is very important. While we have increased modes of communication today, we also have an increase in misunderstandings. Email messages can lead to painful misunderstandings. Phone conversations can also come across in ways we hadn’t intended. Memos are often misunderstood. The common component missing from all these modes of communication is eye contact. The ability to listen is greatly enhanced through effort to make and maintain eye contact. Much of the **tone and content** of the message can be altered with eye contact.

Another symptom of a hectic work life is the tendency to interrupt staff before they complete their full thought. Finishing the speakers thought for them prevents the listener from hearing all the information. **People need to feel heard.** The supervisor’s ability to let people establish their thoughts builds a relationship of respect and makes it possible to provide effective coaching.

Once all the information is heard, it’s also helpful to **check your understanding of the message.** In this way, you can check the accuracy of what you believed the person to be saying and also reassure them that you are indeed listening.
A final component in good listening skills is the ability to allow silence. Much information can be gained from simply allowing a period of time to go by without immediate feedback or comment. Allowing both parties to reflect on the issues at hand can increase the effectiveness of communication.

**Performance Management**

A supervisor’s ability to accurately observe behavior is also crucial. A supervisor’s ability to observe behavior and give feedback will determine the extent they are able to change, shape and maintain employee performance. New employees need as much information about their performance as possible. To maintain consistent behavior, it’s important that people get this information from their supervisor. When initial on-the-job training is delegated to a variety of people other than the person’s supervisor, there can be great disparity in how tasks are completed.

One of the most effective ways of learning is through modeling. There is no more effective education than example. Many supervisors know that telling is not the most effective way to change behavior. However, it continues to be the most frequently used method of instruction. People need to see the “right” way to do something. When they can then demonstrate the skill and get feedback on their performance immediately, the probability of retaining the skill is increased dramatically. A strong educational component during employee orientation is much more effective than correcting poor performance later in their employment. Strong involvement from the supervisor is also critical for employees to resist and question the occasions when veteran staff share with them shortcuts, or alternative methods which sometimes are inconsistent with best practice, the person’s plan, or basic human and legal rights.

A system of regular observations can be highly effective for maintaining the desired level of performance. Observations also provide opportunities to give people recognition and notice staff accomplishments. Observations are most effective when shared in the spirit of helpfulness and support, as opposed to clipboard toting observers waiting to say “gotcha”. While many organizations observe skills such as medication passing on a regular basis, some service providers also use organized frameworks that list a variety of behaviors to be observed quarterly or annually for each employee.

In North Dakota, the Community Staff Training Project’s Direct Support Skill (DSS) Observation form is used to measure staff progress on competencies expected of employees prior to DD certification (See the Appendix). This list of competencies can be expanded upon to meet the needs of individual agencies and/or supervisors. It is only fair for supervisors to let staff know their expectations AND help them develop the required competencies.
Implementing a checklist similar to the DSS observation, helps direct support workers recognize progress as well as areas for improvement.

Supervisors with the best of intentions often plan on making observations and providing feedback. However, without a system in place that defines behaviors and timelines, the likelihood of this happening diminishes greatly. A systematic schedule can be used as a framework to ensure that observations are taking place.

Employees may be hesitant when observations are first introduced, but will relax once they have received some recognition for the skills they demonstrate and assistance that actually makes their job easier or more likely to produce results. Regular observations also provide the supervisor an avenue to address behaviors they want to change in a formalized way. This information can be tracked and used in evaluations – something many supervisors have found helpful.

While results and thoughts about the quality of the observation should be given to the employee immediately, in some cases these should also be discussed at regular staff meetings. These discussions at staff meetings should be used primarily to provide another avenue of recognition. However, sometimes it is a good idea to discuss observations that indicate a need for change or improvement at regular staff meetings. **If one employee is demonstrating an inappropriate behavior, it is likely the others have seen and possibly demonstrated the behavior themselves.** The supervisor needs to share their perspective in a way that ensures people feel supported rather than targeted. These discussions should help teach appropriate procedures and assure employees who question the behavior that the issues are being addressed. However, don’t assume that presenting a need for change in performance in a general staff meeting, will assure that behavior change will occur in any single employee. Often the erring employee won’t recognize that they are making the mistake being discussed. **Group instruction does not replace the need for individualized performance coaching.**

Establish yourself as a reinforcing person. **The power of the supervisor’s relationship with employees is immense.** Hart and Risely looked at the ratio of positive to negative comments by parents in three socio-economic groups. They found that parents in the high socio-economic group, consisting of mainly professionals, had a rate of 6:1 –six positive comments said for every negative comment. The ratio of positive to negative comments by parents in the working class group, slipped significantly to 2:1. What is most striking however is the data for the children whose parents were most likely on welfare. These parents had a rate of 1:2 – one positive comment for every two negative comments! Their level of negative comments was twice that of the working class group (Daniels, 1995).
Their calculations predicted that in the first four years of life:

- kids in the professional group would receive over a half million more positive interactions than negative ones
- children in the working class group would receive about 100,000 more positives than negatives
- the group of children from families receiving welfare would receive 150,000 more negatives than positives.

It is important to not over-generalize these results and note that there are surely families in each of the socio-economic groups that do not follow these patterns. Any given family may do a better or worse job than the cohorts in this study. However, it is interesting to note that the same researchers did studies in classrooms and found that teachers who were paid to find things to reinforce in children, thus increasing their levels of positive comments, increased the level of achievement in their students and improved discipline in the classroom.

Positive reinforcement is the best tool in the supervisor’s tool kit to address employee performance and shape desired behavior. When we look at the majority of direct support staff hired in human service settings, few come from the first group mentioned, in which children had extensive positive feedback in their lives. Many have not received high levels of positive reinforcement. This creates two critical issues for human service supervisors. First, this low reinforcement history creates an increase in an employee’s belief that they may fail and they may tend to give up on more difficult tasks. Secondly, it tells us that this group of employees needs and craves positive reinforcement like no other. It’s possible that positive reinforcement for this group may be even more effective than in others because of a higher desire for it.

Successful supervisors or coaches have a clear understanding of the importance of positive reinforcement and they have systems in place to ensure that their employees experience high density of positive feedback. A ratio of at least 4:1 – giving four positive comments for every other comment has shown dramatic improvement in staff performance (Daniels, 1999). What is the level of positive versus negative comments said to your employees today by you? The more positive comments the supervisor can deliver, the more he or she will affect behavior.

Positive reinforcement can be a focused comment on job performance or it can be a positive comment directed to the person about a host of other things. It can also include a genuine interest in the person and taking time to be friendly. Laughter can be something extremely positive in a work environment. Try not to smile when others around are laughing. It’s very difficult to do. Daniel Goleman refers to smiles as the most contagious of all emotional signals. When people hear laughter, people smile and laugh too, creating a spontaneous chain reaction that sweeps through a group. Goleman refers to the irresistible power of laughter as a “positive emotional hijack.”
In stark contrast, other research noted in Goleman’s book *Primal Leadership* showed that in cardiac care units where the general mood of the nurses was noted as “depressed”, they had a death rate that was four times higher than comparable units. **The best supervisors understand how their behavior, their mood and their presence affect others.** These things either help or prevent them from establishing the culture and environment that is most helpful in supporting people with disabilities and retaining good staff.

Coaching and establishing a positive relationship with staff can be accomplished not only through regular positive comments but also through keeping the promises you make, and demonstrating an interest in others. These will be discussed further as the module continues.

**Feedback**

There are several very simple things to keep in mind when giving feedback to employees. Feedback should be provided **as close to the time the behavior was exhibited** as possible. With every minute, hour, and day that passes after the behavior has occurred, the power and impact of feedback decreases. The only exception to this may be those times when the feedback may not be positive. Supervisors may be wise, in some circumstances, to wait until they have control over their emotions to be certain they will not say things that could be detrimental to the relationship. It may be necessary to wait until the feedback can be provided confidentially as well. However, if failure to provide feedback demonstrates to other staff that the behavior is acceptable, the supervisor has to find a way to provide instruction and correction without showing disrespect.

Make sure the feedback is **specific and clear**. “You have a bad attitude” is not as specific as “I would like you to say more positive things.” People are much more likely to know what they don’t want in others than what they do want them to do. Rather than telling someone they’re too bossy – it’s more effective to suggest they ask for the opinion of others, or compliment people more often. Addressing attitudes and emotions can be extremely difficult if behavioral descriptions are too general. **Making behaviors measurable is one way to make sure expectations are specific and clear.**

In the human service field, supervisors should be masters at taking data and charting. Using a visual graph showing staff progress in a specific area can be especially meaningful. Making a game or contest between teams of staff can make it even more motivating as well. While it may not seem easy, most behaviors can be adapted to some form of measurement. People are motivated to perform in games and contests even when the prize or award is relatively inexpensive. Often bragging rights or recognition by peers or agency leaders is the only reward necessary.

Chuck Coonradt made a living making employee performance measurable. He found it interesting that people would be excited to do tasks like ice fishing (sitting in the cold for hours on end) when those same people working in a cold meat locker would be unmotivated and continually complaining of the cold. They might even be with the same people. Coonradt (1997) surmised that the main difference when people were going ice fishing was that they were involved in
a “game” and received reinforcement (catching fish). He took mundane tasks like filing and create games around them which most of the time did not have tangible awards – simply seeing progress or the chance of winning the game provided incredible motivation. Through this, he was able to alter employee performance by creating a more interesting and fun workplace.

Choose an activity at your site that you want to improve (i.e. data keeping, active engagement in activities, filing, paperwork, and housecleaning) and devise a game in which employees would see a visual plotting of their progress over the course of time. For example, a contest could be put into place in which occasional spot checks give a percentage of people engaged in an activity at one time – with a goal of a certain percentage. Note: Games like this help people work together. Awards can be inexpensive and even silly sometimes. However, research shows that people will “play the game” solely for the sake of winning when excitement is shown by the supervisor and feedback is frequent and specific.

Supervisors usually want employee behavior to change quickly. However, it will take time when dramatic behavior change or improvement is required. In these situations, supervisors may employ shaping to teach the desired behavior. Shaping utilizes positive reinforcement for even close approximations to the desired behavior. Even if the change in behavior is not exactly what is desired— if it’s close, or even a small step in the right direction, positive feedback is provided so the employee knows they’re on the right track and is encouraged to make further progress. Aubrey Daniels noted that it’s the people who reinforce the smallest improvements that get the fastest change. This may take some empathy at times. If you’ve worked as a direct support worker, remember back to the difficulties encountered in that role. Change doesn’t always happen quickly but ensuring that people receive positive reinforcement for changes they do make, ensures small changes will continue.

Many times, people have developed behaviors and habits that have, sadly, had years to develop. Staff who don’t understand this concept, become frustrated when trying a new behavioral support plan that doesn’t provide instant results. After a short time, they proclaim that the “methods didn’t work” or “won’t work.” Supervisors must avoid this trap. Positive reinforcement may not change behavior immediately. Reinforcement needs to be given regularly and frequently over time to really change behavior. Aubrey Daniels refers to reinforcement as “the fuel or energy needed to keep behavior going – when the behavior runs out of fuel, it stops.”

Generally a good rule of thumb is to reinforce more than you think is necessary. People who play video games receive an average of 70 to 100 reinforcers per minute. This helps
develop intense interest and skill, creating a very lucrative market for game developers and some challenges for those who want to have interactions with the people playing. While supervisors will be hard pressed to provide a ratio that high, it does point out the effectiveness of high density of reinforcement schedules.

Some supervisors may resent the fact that people need this much reinforcement. They themselves may not require as much reinforcement and fail to understand why it would be necessary for others. While everybody needs reinforcement, some people motivate themselves internally. This is a huge advantage in life and likely one of the reasons they were chosen as a leader rather than other people they’re supervising. However, it may make it harder for them to follow through on increasing the frequency of reinforcement for the people they supervise. It would be important for these supervisors to recognize this personal characteristic and establish systems that will prompt them to provide an appropriate level of reinforcement for the staff they supervise. Some supervisors have a regular time of the day or week that they devote to coaching or recognition. Others use adaptive aids such as counters to help them focus on the number of positive interactions they provide.

**Conducting Performance Reviews**

Many people dread having their annual performance review. With good supervision, most employees should greatly look forward to their evaluation. **Effective supervisors use employee evaluation as a time when people know they’re going to get some positive feedback.** One of the best things about positive feedback in evaluations is the relationship it helps establish with the employee. This enables feedback that is not positive to be much better received and responded to in a way that results more often in behavior change.

There are several things to consider in regard to performance reviews:

- Frequency
- Honesty
- Follow-up

Turnover and retention are huge issues in staffing community-based supports. The ramifications of poor performance through harm to service recipients is significant. In response to these concerns, many organizations are increasing the frequency of performance reviews from annual to quarterly or even monthly.

**More frequent reviews are a great tool for addressing problem issues in a more timely way and providing additional avenues for regular positive feedback.** Regular face-to-face meetings between employees and supervisors also help keep staff informed of agency decisions and goals. More frequent meetings make the supervisor more aware of issues affecting the employee which can contribute greatly to the quality of the relationship between them.
Frequent reviews also provide a more accurate assessment of performance. Often in annual reviews, what is actually being reviewed is not performance throughout the year but likely the performance from the previous few months, at best. Performance from the first few months of the evaluated year is largely forgotten 8-11 months later. Even if an organization does not adopt a policy of more frequent evaluation, individual supervisors may want to consider creating some informal protocols which will help employees get needed feedback on a more frequent basis.

Supervisors that want positive performance will opt for honesty in the evaluation process even though this can obviously be difficult at times. Failing to address areas that need improvement is a great disservice to the employee. By not giving honest feedback, a supervisor can contribute to a situation in which an employee may not experience what it might be like to deliver exceptional services, feel the pride of doing great work and see the results of it. Doing an outstanding job has the added bonus of increasing the self-esteem of staff that in turn makes their performance continue to increase.

In one organization, when an employee was having performance problems and termination was being considered, the staff person’s previous performance evaluations were reviewed by human resources. Surprisingly, in many situations, the issues causing problems had not been addressed on the performance evaluation. To be fair, people deserve to be given an opportunity to change their behavior. To do this, people need to be told that the issue is important and needs to be addressed. In good employee/supervisor relationships, this feedback will be taken in a positive light because there is a sense that the supervisor truly does care about this person and wants to see them succeed.

Finally, follow-up is an essential component to the evaluation process. If behaviors requiring change are identified, frequent and ongoing feedback will provide guidance for continuous improvement and maintenance of the behavior change. Some supervisors make the mistake of doing nothing more once the behavior has changed. Principles of behavior management tell us that people do things because of what happens to them after they do it. If nothing happens, the behavior will not continue. If the supervisor was not specific enough regarding the behavior to be changed, the employee may be addressing or changing the behavior in a way that doesn’t meet the supervisor’s expectations. If staff make an honest effort to change their behavior, there must be a positive consequence, something they value and can directly identify as a result of their behavior change.
Remember, reinforcement is in the eye of the recipient. If the staff person doesn’t value the consequence provided by the supervisor, the change in behavior has not been reinforced and will not be sustained. **In short, the evaluation process needs to be seen as a living, ongoing process, rather than an event related process.** While the face-to-face evaluation is important, the ongoing process of strengthening the relationship with the employee and providing ongoing feedback is invaluable.
Chapter 3: Feedback Exercises

1. Why is the relationship a supervisor has with an employee important?

1. What do people who believe Theory X believe? Theory Y?

2. Herzberg saw ______________ and ______________ as the biggest employee motivators.

3. People do what they do because of what happens to them __________ they do it.

4. Supervisors that have decided they cannot affect poor performance are relegated to the role of _______________ rather than coach.

5. Your ability to be an effective ______________ enables you to drop everything when someone is speaking to you.

6. There is no more effective way to teach people something than by ________________.

7. A good ratio of positive to negative comments is ____________.

8. Keep a pen and paper nearby when you have a block of time in which you will be interacting with employees for at least two hours. For two hours track the number of positive to negative comments given to them. What is your ratio?

9. Feedback needs to be ________________ and ________________.

10. People who reinforce the ___________ improvements get the fastest change.

11. When giving feedback informally or through an evaluation process, it’s most effective to be specific and clear. Circle the behaviors below that are specific and clear.

   A. You have a bad attitude.
   B. Nothing ever gets done on your shift.
   C. I’d like to hear more positive comments from you. What do you think would be an example of one?
   D. I need you to use this checklist to make sure all the duties get done at the end of the night.
E. I want you to be more professional.
F. I’d like you to wear pants to work as opposed to sweatpants.
G. I’d like you to give a greeting when you answer the phone.
H. You’re always late.
I. You’ve been at least 10 minutes late three times this week.
J. You don’t get along well with others.
K. You’re doing great!
L. I loved the way you interacted with Chris when he was getting upset – not insisting he do that was definitely the way to go.
M. The house looks great!
N. I’ve never seen the floor this clean!
O. Others have relayed to me that they feel tense when they work with you.
Chapter 4: Facilitating Teamwork

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson the learner will be able to:

- Explain why it’s important to get feedback from employees
- Involve employees in decision making
- Demonstrate ways to illicit more ideas from employees
- Describe three kinds of decision making
- Use strategies that foster positive relationships
- Implement strategies for prioritizing and delegating

Teams and Empowerment

A tremendous amount of the work in human services is accomplished through teams. Teams can:

- Increase effectiveness
- Improve communication
- Provide a positive work environment
- Lead to better decision making

People tend to enjoy belonging to something that is meaningful. Commitment to a goal or objective can be significantly higher when people agree on it as a team. Teamwork can also help people accomplish more than they might be able to do on their own. Creating this environment in an organization is another key to being a successful supervisor. However, when things are not going well, when the team is not working together and may even be working against each other – a myriad of problems develop and there is a subsequent decrease in the quality of services delivered.

This unit will focus on the following strategies supervisors use to facilitate teamwork:

- Having high expectations
- Getting feedback from employees
- Encouraging staff participation in decisions
- Communicating changes effectively
- Working on the quality of relationships
- Holding regular staff meetings with open agenda items
- Prioritizing and delegating
- Providing a good role model
Having High Expectations

People tend to become what the most important people in their lives think they will become.

John Maxwell

People will frequently rise to the level of performance that is expected of them. The ability to maintain high expectations for employees is extremely important. **If supervisors are expecting teams to get along and be productive, there is a higher possibility that this will occur.** Take some time to reflect on what your expectations truly are. If you’re expecting substandard performance you will likely receive it. Give your team(s) confidence in knowing you believe they’ll make good decisions.

What kind of confidence do you instill in your staff at survey time? Having high expectations can be especially valuable at stressful times. Having high expectations in this instance is assuring your staff that the team does good work and needs to be proud of its accomplishments. If the supervisor is an agent for nervousness he or she spreads fear and doubt as opposed to confidence and pride. Positive expectations have the added benefit of helping the survey process as staff are able to respond more relaxed and thoughtfully. People with disabilities are also helped to view the situation more positively. One new supervisor was so stressed before a survey that when the survey team came to the door, the person who lived in the home answered the door and went running out of the house screaming, saying, “The G-Men are here!!” The supervisor’s anxiety had clearly found its way to other people around her.

Think of five things you can do before your next survey that will instill high expectations and help them be calmer about the process?

Getting Feedback from Employees

Employees that believe they are not heard or listened to, often organize unions. Being respected enough to be asked for your ideas can be a huge compliment. Having an idea of yours implemented can build up self-esteem and commitment to the team and the agency. Ideas from employees should not be solicited only to make them feel good, however.

The fact is, **many good ideas are obtained from employees!** People working in an environment often have a more clear perspective of what is actually occurring in the workplace than the administration. As a result, their ideas may be more effective. Goleman (2002) looked at employee predictions about the success of their supervisors. The employee predictions were later validated to assess for accuracy. At two years, four years, and seven years, the predictions of the
employees were seen as accurate, much more so than predictions of the supervisor. This insight from employees can be very valuable.

People are going to be much more invested in decisions when they are involved. When people help define solutions, they will be motivated to follow through even though it may be difficult to do so. Getting feedback from employees doesn’t happen without the supervisor being committed to obtaining it. Some employees will voice opinions and ideas from the day they start, but typically most employees will not. One reason might be the fact that in the past they have done so and were either chastised or not taken seriously. While you won’t be able to implement all ideas, make sure you are respectful of any and all ideas and implement as many as you can. When ideas don’t get implemented, staff need to be told why it was not feasible to use their idea.

The agency as well as supervisors must consciously convey the expectation that generation of ideas and feedback is a job responsibility of all agency staff. Many employees may not feel it’s their job to come up with ideas or give their opinions. Make it extremely clear as a supervisor that you not only want this, but actually expect it and see it as a responsibility. All employees need to see themselves as professionals and believe that their voices are heard.

Everyone has been to meetings when there seems to be very little discussion. In other situations, a few members dominate the discussion and some participate very little. Occasionally, at meetings like this, there will be quiet mumblings on the way out of the meeting or in the hallway saying “That won’t work!” or “That was the dumbest idea I ever heard.” Why aren’t these strong opinions voiced at the meeting? As soon as employees begin orientation with an agency, it needs to be communicated to employees that this is not appropriate and opinions must be voiced in a professional manner. When poor decisions are made and some didn’t voice opinions – those employees need to be made aware that they are creating a problem and impeding the team’s progress. More importantly, however, these employees need to be assisted in expressing their views at the appropriate time. They need to believe their opinion has value and learn that sharing their point of view will be a positive experience. An effective supervisor identifies the behaviors that he/she wants to see, clearly conveys that information to staff and reinforces the behavior change when it occurs.

Developing a responsibility for idea generation can be developed into a contest to impress the agency wide expectation for idea generation and creative problem solving. Some agencies offer a bonus for ideas that effectively save the organization money. Others provide formal and informal recognition for creative ideas.

There are always going to be a certain amount of bad ideas. This is actually a good problem to have. If you don’t get any bad ideas from time to time it probably means you have limited idea generation and there is little enthusiasm, interest or motivation to improve the environment or the services you provide. When bad ideas show up, it’s the
responsibility of the supervisor to make sure the person generating it is not humiliated but may even be praised for taking the risk they did. Having a strong negative reaction to the person or the results of the idea, can ensure that that supervisor will have very few ideas coming from their staff from that point forward.

One organization had an interesting way of not only generating ideas but making sure people felt it was a responsibility to generate them. They had a policy that before each employee punched out at the end of the shift, he/she needed to submit ideas that could address improvements in any area, one for each hour they worked. So, if someone worked an eight-hour shift, the staff person would need to submit eight ideas before going home. While this may sound extreme, it did set a culture of constant awareness that things could be improved, the employee’s important role to play in its improvement, and respect for their ideas.

Have a discussion with staff and agree on how many ideas each group member should come up with on a monthly basis and have this as a standing agenda item each month at a meeting. Ideas could be from any area or areas may be assigned to different people who have more interest in that area. Stress that ideas presented may be minor or significant. Make sure to implement some of the ideas so staff can see the results of their efforts. Discuss why others may not work at this time. After six months, generate a list of implemented ideas from this process and discuss how the group would like to continue. Prizes can also be given for the best ideas, voted on by employees.

**Encouraging Staff Participation in Decisions**

Decision-making is one of the main responsibilities for those in leadership positions. But that does not mean that making decisions is something leaders do by themselves. On the contrary, there are many advantages to getting other staff members involved in the decision-making process. **If staff members have a voice in making decisions, they feel that they have some measure of control.** They will also have a greater feeling of “ownership” about decisions, and therefore feel a stronger commitment to making decisions work. Leaders show respect by actively seeking the input of people who will be affected by decisions. Employees who feel respected, heard and understood are more likely to be satisfied and stay with an organization.

**Different Styles of Decision-Making**

Managers have different “styles” of decision making, depending on the situation and their own personalities. These styles can be grouped into three categories:
Authoritative decision-making. Other staff members are not involved in the decision making process.

- The supervisor makes the decision without gathering information from other people.
- The supervisor makes the decision based on information collected from sources other than employees.

Consultative decision-making. The supervisor consults employees before making a decision.

- The supervisor asks for information and suggestions from individual employees.
- The supervisor holds a meeting to solicit staff input.

Participative decision-making. Staff members make decisions as a group.

- The group makes the decision together with the supervisor. The supervisor acts as a chairperson.
- The supervisor leaves employees on their own to make a decision.

It is easy to get into the habit of using the same style of decision making in every situation, but it is worthwhile to consider and experiment with other styles as well. This exercise is intended to assist supervisors in thinking about their own style of decision-making.

**How Do You Make Decisions?**

Read the following statements. If a statement is never true for you, write 1 in the blank after the statement. If a statement is sometimes true for you, write 2 in the blank. If a statement is true most of the time for you, write 3 in the blank. Then add up the numbers you wrote and see the instructions at the top of the next page.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I consult other staff members before making a decision.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I think that other staff members may have good ideas that never occurred to me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I think that it is just as efficient for a group to make decisions as it is for me to make decisions myself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I think that most staff members have good judgment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I think that other staff members could fill in for me if I were out sick for a few weeks. (1 = no staff members, 2 = some staff members, 3 = most staff members)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I hold regular staff meetings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I think that brainstorming (getting together in a group to come up with creative ideas) is a worthwhile activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I think that most people are willing to accept the responsibility for making decisions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My staff has proven to me that they can make decisions on their own.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am willing to go along with what my staff thinks is best, even if I disagree.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**

*If your total was between 10 and 15, your basic style of making decisions is authoritative.*

*If your total was between 16 and 24, your basic style of making decisions is consultative.*

*If your total was between 25 and 30, your basic style of making decisions is participative.*
Although everyone has a most comfortable style of decision-making, each person needs to use different styles occasionally depending on different situations and needs. It may not be possible to share the decision-making process with other staff members in some situations—for example, a disciplinary action against an employee. There isn’t time to involve others in every decision. And, if group decision-making isn’t managed well, forceful individuals can dominate the group’s work. However, in most cases, involving other employees in the decision-making process will generate better decisions and more satisfied workers. The important thing to understand is that there are many ways to go about making a decision.

**Involving Staff in Program Decisions.**

When supervisors ask staff to help make program decisions, it tells them they are respected as individuals with valuable knowledge, ideas, and experience. There are many ways to solicit suggestions from the staff about a particular decision, especially if you have some time to make the decision. One approach is to announce at a staff meeting that a decision will have to be made concerning a particular issue and suggestions from anyone on the staff are welcome.

Another approach is to hold a **brainstorming** session. This is a meeting in which participants are to offer creative suggestions for dealing with a particular problem. All of the suggestions are recorded. There is no criticism or evaluation of the ideas suggested until the session is over. The purpose of the session is to get “quality from quantity” — that is, to come up with a few good ideas from the many that are offered. The assumption behind brainstorming is that people working together on a problem can inspire each other. One person may offer an idea that is really not practical, but it may give another person an idea that will work. After all the ideas are listed—some good, some bad, some in-between—a decision is made. Who makes this decision depends on the type of problem being considered.

**Use Group Decision-Making When Appropriate**

When is it appropriate to ask for suggestions from other staff members about a decision? When is it appropriate to give staff members a voice in actually making the decision? The answers to these questions depend to a great extent on the supervisor’s style and their relationship with other staff members. But even so, it is still possible to set some guidelines for when and how to involve other staff members in the decision-making process.

**Supervisors should make a decision independently when:**

- The problem does not involve other staff members.
- There is no time to consult other staff members.
- The supervisor has the expertise to make an informed decision and it’s not likely that staff members will be able to shed much light on the issue.
- Other staff members do not need to get involved in carrying out the decision.
- There is little for other staff members to learn from taking part in the decision.
• The decision concerns a highly sensitive or personal issue that should remain private.

**Staff members should be involved in a decision when:**
- Everyone on the staff will be affected by the decision.
- Staff cooperation will be necessary to carry out the decision.
- There is time for consultation and group decision-making.
- The issue is important enough to take up staff time.
- Other staff members know more about the subject than the supervisor.
- Other staff members can learn valuable skills during the decision-making process.

**Provide Follow-up Feedback on Decisions Made and Outcomes**

Just asking staff members for input on decisions, does not convince them that the supervisor is genuinely interested in their ideas. *They must be kept informed about the decisions made and the outcomes of those decisions.* Whenever a staff member makes a suggestion or provides some information concerning a decision, the supervisor owes the person a report on the outcome of the decision and an explanation of the reasons for the decision.

For example, suppose staff were asked to give ideas about physical improvements. If some of these ideas were used, but others could not be implemented because of budgetary constraints, a brief explanation should be given. This can be a touchy subject. It is important not to embarrass the staff members whose ideas weren’t used. If a neutral explanation is available – one that won’t make the people involved feel bad – express these in the meeting – otherwise it is better to explain to these people in private why their ideas weren’t used. Every suggestion, no matter how impractical or unworkable, deserves a response. The quickest way to discourage staff input is to give them the impression that management is really not interested in their ideas.

The feedback should continue as the decisions take effect. Staff members often feel cut off from higher levels of management. Sharing information on management decisions will help to alleviate this feeling. Never imply that management decisions are too complicated or difficult for staff members to understand.

**Delegate Follow-up Activities to Carry Out Decisions**

One of the best ways to get employees involved in the decision-making process is to delegate some responsibility for seeing that decisions are carried out.

There are many advantages to delegating tasks to other staff members:
- It allows the supervisor to concentrate on other duties.
- It demonstrates the leader’s commitment to working in partnership toward common goals.
- It enables staff to gain additional experience and develop leadership skills.
In deciding which follow-up activities to delegate, consider the following questions:

- Which tasks could staff members handle?
- Which staff members have the ability to perform these tasks?
- Which staff members have expressed an interest in these tasks?

Good leaders ensure that the person assigned will have time to successfully complete the task. Make sure that the person understands:

- Exactly what is to be done.
- When the task should be completed.
- What the desired outcome is.
- How to get help if things do not go as planned.

The last item is very important. **Often when employees take on a task, they feel reluctant to ask for assistance if a problem comes up.** They feel somehow that they have failed if they cannot perform the task completely on their own. Staff need to know the supervisor is available for assistance if needed. If the task is long or complicated, set interim goals to see how things are going.

**Communicating Changes Effectively**

Employees want to feel they know what’s going on in their work environment. When changes occur, the way the information is communicated to employees can make the difference between wide acceptance and general disdain. Employees need to be shown respect by communicating important information or changes as quickly as possible. **If employees find out information from other sources there may be rumors, hard feelings, or even anger if the source provided incomplete or inaccurate information.** Additionally, staff might be wondering why they didn’t hear it from their supervisor. A supervisor who values their relationship with his or her employees will want to make every effort to personally deliver information that causes changes to their employees. The best and brightest employees are going to want to know why changes or decisions were made and will be more accepting if they receive an explanation from a supervisor who has demonstrated respect in the past. **Change is often not an inherent distaste for change itself but more related to a fear of the unknown.** By giving people as much information as possible most fears can be alleviated.

Consider the following account (Goleman, 2002) that shows the manner in which information is shared can change the message delivered and the response. Information in this situation was being relayed about a journalism department being closed.
Look for the stark contrasts and ways the second approach could be used in the disability field:

> It didn’t help that the executive sent to deliver the decision to the assembled staff started off with a glowing account of how well rival operations were doing, and that he had just returned from a wonderful trip to Cannes. The news itself was bad enough, but the brusque, even contentious manner of the executive incited something beyond the expected frustration. People became enraged – not just at the management decision, but also at the bearer of the news himself. The atmosphere became so threatening, in fact, that it looked as though the executive might have to call security to usher him safely from the room.

The next day, another executive visited the same staff. He tried a very different approach. He spoke from his heart about the crucial importance of journalism to the vibrancy of a society, and of the calling that had drawn them all to the field in the first place. He reminded them that no one goes into journalism to get rich – as a profession its finances have always been marginal, with job security ebbing and flowing with larger economic tides. And he invoked the passion, even the dedication, the journalists had for the service they offered. Finally, he wished them all well in getting on with their careers. When he was finished, the staff cheered.

While the same message was conveyed, the addition of some comments from the heart and some compassion made a world of difference in how it was perceived. Supervisors who pattern their communication like the second leader will be able to build on the common interest and dedication people in the field have for supporting people with disabilities.

When conveying information that might be threatening or negatively received, supervisors do well to reflect on the concerns employees might have. Ultimately showing your genuine concern for the employee and how decisions affect them will help ensure that information is received positively.

**Working on the Quality of Relationships**

Everyone enjoys working in an environment where you have positive relationships with people. Research reported in *First Break all the Rules*, by Marcus Buckingham revealed that one of the factors that kept people at their jobs was the fact that they had a “best friend” at work. Many people rely on their jobs for social interaction, particularly in today’s busy society. People often have more than one job and time spent outside of work is limited.
While everyone may not be best friends, having positive relationships at work can do an incredible amount for reducing turnover, assisting in creating a positive work environment, and ultimately providing better services and supports for people with disabilities.

There is some irony in the fact that one of our major objectives in supporting people with disabilities is that we want to help them establish and maintain positive relationships. In reality, some of the relationship skills displayed by staff are less than "positive". It's not uncommon for a significant problem to be created simply because of a staff unknowingly slighting a co-worker. Something as inane as not responding when a co-worker said hello, can snowball into a major rift. The greeter might ask himself, “What did I do to deserve the insult?” or , “Why is she angry with me.” In reality, the other staff may not have heard him or may have been dealing with a problem completely unrelated to the employee who is now upset.

Working on relationship skills is an ongoing process in work environments striving for a supportive corporate culture. Regularly reviewing scenarios and role-playing are good ways to open discussion around this topic. This process is much easier to do when things are going well rather than waiting until the situation is in crisis mode.

One exercise that has been successfully used in several organizations is an adaptation of Michael Smull’s Essential Lifestyle Planning. Smull uses a process in which people compile lists about their life utilizing knowledge they have about themselves but also using knowledge from people who know them well. Two of the lists are entitled “Positive Reputation” (your positive traits) and “Negative Reputation” (your less than positive traits).

In groups of people that work together, it has been beneficial for employees and their supervisors to make these lists and share them with each other. Sharing everyone’s positive reputation has some obvious benefits, however, sharing the negative reputation list also has some important benefits. Seeing a co-worker list things that drives others crazy, as things she knows are negative, demonstrates that the employee does have an awareness of the issue. Often the person will relate that she doesn’t like this aspect of her personality either and she either wishes she could change it or is trying to do so. This doesn’t fix the problem but it may make it much easier to accept the quality in the person. A deep appreciation of everyone’s positive traits can be a good tool for keeping these issues more prevalent in the minds of employees, making it less likely that hard feelings will result needlessly.

Employees need not depend on their supervisor as the only way to get positive reinforcement. Co-worker reinforcement should be framed as a job responsibility for all staff. Having notepads or boards available for people to post kind words can be a simple vehicle to facilitate increased kindness toward each other. Supervisors who recognize and praise employees for these behaviors will see increased frequency of coworker recognition.
Avenues that allow co-workers to give each other positive reinforcement will be discussed further in a future chapter.

Occasionally with tragedy comes opportunity. When someone has a life crisis such as medical emergency, try to find ways coworkers can support that person in need. Allow people to give him/her sick days, have the group bring over meals or develop a variety of other ideas to work together to support this person. These efforts can do tremendous things to help team spirit develop or grow stronger. It also helps develop strong loyalty with the employee who endured the difficult circumstance. Make sure to include people with disabilities in these efforts as well.

In this line of work, supervisors often find themselves working with other professionals both inside and outside their organizations such as QMRPs, behavior analysts, medical personnel, mental health professionals, advocates from other disability organizations and funding sources. A supervisor’s ability to foster these relationships can improve the quality of services and actually make their own job easier. Relaying information and keeping the lines of communication open is a good place to start. Finding out information when it is too late to affect the outcome hinders collegiality. Making an honest effort to relay pertinent information in a timely manner is a great way to establish a foundation of trust in a relationship. Occasional supportive and positive comments to other professionals and acknowledgement of the work others do are fundamental to a relationship building. All of these things take time, however the time and energy demands when relationships sour are tremendous.

The supervisor’s relationships with landlords, business people in the community, and family members all impact outcomes for people served. **Supervisor’s interactions with others shape their perception of the disability agency and their perception of people with disabilities.**

Professionals in human services have an obligation to work toward positive relationships in all these areas for the benefit of the organization and ultimately people with disabilities. This doesn’t mean supervisors should ignore inappropriate treatment or discriminatory actions. However when it’s necessary to advocate, act in a way that is persuasive and professional rather than bitter, angry, and emotional.

The supervisor also serves as a role model for employees. Effectively dealing with other professionals, funders and families shows direct support how to handle themselves in similar situations. There are always going to be family members who are difficult, funding entities who are frustrating, and people in the community who lack understanding. Supervisors and employees are often a catalyst in helping to foster improved relationships with families. This doesn’t happen by being angry, irritated or short with family members but by persuasively showing them how much the organization cares for the person with a disability and the person’s positive character traits. Focusing on negative aspects of difficult relationships, particularly when these aspects are relayed to other staff is not helpful to anyone. **Supervisors who handle difficult relationships in a professional way not only get better**
results but also help ensure their staff will handle them well. Better quality interactions lead to more positive outcomes.

**Professional Courtesies**

Professional courtesies include basic manners such as returning telephone calls promptly and following the chain of command within and outside the organization. Supervisors who follow these guidelines will avoid wasting energy on misunderstandings and hurt feelings:

- When having problems with others, discuss them initially with the person on your supervisory level. No one likes being told by his or her boss about some difficulty or problem.
- Give people the benefit of the doubt. If someone is having a bad day, don’t take it personally. Set an example for staff to ignore petty aspects of poor communication, rather than taking it personally and assuming that the irritating act is intentional.
- Do your best to make sure people get things from you when they’re due. If this is impossible, contact them and let them know why and when they will receive it.
- Keep your word when interacting with employees, people with disabilities, and others.

**Holding Regular Staff Meetings**

Efforts to keep the lines of communication open can be greatly enhanced through use of regular staff meetings. However, it is important to ensure that all people are involved in the discussion. Elicit comments from people who tend to be silent and suggest that more vocal people give others a chance to be heard.

An organized agenda should include items that are considered “standing” – items that are discussed at every meeting. Hopefully at least one standing agenda item is something positive – for example, improvements or advancements on the part of people receiving services. Staff should have the ability to add new items and there should be time for discussion. This will help employees in becoming more involved in the meeting process and making sure the meeting is more than just “announcement time” for the supervisor.

Minutes of the meeting allow the supervisor to give information to people who may have missed the meeting and gives the supervisor the ability to refer back to discussion and decisions made in meetings. Having things in writing makes a tremendous difference in the likelihood that they will actually happen. Quickly reviewing the last meeting’s minutes at the start of the next meeting helps keep things on track and ensures that areas won’t be lost or forgotten – something that happens often in busy work environments.

Use this time wisely to disseminate information, get feedback, brainstorm, and generally do as much as possible to ensure the team is on the same page. Additionally, **meetings should**
be used as tools to remind people why they are working for this organization. Reinforce the agency’s goals and foster teamwork – always moving toward creating stronger, more consistent positive attitudes.

Use of food at meetings can be helpful in putting people at ease and in some cases getting people to talk more. Have fun with meetings, make them something enjoyable for staff, rather than something they dread. **Remember, people are able to think more creatively and clearly when they’re in good moods** (Goleman, 2002). Things like snide comments or withdrawal need to be addressed with the people exhibiting these behaviors. Immediately after the meeting is the best time to give feedback. However, if the behavior interferes with the business at hand, you may need to address it on the spot. Remember the smaller amount of time between the behavior and the feedback – the more effective the feedback will be.

Throughout your working life, think of regular meetings you’ve had. Which did you enjoy? Which did you dread? What hindered or helped these meetings to be successful? How could the leader have been a better facilitator? What did the leader do to help make the meetings successful? Jot your thoughts below.
**Prioritizing and Delegating**

Prioritizing becomes much easier when everyone agrees on the mission and the goals the organization and the individual team want to accomplish. For example, there are always going to be conflicts about the importance of having a clean house versus the time spent on social plans with people receiving services. While both are important, usually some compromise can be made. Bringing people back to what they have in common, a strong desire to help support people with disabilities learn and grow, can be helpful in getting people to agree.

Providing a structure for supervisees assist them in prioritizing, delegating, and meeting deadlines. Supervisors/administrators need to ask themselves:

- Have we made things as simple as possible?
- Are there areas where paperwork can be decreased or at least made more efficient?
- Are paper trails as uncomplicated as possible?
- Do staff know when it is necessary to contact a supervisor immediately and when they can wait until tomorrow or even later?

Processes can be streamlined and simplified by making a list of events or tasks that occur reasonably often. For each, state:

- What forms need to be completed
- Who needs to be contacted, and
- What are the time frames required?

All the time management training in the world won’t help staff work efficiently when systems in place are cumbersome, complicated and duplicative.

Delegation is a must for supervisors that need to accomplish all the things they need to accomplish on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Some supervisors fall into the trap of repeatedly delegating to a few star performers. While people may benefit from increased responsibility, don’t send the message that the harder you work, the more work you get -- and the less you do, the less work that is assigned to you. This can be an easy trap to fall into but it results in continued low expectations followed by continued low performance for some staff. Other staff, likely those who are valued most, may eventually feel taken advantage of and develop resentment toward the other employees who are not doing their share as well as the supervisor who is not addressing the issue.
By clearly delegating responsibilities, a supervisor can decrease the likelihood of staff conflicts. Staff schedules that delineate responsibilities can make shifts run much smoother. Additionally designating a “key” staff for each person receiving services is helpful. Many times, everyone is responsible for everything and unfortunately all too often this means no one is responsible for anything. The ability to give either positive or negative feedback is greatly diminished when no name is tied to tasks. In addition, making check lists for staff can be a great aid in eliminating misunderstandings and improving accountability. In *Strategies for Supporting and Managing Frontline Staff*, Linda Lapointe (2002) suggests using a variety of checklists that indicate the priority of items on the list. This will help assure the supervisor and the employee are on the same page when the employee has a shorter shift or has run into a crisis and will be unable to accomplish everything they would on a regular shift. Supervisors often assume what is important to them is as important to the employee when it comes to prioritizing, but that is not always true!

Knowing staff well allows the supervisor to make better decisions when delegating. Pairing people to tasks in their strength areas, makes sense for everyone involved. A book entitled *Now Discover Your Strengths* (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001) polled employees and asked them if they had the opportunity to do what they do best everyday at work. Employees who answered yes were far more likely to work for organizations with low turnover, higher productivity scores and higher customer satisfaction scores. Unfortunately these employees only added up to about 20% of the workforce! Because people work better when they utilize their strengths, effective supervisors do their best to match employees to their strengths as much as possible.

Are there employees who work better with different populations of people you support? Are there employees with specific skills or talents that can be brought into and utilized in the workplace – employees proficient at decorating, photography, art, cooking? One agency had an employee who had great skills in video taping and editing. While he enjoyed his job working with people with disabilities, he did miss the ability to use this skill. The agency was also wrestling with the problem of getting important information about people they supported to new employees. They asked the employee interested in video production to develop a system of self assessment on video in which the person would be filmed with their family and staff, showing them doing the things they loved doing. Employees who viewed reading self-assessments as a chore, were now thrilled to learn the preferences of service recipients through the superb videos their coworker produced.
Most successful employees have an artistic quality to the way they support people with complex needs. They might have special skills in areas such as:

- Dealing with challenging behaviors
- Knowing what people are communicating who are not verbal
- Coming up with ideas for interesting activities at a day program
- Inspiring people to add exercise to their life and setting up exercise programs for them
- Assessing what is bothering someone without escalating their aggression
- Getting people involved in household chores
- Helping people get along with roommates
- Helping staff work together
- Making money stretch on a grocery budget while maintaining meal quality
- Providing a positive atmosphere for employees and persons receiving services
- Organizational skills – they keep the house amazingly organized

There are obviously many more that could be mentioned. Sadly, many staff who have these skills and have them as an art form, don’t view it that way themselves and haven’t been made aware of it by supervisors. If supervisors take the time to identify a specialty for each employee, it will benefit services and make the person even more motivated to further develop the skill. Additionally, it could make them more likely to stay with the organization and create a stronger sense of accomplishment. Employees in a specialty area could be used when there are new people receiving services, new programs starting or areas where problems have developed. Initiatives like this can build up employee self-esteem and create a valuable resource pool that could be seen as internal consultants facilitating teamwork throughout the organization.

**Providing a Good Role Model**

Ultimately, providing a good role model is likely the most critical aspect of facilitating teamwork. When supervisors who maintain a positive attitude, keep promises to staff, show respect, honesty, consistency, kindness, and interest in others, staff will likely follow. There is a Golden Rule of Human Services – not only that you should treat others how you would like to be treated – but also, the way you treat employees will be the way they treat people with disabilities. The ability to role model the behavior a supervisor wants staff to exhibit to each other and people with disabilities will equal the staff member’s ability to show these same skills on the job.

Keep in mind the tenants of servant leadership – be a servant first and a leader second. Supervisors who have experienced working for someone who held the fact that he or she was the boss over their heads, remember how heavy the “servant” label felt. In these situations employees are more likely told to do things rather than asked and there is little room for kindness and support. Supervisors are challenged to create a better culture for their employees as they demonstrate the ability to put others’
needs ahead of their own. Staff members who observe their supervisor in positive interactions with people receiving services, assisting them when they need support, and modeling positive interactions with staff, will do the same for people receiving services.

*Encouraging Staff Participation in Decisions* section is adapted from *Competencies for First-Line Supervisor (1990)* by New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.
Chapter 4: Feedback Exercises

1. Explain why it’s important to get feedback from employees.

2. Employees need to be ________________________ in professionally relaying their opinions at ___________________________.

3. Why might getting bad ideas be a good sign?

4. A strong negative reaction to a staff member’s idea can ensure that the supervisor will have ______ (more or less) ideas from that employee?

5. List three reasons staff should participate in decision-making.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

6. Describe three kinds of decision-making.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

7. Change is often not an inherent distaste for change itself but more related to a fear of the _________________.

53
8. Relationship skills are important to develop with employees since helping people with disabilities ______________________ is a major objective for this field.

9. Effective supervisors do their best to match employees to their _______________ as much as possible.
Chapter 5: When People Don’t Do What They’re Supposed to Do

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson the learner will be able to:

• Identify the effects of failing to address problem behavior with staff
• Explain the importance of finding out why employees behave the way they do
• Explain reasons why employees don’t do what they’re supposed to
• Conduct a four step intervention process
• Conduct a 5 step feedback discussion to address problem behavior
• Implement strategies for dealing with difficult people
• Identify strategies for dealing with employee conflict

Effects of Failing to Address Difficult Situations

One of the biggest sources of employee dissatisfaction stems from a sense that poor performance is not addressed. Because human service programs serve what many consider to be the most vulnerable population in our society, there is a direct link to abuse and neglect with stress on the job. In an indirect way, not addressing difficult situations can actually lead to harm for the people you support. **Failing to address difficult personnel situations may result in some or all of the following short and long-term effects:**

- Loss of employee respect for the supervisor.
- Damage to the relationship between the supervisor and all employees.
- Animosity toward the employee not performing, from both the supervisor and co-workers.
- Stress and tension in the workplace will increase for both employees and people receiving support.
- Behavioral incidences may increase.
- Turnover may increase, while job satisfaction and morale decrease.
- Resources of time and energy that could be used more positively may be wasted by ineffectively dealing with a reoccurring problem without addressing the real issue at hand.

This module has discussed ways to shape behavior so positive behavior is more likely to occur. In our previous units, positive reinforcement was seen as the key to shape staff performance. What happens when things don’t go well? What follows are suggestions for handling difficult situations. Supervisors who make conscious efforts to implement these strategies are more likely to
earn the support and respect of staff. Ultimately, supervisors who resolve problem situations feel better about themselves and their performance as supervisors.

**Root Cause Analysis**

Root cause analysis refers to the ability to find out what is really causing the problem. Often times, supervisors address symptoms but fail to address the real cause of the problem or the root cause. Ferdinand Fournies did research with over 25,000 supervisors and managers and asked them why people didn’t do what they were supposed to do. Fournies categorized the feedback he received into 16 reasons why people don’t do what they’re supposed to do.

1. They don’t know what they are supposed to do
2. They don’t know how to do it
3. They don’t know why they should do it
4. They think they are doing it
5. There are obstacles beyond their control
6. They think it will not work
7. They think their way is better
8. They think something is more important
9. There is no positive consequence to them for doing it
10. There is a negative consequence to them for doing it
11. There is a positive consequence to them for not doing it
12. There is no negative consequence to them for not doing it
13. Personal limits
14. Personal problems
15. Fear
16. No one could do it

Most of the reasons sited in Fournies research are directly linked to something leadership did or didn’t do. They also provide evidence to uphold the earlier discussion - behavior occurs because of the consequences that follow the behavior.

The 16 reasons are listed in the order of most to least received. Reason number one, they don’t know what they are supposed to do, was first or second 99% of the time. Interestingly, even though managers identified, “They don’t know what they are supposed to do” as the main reason for poor performance in the workforce, when asked what interventions they used to address problem situations, they rarely started with a solution aimed at this root cause. Supervisors’ solutions to problem performance were infrequently related to the cause of the problem.

**Problem Solving and Decision Making**

It is encouraging to find that in a study of over 25,000 people, there were only 16 reasons why people didn’t do what they were supposed to do. Fournies suggests that supervisors
who use this list to establish why the desired behavior is not occurring, will be able to better address the problem.

The first step is to define the problem. This may be more difficult than it sounds. The supervisor may know there is a problem but have difficulty identifying what the employee is doing wrong. Many times behavior is described using global statements such as, “He’s not motivated.” It is impossible to measure motivation, but it is possible to measure some behaviors you think shows enthusiasm and commitment. Examples of these might be, “completes all nightly duties and charting” or “contributes input to meetings.”

Describing the behavior using the most specific terms possible is going to lead to success in communicating the behavior change to the employee and ultimately seeing results. The supervisor has to identify the behavior that is the problem. If an employee is not having positive interactions with people receiving services – identify specifically why the employee is not having positive results.

- Is he ordering people to do things rather than asking them?
- Does he smile and talk to people in a respectful way?
- Is he respecting personal space?
- Are people finding him intimidating because he’s using a stern, loud tone of voice?

These are examples of problems that may be causing performance that doesn’t meet the supervisor’s expectations.

Identify a problem behavior you may be dealing with at this time. In the most specific and clear language possible, list below a description of the observable behavior that needs to be addressed.

Once the problem behavior is identified and established, the following four-step intervention process can be put into place:

**Step 1** – Tell the employee about the poor performance and help them determine how to make corrections or changes. Follow-up to check improvement, reinforce for any improvement.
**Step 2** – If performance has not improved, identify the poor performance; ask why it doesn’t match the agency or supervisor’s expectations; ask for specific behavior change; give assistance as needed. Follow-up to check for improvement, reinforce any improvement.

**Step 3** – If performance still does not improve, use analysis of Fournies’ 16 reasons to understand why performance is unsatisfactory and take action to eliminate what, if anything, is influencing the poor performance. Keep in mind this list is ranked from most frequent reason for poor performance to least, so start evaluating from the top of the list. (Ninety nine percent of the time, “they don’t know what they are supposed to do” came in as the first or second reason.) Suggested supervisor interventions follow each reason for poor performance in the list below:

1. They don’t know what they are supposed to do -- tell him/her
2. They don’t know how to do it – provide training or practice
3. They don’t know why they should do it – explain to him/her
4. They think they are doing it – explain to him/her why they are not doing what is expected
5. There are obstacles beyond their control – remove the barriers or explain how to get around them
6. They think it will not work – convince them
7. They think their way is better – explain why not
8. They think something is more important – explain priorities
9. There is no positive consequence to them for doing it – give positive reinforcement
10. There is a negative consequence to them for doing it – eliminate the negative consequence or provide immediate positive consequences
11. Fear – correct his/her understanding/assure
12. There is a positive consequence to them for not doing it – remove the positive consequence for nonperformance, arrange for positive consequences to follow appropriate performance
13. There is no negative consequence to them for not doing it – deliver negative consequences
14. Personal problems -- accommodate the problem or get the employee to solve the problem
15. Personal limits – the only options are transfer or termination
16. No one could do it – ask yourself how someone could do this or try doing it yourself to assess

**Step 4** – If poor performance is by employee choice, use the stages below to get the employee to change his/her choice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th>Stage 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get agreement that a problem exists.</td>
<td>Mutually discuss alternative solutions.</td>
<td>Mutually agree on action to be taken to solve the problem.</td>
<td>Follow-up to measure results.</td>
<td>Reinforce any achievement when it occurs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Stage 1** is the most critical in the feedback discussion and will usually take up half of the entire conversation. Even if it seems like it is taking a lot of time, do not proceed to step number two until you’ve convinced the employee there is a problem. Without this agreement, progress will not take place. The employee needs to understand there are consequences for the organization (diminished quality of services because of their poor performance or impact on people with disabilities for example) and there are consequences for them if there is no change in performance (they could be transferred, not eligible for raises, or in extreme instances discharged). If they do not agree there is a problem in respect to how it is affecting others and the organization, they will likely agree there is a problem based on the possible consequences that could occur to them.

In **Stage 2** alternative solutions are explored. Some alternative solutions for a tardy employee may be buying a louder alarm clock. Being supportive in this step is important. You don’t want to lose any employees.

In **Stage 3** the action needs to be highly specific. You want to know the what, when and how.

**Stage 4** is one of the most frequent reasons behavior does not change. The supervisor decides not to follow-up or doesn’t take time to do it. The purpose of follow-up is to make sure people are doing what they said they would do. Since you have already addressed this problem with the person by this point, feedback is particularly important.

**Stage 5** helps assure the employee is on the right track and helps the supervisor ensure the behavior will continue. Having a system or framework for handling difficult situations such as the one discussed here, allows for more efficient use of the supervisor’s time. A Gallup survey found that the best supervisors spent the most time with their top performers. Unfortunately many supervisors spend more time with people not doing what they’re supposed to do. Effective supervisors assess how they use their time and make sure that staff members are getting the support they need to keep them at peak performance.

While these processes may not be enjoyable, dealing with the problems that occur if they are not addressed will be even less enjoyable. There may be times during this process when the person may not like you. Giving honest feedback to people, even when delivered in the most caring way possible, will not always be received positively. A good supervisor knows that there will be times when some staff are upset. Everyone desires to be thought of positively. However, supervision isn’t a popularity contest. Supervisors with self-confidence have the strength to be as honest as possible when addressing problem performance. Approaching supervision as a collaborative skill building
and coaching opportunity is likely to lead to improved performance and more satisfied, loyal staff.

**Dealing with Difficult People**

Too often a supervisor finds that a large part of his or her time is spent on staff described by some as “difficult.” Excessive time spent on disciplining unproductive employees limits the supervisor’s time available to coach and reinforce others. “Difficult people” don’t only have conflicts with their supervisors. Their poor attitudes and destructive behaviors also tax their coworkers and interfere with services and supports provided.

In his book, *Coping with Difficult People*, Robert Bramsom categorized “difficult people” into five main groups:

- Complainers
- Unresponsives
- Super agreeables
- Negativists
- Know it all experts

**Complainers** tend to see themselves as powerless. To help them maintain this perspective they will complain about things to everyone around them except for the person who might actually be able to do something about it. Other complainers have a crystal clear image of how things “ought” to be and have a great sense of injustice about many things. They also may be perfectionists – constantly striving for perfection and letting everyone know when things don’t live up to their standards. Complaining can be a tool for the complainer to maintain themselves as blameless, innocent, or even self-righteous. They do not want to take personal responsibility.

**When dealing with a complainer**, listen attentively. Acknowledge what they’re saying. Sometimes people merely need to let off some steam. They likely already feel powerless so it is important for them to have someone who will listen. This is critical in moving the staff person to the next step. However, don’t give an unusually long period of time, which can sometimes reinforce their behavior. Don’t argue or apologize. Many complainers will frequently use general terms such as “always” or “never”. The supervisor should avoid doing the same. It’s much more effective to move forward into a problem solving mode. Many times, some well placed questions work wonders. Some examples might include – “Why do you think that is occurring?”; “What do you think could be done to improve that?”; “What ideas do you have that might help?” As always, lavish verbal praise when the complainer does come up with an idea or suggestion. The supervisor should ensure that the employee leaves the conversation knowing that his/her ideas were valued and that he/she had an opportunity to provide positive input.
**Unresponsive**s are people who give little feedback regarding their thoughts and ideas on subjects. This is not the person who is merely shy. This is the person who by their body language conveys that he/she would rather be just about anywhere else. Unresponsive use their silence to show aggression. There are also a number of short-term benefits to this behavior to these employees. They avoid taking any risks by not showing any type of opinion or interest. They also might be avoiding consequences. If they admit to an error or take a stand on an issue, they fear they might get “in trouble.” But if they lie about their actions or opinions, they may feel guilty. Being unresponsive saves them from having to decide between these two undesirable responses. It’s a way to handle things in which there are few decisions that have to be made.

*When supervising unresponsive*, ask as many open-ended questions as possible. Another technique is referred to as the FSS – the friendly silent stare. Unresponsive are used to people taking up the space when they refuse to engage. Don’t do it. If a long period of time goes with still no response – attempt to discuss the situation. For example, “I expected you to say something and you’re not – what does that mean?” With still no further comment another open ended comment that works could be, “How do we get out of this bind?” or “Can you talk about what makes it difficult for you to say what you’re thinking?”

**Superagreeables** can be difficult because their intense need to be liked and avoid conflict makes it hard to know their opinions or what they are thinking. Unfortunately this leads to more conflict for them. They often over commit to people because they aren’t able to say, “no” to anyone.

**Supervisors assist superagreeables** by starting out conversations with something like, “I really want an honest response.” Honest feedback from employees is always important but particularly in dealing with issues around people receiving services. Superagreeables can be convinced to be honest if they’re brought back to what the agency mission is all about. For example, “If we really want to help Glen make progress we need all the honest input we can get.” Since these people are masters at reading behavioral signs, they can very quickly identify insincerity. Effective supervisors must make every effort to show genuine concern for their employees and people being supported. Superagreeables need every assurance that they are valued. Often people who are superagreeable will let the supervisor know what they think through humor. Listen to the humor – there may be hidden messages in their jokes and humorous remarks that give insight into their opinions.

**Know it alls** have a tone of absolute certainty with little room for the opinion of others. It can be very hard to change their minds. When things don’t go right, it is often everyone else’s fault. They have a fierce drive for stability and intense desire to be admired and respected.
Supervisors of “know it alls” need to listen and acknowledge what the person has to say. Question firmly but don’t confront – they will likely take it personally and their views will be even firmer. Acknowledge their competence. “Know it alls” are actually correct a fair amount of the time. Because of their fierce desire to be respected, they usually check their facts thoroughly (There is another kind of “know it all” who don’t know their facts and act as if they do. This additional personality type can be addressed using the same strategies). When getting them to consider other perspectives, state them as alternative versions rather than a situation in which they are completely wrong. This might be a way for them to at least consider the other point of view. Provide a means of saving face if you want a positive outcome. Addressing differences face-to-face and in private are critical. With an audience, there is far less chance that the “know it all” will be able to back down or consider other views.

Negativists are constantly tapping into the potential for despair. They view themselves as completely powerless and think nothing they do matters. When presented with people who can actually do things to fix a problem, negativists assume they can’t be trusted or don’t care. This attitude makes problem solving difficult.

Supervisors need to avoid getting drawn into negativist thinking. Stating realistic optimism helps counter negative thinking. It’s not helpful to argue. Statements the negativist makes may be accurate, but encourage them to consider the worst thing that could happen – often it’s not that bad. Ask them, “How much is this going to matter five years from now?”

In dealing with difficult people, supervisors need to use some mental preparation before dealing with people like the ones described in this chapter. Being unprepared makes it harder to avoid being pulled into negative thinking and less likely that the situation will have a positive outcome. People in these categories have taken a lifetime developing the way they interact with others. They are very good at whatever difficult personality traits they have practiced. The good news is that while the reactions are well developed, they are also very predictable. Before discussions with people that fit these categories, effective supervisors mentally prepare the best way to communicate the message as well as their responses to anticipated comments. Supervisors can use knowledge about the staff person’s thinking process to help the worker see some other perspectives and approaches.

Managing Conflict and Disagreement

In any work setting there are bound to be conflicts from time to time. When conflicts are between two staff people, it is helpful to schedule a face-to-face meeting. The five step process mentioned earlier can be used to negotiate a compromise. Begin with an agreement that parties to state their views and ask them to then describe
the view of the other to assure all parties understand each other. Once all the facts are on the
table, negotiate some compromise and follow-up to make sure both are living up to their end
of the bargain. Make sure to give positive feedback to both for the agreement that’s reached.

The following suggestions for supervisors will help manage/prevent conflict and
disagreement:

- Spend time getting to know staff on a personal basis. Listen and respond to their
  requests for assistance. Good relationships with staff and frequent contact will alert
  the supervisor to situations earlier, making it much easier to intervene in coworker
  conflicts before they escalate and compromise quality of services.

- Make sure everyone knows what the expectations are at the beginning, during, and
  end of a shift. Clearly defined responsibilities eliminate many staff conflicts. While
  there may be times when responsibilities aren’t met, valid reasons need to be
  communicated to the supervisor.

- Make sure people are made aware initially and on an ongoing basis that ALL
  written communication needs to be professional in nature. “Log book wars”
  between shifts or programs are waged when an initial nasty comment is responded to
  in a similar manner. Unfortunately, many staff find it easier to write
  things they wouldn’t say to the person. These written comments
  are there for all staff to see for the foreseeable future,
  engaging them in the conflict as well. Sarcastic
  comments written in very large letters followed by
  numerous exclamation marks in log books are
  unacceptable. While most staff are aware that a yelling
  match is not appropriate, they are quick to join a “log
  book war” when they have a conflict with another staff
  person.

- Ensure everyone is on the same page regarding the way persons with disabilities are
  supported. Coach staff in developing appropriate, consistent responses that provide
  people with disabilities with positive interactions. Many staff conflicts arise from
  differences in views regarding interactions with people with disabilities. If
discussion and feedback in this area are limited or unclear during training, staff may
quickly take on parental roles. Some staff may feel others are too “strict” while
others are perceived as too “lenient”. Staff members fall into a parental role when
they are not offered more professional, age appropriate alternatives. More
appropriate roles need to be stressed clearly and repeatedly, giving positive feedback
to those demonstrating these positive approaches.

- Let employees know that increased stress and tension directly affect persons
  with disabilities. For some employees this is a new thought. They may have a
  mistaken perception that everyone is not aware of the conflict. Even if people may
  not know exactly what the issue is, they can surely sense the extra tension and stress
  in the employees.
• **Stress the benefits of keeping conflict with coworkers between the parties who disagree.** This is hard to manage as it is basic human nature to seek support for one’s own perspective. However, when other staff members become involved, it increases the likelihood that the people with disabilities will be affected by the negative atmosphere and tension. Stress the professionalism and maturity this takes.

• **Stress the staffs’ responsibility as role models in relationship skills for people with disabilities.** Staff have a specific and important responsibility to teach people with DD how to establish and maintain relationships. The most effective way they will learn is through staff example, good or bad.

**Letting Someone Go**

There will be times when you have tried all the positive methods of coaching, all the ideas for addressing poor performance and all the feedback possible in an attempt to salvage an employee – but you still need to terminate someone’s employment. Keeping an employee after appropriate and consistent intervention is never a good idea. **In many ways keeping someone on the job is doing a disservice to the employee.** They are obviously not in a good job fit and are likely unhappy if they’re not performing well. Letting them go, forces them to look at the reasons why they weren’t successful and hopefully pursue some other employment that is a better fit or change some behavior that will allow them to have more successful outcomes. In one instance an employee that was let go sent a note to the supervisor months later, thanking them for “waking them up”. They felt this was helpful for them and now were on a better path, working at something that utilized their strengths to a larger degree.

Terminations need to be explained as clearly as possible. If the steps outlined in this chapter have been used to address poor performance, it will be of no surprise to the employee that things have come to this point. There is no need for extensive discussion. Continue to be as caring and considerate as possible. It can be a painful process. However, for supervisors, the larger responsibility is now with the other employees and the people receiving services. Good supervisors are shaping behavior and addressing nonperformance problems quickly. This approach creates positive work environments where employees can be successful the vast majority of the time.
Chapter 5 Feedback Exercises

1. What are the effects of not addressing problem employee behavior?

2. In the Fournies study, what was the #1 reason people didn’t do what they were supposed to do?

3. List the top 10 reasons Fournies found employees didn’t do what they were supposed to do.

4. List and describe the 4 steps in the intervention process.

5. List and describe the 5 feedback discussion stages.

6. Supervisors need to be comfortable in the knowledge that giving honest feedback to people even when delivered in the most caring way possible will __________ always be received positively.

7. What are two things to keep in mind when dealing with

   a. a complainer?
b. an unresponsive?

c. a superagreeable?

d. a know it all?

e. a negativist?

8. List three suggestions to keep in mind for helping manage or prevent conflict and disagreement.

   1.

   2.

   3.
Chapter 6: Accelerating Learning

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson the learner will be able to:

- Define worker centered orientation
- Use feedback from employees to improve training
- List alternative ways to improve training
- Explain the link between adequate training and positive attitude toward change

Worker Centered Orientation

New employees will thrive if they make a connection, develop skills to be successful and receive support. If workers feel like they are a part of a team from the very first day, they are more likely to stay. Other factors associated with increased retention rates of newly hired direct support workers include environments where:

- Co-workers go out of their way to help new staff members adjust
- Workers learn their new responsibilities by observing experienced staff
- Experienced staff view advising or training newcomers as a main job responsibility

Many agencies fill orientation with regulations and mandated training that must be provided before the person can perform direct support responsibilities. Unfortunately, this means that workers are too overwhelmed with information to get to know their coworkers, the individuals they support, routines, and responsibilities.

A worker-centered orientation helps new workers cope with the stress of starting a new job. The agency uses it to welcome new people, promote positive attitudes about the decision they made to join the organization, and acquaint them with the organization’s history, values, and goals. A worker-centered orientation gives enough information about work and behavioral expectations of their new position and agency policies and procedures to ensure the worker will be successful, but not overwhelmed. Planned opportunities to get to know other workers and service recipients help ease fears about that first solo shift.

Supervisors who want to plan a better orientation process learn from the people who know what it takes. Ask current staff:

- What were the hardest things for them when they first started?
- Who did they ask when they had a question? Was that the best person to ask?
• What do you wish new workers knew before they started providing direct support in this setting?

• How can we help them learn these things? (e.g., reading, go to a class, watch a video, watch an experienced staff)

• How can we support new employees to feel like a part of the team?

The time a supervisor spends with a new employee in the initial days of employment may be some of the most important in the person’s career. The assurance and feedback provided during this time is essential for getting them off on the right foot and developing the trust and respect for each other that is necessary in their relationship as they work together.

**Training**

While there might be a solid orientation process in place, what may be more challenging is the development and dissemination of training on a regular basis for the veteran employee. Effective coaching also means providing the ongoing training staff need. An effective coach also provides his/her employees with necessary resources. The following are some ideas and ways to provide training to keep staff as informed, up-to-date, and motivated as possible.

• Community agencies often have people willing to provide presentations on a variety of topics. Calling the county health office or other nearby medical facilities can result in some great speakers on a variety of topics.

• The use of films can be very engaging for employees. There are a wide variety of documentaries and widely released popular films that deal with the disability field. Why not have a monthly or quarterly Film Fest where you can view films and discuss? Using film in training is best accomplished with some prep work. This can include putting together a few questions or things you might want the viewer to answer or look for as they view the film. Preparation will also lead to richer discussions afterward.

• Rotating the responsibility for planning training can be a great way to extend the training resources in an organization. Put all leadership staff (and others who have information to share) on a scheduled rotation.

• Although it may be hard to get employees to read an entire book on management or programmatic issues, frequently, employees will read a chapter or two at a time which can be used for regular discussion. Include humorous and motivational or inspirational content with more detailed disability or research topics. Utilize some of the resources we list at the end of the module.
• Think about hiring a consultant who will work for a fraction of the cost of a full or part time employee, providing trainings on a monthly or quarterly basis.

• Subscribe to journals and newsletters in our field to get regular information you may be able to disseminate to your staff.

There may be instances where people receiving support have needs in areas in which staff members have no experience. Or, the agency may begin supporting people new to the agency who have medical or behavioral issues that haven’t been addressed previously. These sudden changes may cause concern or reluctance on the part of staff. It is important to realize, however, often what people really fear is not change but uncertainty. **Appropriate training can make an incredible difference in the way people deal with change.** Providing as many resources and as much knowledge about a situation, can do much to alleviate stress and hesitancy on the part of staff. Describing best and worst case scenarios and how these would be addressed is one effective way to address fears related to new challenges confronting staff.

Things are always changing. What are some upcoming changes that will be occurring within your organization? What areas of training could be provided which may make people more comfortable with the change?
Chapter 6 Feedback Exercises

1. Define worker centered orientation.

2. Supervisors can learn much from ________________  ________________ about ways to improve training.

3. Describe at least two suggestions for improving training.

4. ________________  ________________ can make an incredible difference in the way people deal with change.
Chapter 7: Employee Recognition and Retention

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson the learner will be able to:

- Explain the relationship between employee recognition and turnover
- Explain the necessity of having a plan for recognition
- Explain the why it is essential that recognition programs have meaning to the people being honored
- Implement recognition strategies

Retention

A supervisor’s ability to keep key staff can be the difference between average and superior quality in services and supports. Generally, when people leave an organization it is not due to the job itself or other factors (i.e. wages) as much as issues with the supervisor (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; LaPointe, 2002). Employees tend to leave supervisors, not jobs.

Throughout this module the importance of the relationship between the employee and the supervisor has been stressed. In addition to the all important issues of honesty and trust in the relationship, it is vital that employees have a clear understanding that they are appreciated and that they are making a difference.

Unfortunately, some supervisors believe that recognition is a bad idea because it has caused some problems for them in the past. In one instance, a supervisor gave an employee flowers after they noticed some significant effort on her part. Rather than helping to create a positive environment, this supervisor heard complaints from other employees who were upset because they did not receive similar recognition for things they had done. This case is an example of a problem created by low use of recognition. When recognition is available and employees are not happy for the co-worker, but are envious – it is a telling sign that not enough recognition is flowing. There is so little positive feedback in the environment and people desire it so badly for themselves they can’t be happy for a co-worker who receives acknowledgment. This obviously can lead to a wide variety of problems that are likely to affect the delivery services and how staff relate to their supervisor in the future. Recognition is the key tool to use in reinforcing staff and changing behavior positively. A solid agency wide recognition plan creates the structure for letting staff know how much they are appreciated and why.
Having a Recognition Plan

The fact that recognition is important is widely accepted. However, even though supervisors agree that reinforcing performance is valuable, what actually occurs on the receiving end for most employees is very small. With busy schedules, many supervisors find themselves continually putting out fires and dealing with critical issues such as staff shortages, challenging behaviors and training new staff. However, the staff turnover a supervisor experiences is a direct measure of his/her skills and abilities. If there isn’t a solid plan for the way recognition should occur, it’s highly likely little will occur.

Although recognition can address many of the challenging issues faced by supervisors, making their jobs much easier in the end, it often is the first thing to be taken off the “to do” list when things get busy. Supervisors that have a solid plan for recognizing their staff don’t have to deal with staff shortages as much. Because their retention is better, they have veteran staff who have learned how to prevent many behavior issues from escalating. Time that other supervisors have to spend training new staff, can be spent doing other things. Their regular staff remain engaged and connected to the mission of the organization, a place they have no desire to leave. What follows are some key components to creating a recognition plan that can accomplish these goals.

A recognition plan has several essential components. Supervisors must believe it is more than just a warm, fuzzy, optional part of the job that is completed when there is time. Effective managers see recognition as a key aspect of supervision. Resources such as time and energy are channeled toward the plan. While some financial resources can be helpful, many of the initiatives and ideas listed below will not require expenditures of money.

A recognition plan also has to have ways for recognition to be distributed in all directions. Recognition plans that expect the supervisor to be the only source of acknowledgement will fall short. When recognition flows from co-workers, families, and people with disabilities; the amount of positive reinforcement doubles or triples. There needs to be systems in place which allow everyone in the organization to pump positive reinforcement throughout the environment. Giving out positive reinforcement should be framed as everyone’s responsibility.

Decide how much time you would like to block off each week to address recognition. An hour every Friday morning to write notes, make phone calls and come up with other ways to recognize? Block out this time in your calendar and treat it as sacred.

Thirdly, there needs to be a variety of ways to deliver positive reinforcement and recognition in order to recognize a range of abilities and accomplishments. There should be some avenues that would be appropriate for small efforts (which might be a note from
their supervisor or co-worker) all the way to large efforts that might deserve agency-wide recognition and a host of initiatives in between.

**Recognition That Works**

The key ingredient for any recognition initiative is that it has meaning for the individual being reinforced. For example, some organizations have employee of the month programs that initially may have had some recognition value, but now carry little meaning and may even decrease employee motivation. When these awards are given to people because no one from their department had been chosen for awhile and someone had to be chosen for that month, they actually cause hard working employees to become dissatisfied or less motivated. Establishing and maintaining meaning for a recognition program requires planning and effort.

Surprisingly, some of the better plans have few rules. There are no set standards that say how many people have to be recognized or how often. In these programs, there may be no one getting the award for that time period or there may be several. In these plans, employees are not competing against each other and the focus is put on the actual effort put forward by the employee rather than adhering to some arbitrary guidelines. This is a key ingredient in maintaining meaningfulness.

Some say, a good employee recognition plan may “make some people cry”. Everyone touched by the employee’s service is overjoyed by recognition their coworkers receive. This is in stark contrast to another agency in which the award receiver was heard to say, “If I’m getting this, they really don’t know what’s going on around here.” This employee clearly knew their performance was not exemplary and rather than showcasing her abilities it exemplified to her the lack of care taken in choosing the recipient.

While financial resources are in short supply, **you can’t afford not to spend some money on recognition.** The advantages for turnover costs alone can help recoup what is spent. Additionally, there is improvement in quality services and supports as people served benefit from staff who experience more positive interactions themselves. By giving recognition, supervisors model the behavior they want to see when staff interact with people with disabilities. Balloons, candy, and t-shirts are small expenditures that, when used wisely, have a great return on investment.

A team that meets regularly is one way to systemize staff recognition plans. Reviewing how often the program is being used and effectiveness can be vital information in deciding whether a program needs tweaking or a major overhaul. In addition to assessing initiatives currently in place, new programs should be developed periodically.
The following are a range of ideas, from the simple to more involved:

- Take advantage of regularly scheduled events as opportunities to deliver some recognition. For example, consider hand-delivering paychecks to employees, using this as an opportunity to regularly thank them (the more specific, the better) for what they do. This is a very simple way to make sure at least twice a month there is some positive interactions between the supervisor and the employee.

- Ask the entire management team, to devote an hour every Friday morning (or whatever day works better) to concentrate solely on giving out recognition. This time may be spent writing notes to people that will be distributed throughout the next week or talking to or calling people to let them know what efforts you’ve seen and appreciate. Having an agreed upon time blocked out on personal schedules, like any other commitment is crucial in making sure the recognition actually takes place. Rather than a low priority activity that will occur if nothing else is going on, this time needs to be treated as sacred. Making this commitment with other colleagues can serve to encourage and support follow through and commitment. It would be interesting to take a morale assessment of staff before a program such as this was implemented and six months later to see progress. The results could serve as a motivator possibly for supervisors who wonder whether they are using their time wisely in respect to recognition.

- In larger organizations, people may not have as much contact with the CEO or others in leadership positions in the organization. Including promising staff in meetings they wouldn’t ordinarily attend on topics of interest to them personally can be a form of recognition. Additionally, a supervisor can arrange a meeting with the CEO or other leader, for the purpose of recognizing their achievements. This takes only time and a little energy but the payback can be huge. This is helpful in making the employee not only feel appreciated but also more connected to the agency.

- Another low cost initiative is the use of printed note cards used solely for recognition. They may have the organization’s logo and some initial words such as “I appreciate you because..” with lines for the employee to fill out and deliver to the recipient. This sounds very simple, but ensuring that these notepads are placed throughout the agency at all times can be a big reminder to staff of the need to follow through and actually fill them out when they might otherwise have forgotten or not thought about it.
Some agencies specify a day annually that can be noted as a day in which recognition is the focus for all employees. One agency has an annual “Kindness Day”. In the week that precedes this annual day of kindness, employees have the option to utilize mailboxes placed throughout the agency to send written messages and if so noted, a flower to another employee, both to be delivered on the designated Kindness Day. This has proved very successful in spreading recognition throughout the agency. Carnations are used in this instance for the flowers as they are inexpensive and tend to last longer than some other flowers, leaving a fragrant reminder of the kindness they were shown by co-workers. The organizers have a great time putting it together, building up their storehouse of positive affect.

Games can be fun when attempting to shape behavior and recognize performance. Some organizations have created contests with prizes that include small tangible items, bonuses or simply bragging rights. Some organizations use a traveling trophy that moves from department to department depending on who wins the game. One organization used a stuffed skunk from a taxidermist for this purpose and people loved it! Visual aids to show progress toward the goal can do wonders for interest in the program. One organization had employees who were NASCAR racing fans. They posted a large paper racetrack with cars and drivers (pictures of the supervisors’ heads) to show progress toward the annual goal. As departments made it closer to their goal, the cars were moved closer to the “finish line.” Some possibilities for game goals might include cleanliness (random spot checks show progress weekly), increasing billing for programs, or even in recruitment efforts as employees work to get good candidates in the door.

Some organizations celebrate employee anniversary dates much like a birthday. They call these special events “Celebrate Anne Day” using the name of the employee. Photos of the person when they were younger, a list of the person’s positive qualities compiled by coworkers and consumers, and a cake or potluck show appreciation to the employee for her contributions. Employment anniversary dates are important dates and should be recognized.

You Deserve a Break was an inexpensive staff appreciation program developed by Opportunity Foundation in North Dakota. Administrative staff met at a group home or day program at the start of the shift. They told the staff who were about to start their shift that they “deserved a break.” Administrative staff worked their shift for them while they received pay for the day. This was highly motivating for the employees and the element of surprise was half the fun. It also had other positive aspects in that it was an opportunity for the administrative staff (including the CEO) to be reminded of what frontline staff were experiencing from day-to-day. The administrative staff often learned a lot during these initiatives while delivering a highly motivating and appreciated form of recognition to the employees.
• Trinity Services, an agency in Illinois, designates employees as “exemplars” as a part of its recognition plan. This status is very difficult to obtain and holds as much meaning for some as getting a college degree may have for others. Exemplars, as they are referred, are chosen by a nominator, approved by the administration of the agency with much care, and finally approved by the other exemplars. Seldom is someone made aware that they are going to be included in this group that they don’t cry. Exemplar status includes an initial bonus, an ongoing raise, an exemplar ring, recognition at the holiday party and ongoing involvement in giving the agency feedback on decisions that affect the organization. Exemplars are seen as leaders in the organization and may be asked to help start new programs or other areas in which exemplary, veteran staff are highly responsible for success.

There are many, many ideas and variations on these themes. Brainstorming on some ideas for your employees is time well spent.

Think back to the jobs you’ve had. At what times did you feel recognized for what you did? When was this most meaningful? Why was it meaningful? What was it like when you weren’t recognized?

Celebrating at Work

Celebrating accomplishments together can be a great team builder and source of recognition. When a certification survey is completed or when some other goal is accomplished make sure to take the opportunity to show appreciation and give staff the chance to celebrate accomplishments together. In addition to survey processes, keep in mind timelines that may be worthy of celebration. Many new programs struggle in their first few months or even years. It’s important to take time to celebrate accomplishments and anniversaries (for example a program’s one year anniversary). There also may be data worthy of celebration. Has your team or the organization as a whole accomplished a new low in turnover or met a goal in turnover? Has a new low in worker’s compensation been achieved? Has a new grant been awarded to the organization? Has the organization received some type of recognition? Make sure these accomplishments are publicized widely.

Making sure the times when people with disabilities accomplish goals or objectives are celebrated can be rewarding for employees and program participants. Before you move onto the next objective, make sure there is some recognition around the goal or objective that was
met. This is a great time for balloons and other items that denote celebrations letting people know something great was accomplished.

**Fun and Friendliness at Work**

Creating a fun and friendly atmosphere at work is an incredible retention tool that costs nothing but a little time. How a supervisor chooses to interact with staff and the level of positive collaboration is directly related to retention. Supervisors need to take the lead in teaching staff how to have fun at work.

The Fish Philosophy is a good book/video for ideas on making work enjoyable. Before adopting the Fish Philosophy, working in the Seattle fish market used to be a cold, stinky job that was anything but fun. After making a conscious decision to change the way the fish market workers interacted with each other and their customers, the job actually became something workers enjoyed. It was still cold and stinky, however. Having fun on the job is clearly a frame of mind and a conscious choice. Effective supervisors help employees find fun at work.

Do you take the time to talk to people about things other than work? Max Dupree in his book “The Art of the Leader” suggests that friendliness at work is critical. He wrote the following reminders for leaders:

**The Importance of Friendliness**

1. Say please and thank you
2. Look at people’s faces when they are talking to you and showing a pleasant face
3. Greet people with a good morning or good afternoon before talking about work
4. Be prompt in keeping appointments so people don’t have to waste time waiting for you
5. Treat people who come into your office as guests by not making them wait or talk to the top of your head
6. Apologize when you are late or have to interrupt a meeting
7. Never insult them and wasting their time by accepting non-related phone calls during meetings
8. Hold conversations with people versus lecturing them and not interrupting people when they are speaking
9. Control your emotional outburst because you don’t have the right to speak loudly or otherwise abuse your employees
10. Don’t make sarcastic comments
11. Don’t eat or drink while meeting with your employees unless you offer them the same privilege
Chapter 7 Feedback Exercises

1. Studies show that generally, when people leave an organization, it is not due to the job itself or other factors as much as issues with the __________________________.

2. If there’s not a __________ for recognition, it’s likely that little will occur in busy environments.

3. The key ingredient for any recognition initiative is that it has _________________ for the individual being reinforced.

4. Celebrating accomplishments together can be a great team builder and source of _________________.

5. List at least 3 points to Max Dupree’s “Importance of Friendliness”.
Chapter 8: Commitment to People with Disabilities and Quality Services

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson the learner will be able to:

- Explain why ethics and integrity are important
- Define the term “leemer”
- Identify results which stem from poor ethics and integrity
- Explain strategies for supporting staff to prevent abuse
- List ways to get feedback from staff regarding supervisory performance

Ethics, Integrity and Your Values

Ethics, integrity, and personal values determine what a person does and how he or she sets priorities. Too often, people lack grounding in their values and are easily swayed when things become difficult or when others try to steer them another way. Supervisors need to ask themselves:

- How closely does your everyday behavior match your values and serve the mission of your organization?
- How consistent with your values is your emotional response in any given situation?
- To what degree do you establish clear priorities and sustain attention to tasks?
- How consistent are your priorities with what you say is most important to you?

When we don’t make a firm commitment about what our values are, we let events and other people drive us rather than directing our own lives.

Spend some time reflecting on what values are most important to you. The workplace can be a forum for how we express and embody our deepest values. Continually remind yourself of them and why they were chosen. Ask yourself the following questions:

1) What are the three most important lessons you’ve learned in your life and why are they critical?

2) Think of someone you respect. Describe three qualities in this person that you most admire.

3) Who are you at your best?
Review the following list and choose the three to four values that seem to be most important to you based on how you answered the preceding questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authenticity</th>
<th>Balance</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Compassion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concern for others</td>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Generosity</td>
<td>Genuineness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Harmony</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>Respect for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Serenity</td>
<td>Service to others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From *The Power of Full Engagement – Loehr & Schwartz*

Choosing values that are most important is the first step. Next, decide exactly how to embody the values in daily life, regardless of circumstances. In many instances it’s easier to make decisions with short-term benefits. However, maintaining some identified core values holds a person to another standard. For example if a person holds integrity as a core value, she may be more likely to take responsibility for a mistake even if it may result in some criticism. If honesty is a core value, a supervisor will tell his employees exactly how his performance is not up to par, rather than avoiding confrontation. If genuineness is a core value, a team member will speak up in a meeting if it involves a behavioral intervention she doesn’t agree with, even though she knows that everyone wants to end the meeting and go home.

In *Built to Last*, Jim Collins (2002) argued that companies driven by values performed better in the long run. Personally, it can greatly increase the passion, commitment and perseverance an individual puts into his work. Supervisors have an incredible opportunity to positively influence people with disabilities and employees who want fulfilling work. If the supervisor’s personal values align with his or her behavior, trust will develop among employees and the team will have greater productivity. Example is the best teacher. If staff see their supervisor demonstrating behavior that matches the values he or she espouses, they will be more likely to model the behavior as well. If the supervisor demonstrates positive interactions, the employee will likely be positive also. If the supervisor puts people with disabilities first, their staff are more likely to do so.

People with DD are considered by many as the most vulnerable population. Research documents the high probability that people with DD will do whatever they are asked. If given a choice, many will consistently agree to the last item offered. Abuse rates for this population can be anywhere from 65-75%. Because of all of these factors, it is critical that supervisors hire the best people,
train them well, and provide feedback on performance to ensure highest quality supports possible.

Scenario #1

A supervisor asks a direct support professional to use bleach to clean something, knowing this is against agency policy. She says the policy doesn’t make any sense and instructs the staff to purchase bleach and use it for specific cleaning tasks. Later, when the staff are cleaning with the bleach solution, the department director stops by the house. He is alarmed that bleach is in the house. After speaking to the direct support staff, the director goes into the kitchen to question the supervisor. The supervisor tells the director they can’t understand why the staff would do this because they’ve made it quite clear that bleach is not allowed in the house. The supervisor tells the director that she will address this issue with the staff and “nip this in the bud”. Unbeknownst to the supervisor, the direct support professional overheard the exchange.

What are some likely after effects of this incident? (Come up with at least 3 for each)

For the supervisor?

- 
- 
- 

For the direct support professional?

- 
- 
- 

For other staff?

- 
- 

Scenario #2

A supervisor walks into a group home and sees one of the staff lying on the sofa watching television while several people receiving services are walking around the house aimlessly. It bothers the supervisor to see this and she knows she should say something. However, if she criticizes the staff person, he may get angry and refuse to fill an extra shift this weekend. The supervisor rationalizes that people receiving services actually seem okay and no one’s getting hurt. The
staff person is good at what he does and the people in the house seem to like him. The supervisor walks in the room and says hello to see if her presence causes the staff person to get up and do something. It doesn’t. The supervisor walks out of the room, frustrated. She also notices that the other staff is preparing fish sticks and tater tots again. She just talked to them about preparing healthier meals at the staff meeting earlier this week. The supervisor rolls her eyes, thinks to herself that this is hopeless, says goodbye to the staff in the kitchen and leaves the house.

What are the likely after effects of this incident? (Come up with at least 3 for each)

For the team supervisor?

•

For the employee?

•

•

For the people in the home?

•

•

•

For other staff?

•

•

What/who are affected in the previous Scenario?

**Scenario #3**

An employee calls his supervisor and can’t reach her so he leaves a message at the supervisor’s voice mail. It’s now three days later and the employee hasn’t heard back. When the staff person calls again the supervisor answers the phone. He asks the supervisor to consider a schedule change because he is having trouble with day care arrangements and needs to change to another sitter who has different hours available. The supervisor says she will check on this. It’s been a week and the employee still hasn’t heard anything back from the supervisor.

What are the likely after effects of this incident?
For the staff person?

•

•

•

For the supervisor?

•

•

•

For the other staff?

•

•


Leemers and Your Role as an Advocate

In *Managing the Unexpected*, Weick and Sutcliffe use the term “leemer” to describe a feeling that something is not right without actual data or facts to support the feeling. Leemers might include feeling puzzled, anxious, or unsettled. They found that most successful leaders trusted these feelings and found them to be highly accurate in predicting when something actually was wrong. The leaders in this study dealt with situations that were highly critical such as aircraft carriers, nuclear power plants and emergency crews. In these organizations, if there are problems, lives can be lost. Leaders who sense leemers and take appropriate actions prevent costly mistakes and even save lives.

Some people sense leemers but dismiss them because they don’t immediately know what is causing the uneasy feelings. Worse, some people actually prefer not knowing what the problem is. In human service organizations, very bad things sometimes happen to people receiving support. The supervisor’s role as an advocate in this field is extremely important. When leemers are sensed, effective supervisors take the time to analyze what might be contributing to them. Some leaders even keep a journal of things they consider leemers because it helps them prevent problem situations.

Many supervisors joke that they need “a warm body”, meaning they may not have ordinarily hired this person but because they are desperate for additional staff, they felt the need to do so. Although every person hired can’t be a star performer, the agency’s values and mission must be considered before hiring someone out of desperation. **The pain experienced when short staffed is less than the pain of bringing someone into the organization that can negatively influence other staff or worse, harm people receiving support.**

Assess situations in which people with disabilities have increased frequency of behavioral problems when particular staff are working. If consumers say they don’t like particular staff, find out why. People with disabilities, unfortunately will tell us about abuse that is
happening to them only about three percent of the time (Mental Retardation, December, 1998). While, these statements are not enough in themselves to warrant dismissal or an abuse investigation, supervisors must act as advocates and assess situations to protect both people served and those who support them.

It is important to have ongoing discussions with staff regarding abuse and neglect. Work as a team to develop coping strategies for supporting individuals with complex needs. For example, there may be some individuals who are so emotionally or physically taxing that no one should work with them for more than four hours.

Some strategies listed below will help prevent staff from becoming overstressed and abusive:

- Plan as a team, when things are not in crisis mode, how you will handle a crisis and the best way to prevent problems from escalating.
- Have a thorough discussion after a crisis to assess what was done well and what can be improved next time.
- Discuss ways employees can give support to each other when times are difficult.
- **Frame the effort of asking for help as a strength rather than a weakness.**
- Ensure staff know that they are expected to work with people with disabilities in a way that builds trust with them, not fear.

Sometimes, supervisors may unknowingly give staff a message that says they want to avoid any problems or incident reports, regardless of the costs. Many times in these cultures, staff feel free to use threats or fear with people with disabilities. Hearing statements like, “Nothing happens on my shift!” or “I don’t let him get away with that!” should cause great concern on the part of the supervisor. These comments show authoritative ways of dealing with and controlling people as opposed to demonstrating kindness, caring and trust. **Staff should think of themselves as a counselor rather than a police officer.**

People who are overworked and stressed out are often those working two jobs. Supervisors need to monitor use of overtime at site(s) they manage and determine a healthy limit of overtime usage. The supervisor’s role as an advocate must be taken seriously. One state’s court proceedings suggested a direct link between abuse rates and poor supervisor training. If people in the judicial system are able to ascertain this relationship, how much easier it should be for support providers to recognize.

Roger McNamaries told of his experience with a “leemer” in one organization. Agency leaders knew something was not “right” in a particular group home, however, they couldn’t assess exactly what it was. They asked McNamaries to give a third party opinion. While he observed the activities in the house, he noticed something very strange. Dirty socks were strewn throughout the house. There was a sock around a doorknob in one room and around a curtain rod in another. Eventually, he realized that each sock contained a golf ball and that the socks were
used as an organized system of “behavior management”. When someone living in the house would not comply or did something they weren’t supposed to do, staff would reach for the closest sock and hit the person with it.

Answer the following questions.

- How might “behavior management” practices like these develop?
- When staff feel behavioral concerns are not being addressed, do you worry they may develop their own interventions in these circumstances?
- What “leemers” should have been noticed at this home?
- What was the quality of interactions with the employees and people living in the house?
- How do you think people living in the house responded to the staff?
- Would you have been suspicious if you visited the home and noticed the socks?
- Would you shrug it off or would curiosity make you ask more questions?
- If you were in a hurry, would you take the time to investigate further?

Assessing Your Performance

As a commitment to people with disabilities and to staff they supervise, good leaders are continually looking for ways to improve their skills. Asking employees about your performance as a supervisor can yield some interesting (and often quite accurate) information. It also helps develop relationships and trust among staff. Including people with disabilities in the assessment process is also important. The following questions could be included in the evaluation process:

- What do you expect and need most from your supervisor?
- If you were “in my shoes” what key areas or matters would you focus on?
- What significant areas are there in the organization where you feel you can make a contribution?
- What two things could we do together to work toward building a better team, department, or organization?
- In the past year, was there anything that affected your sense of integrity, either positively or negatively, in the organization?
- What are some signals that would make you concerned about the services we provide?

Organizations often do exit interviews to find out why people leave the organization and to see if there are procedure and policy implications that impact retention. Conducting “stay surveys” to assess why people are staying is a far more positive approach. The purpose of these interviews is to find out what is most meaningful to employees and what they get out of their job. This information serves two purposes. One, it helps leaders find out information about what’s working and what’s not. Additionally, it reinforces the reasons
staff are staying in their own minds. The interviews are actually affirming exercises that can strengthen staff commitment and further their resolve to stay longer.

A study published in the American Journal on Mental Retardation (2004) identified benefits staff gained from working with people with disabilities. Staff said, “Working with people with disabilities has…………

- Made me a more responsible person
- Helped me learn patience
- Provided a source of pride because of the kindness and loving received
- Made me more sensitive to people
- Helped me cope with stress better
- Helped me be more compassionate
- Helped me learn to adjust to things I cannot change
- Made me more aware of people’s needs and feelings

These are just a few of the many things that support providers agreed were things they’d gained from working in the disability field. This is valuable information to share with staff and to reflect on as a supervisor, as well.
Lesson 8 Feedback Exercises

1. Why are ethics, integrity and personal values important?

2. What is a leemer?

3. The pain experienced when ______________________ is less than the pain of bringing someone into the organization that can negatively influence other staff or worse, harm people receiving support.

4. Good teams work together to develop ______________________ for supporting individuals with complex needs.

5. List 4 strategies to help prevent staff from becoming overstressed.

6. Sometimes supervisors may unknowingly give staff a message that says they want to avoid problems and incidents regardless of the cost. In these situations, staff feel free to use __________ and ____________ with people with disabilities.

7. List two questions that may work out well as means to assess your performance through your employees.

8. What are some things you’ve gained from working in the disability field?
Chapter 9: Balancing Work/Mental Life

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson the learner will be able to:

- Identify strategies for improved time management
- Identify strategies for managing stress and energy
- Explain the importance of taking care of yourself
- Assess whether relaxing activities are a part of life

Time Management

A popular book on time management, *Eat that Frog*, suggests that effective managers get the things they dread (or don’t enjoy as much) out of the way before tackling more enjoyable tasks. In fact, the title of the book is based on an Indian proverb that says, ‘If you eat a frog the first thing everyday, the rest of the day won’t be so bad!’ There are few things as tiring as an uncompleted task that seems to stick around forever. Eliminating these from your day can be an energy booster.

The author of *Eat that Frog* refers to **the last 15 minutes of the day as the most important 15 minutes of the day. Managers that end each day by planning for the next, give themselves an incredible jump start the following morning.** Several organizations have seen substantial improvements in productivity after adopting this management routine.

For one week, try using the last 15 minutes of your work-day to make a list of things you want to accomplish the following day. At the end of the week, assess whether your productivity increased.

Too often, managers spend their time working on little things that don’t affect long-term outcomes or agency goals. Because details and busywork consume 80% or more of a manager’s workload, he/she may not get to the tasks that might have an impact on productivity, retention or other program goals. Many supervisors confuse activity with accomplishment. They stay so busy with day-to-day things that have to be done that the day is over before they get a chance to “lead.” By resisting the temptation to clear up the small things first, managers ensure that they have time to work on things that take more thought or concentration and have more lasting impacts. Why not put aside the first hour of your day to work on a large project rather than cleaning up a lot of little things that will get done anyway. This will be discussed further in the last chapter.

Some managers put off tasks until close to the deadline because they feel they “work better under pressure.” Research, however,
does not support this belief (Tracy, 2001). People who work closer to the deadline endure more stress and make more mistakes than those who are more organized. Creating a prioritized list also helps managers make more effective use of their time. During the last 15 minutes of the day, items can be pulled from this list for completion the following day.

Effective managers have learned to delegate tasks. Delegating helps prevent supervisor burnout and can increase retention of frontline staff. Many frontline workers appreciate the sense of accomplishment that comes with increased responsibility. Effective delegation is a must for managing time effectively.

Blocking time for similar activities is also helpful. Designating a certain period of time for making phone calls or checking email saves much more time than doing both throughout the day. When working on reports or projects that require concentration or short turnaround time, effective supervisors don’t take calls unless there is an emergency. This allows them to complete the report in one day, when it otherwise might take several. Enjoying a sense of accomplishment in finishing a task, gives the manager more energy to do other things. When similar activities can be completed without interruptions, productivity will increase. Managers need to assess themselves to determine when they are most productive, and schedule more challenging things for that time of day.

For big tasks that seem overwhelming either decide to do at least one part of it or resolve to work on it for a specific time period, no matter how much is completed in that time. This can help ward off procrastination of tasks that seem too large to tackle.

**Stress and Energy Management Techniques**

Loehr and Schwartz (2003), authors of *The Power of Full Engagement*, worked with professional athletes to help them perform at their best. They collected data about what makes some people perform better than others. Their data indicated that the athletes who performed the best were those who were able to recover physically and restore their energy quickly after a physically grueling task. They built highly structured recovery routines into their lives.

Loehr and Schwartz applied what they learned from athletes to their work with stressed out business leaders. They helped them decrease the amount of stress and increase the amount of energy in their lives. They tried a variety of techniques to help people in the workforce maintain energy and refuel.

- They found that some kind of break at about every 90 minutes significantly improved performance in the workplace. Some people simply went for walks, others had snacks, while some listened to music – anything to get their mind off the task at hand for a short period of time. When implemented regularly these things became so automatic they became a habit. They referred to this as energy renewal.
• Another addition to the day was referred to as **positive energy rituals**. People would agree to do daily rituals in a regular highly structured way. These rituals become as routine as tooth brushing. These rituals involved activities such as spending time with loved ones, eating right, exercising and getting enough sleep. For some people, their ritual might include having breakfast every morning with one’s spouse or leaving a child a note everyday before they went to work. These things, when done regularly, actually helped people maintain their energy level. **How do your habits of eating, sleeping and exercising affect your available energy?** Many people initially would protest that they didn’t have time for these things. However, their studies show a clear increase in productivity once people started adding these things into their lives. They had to make time for them, but they got more done when they were at work. As a result, they didn’t have to work as many hours and they had more energy to devote to pursuits and interests outside of work.

It’s important that these behaviors turn into habits. If they’re not built into a person’s routine, it’s likely they won’t endure. Ninety-five percent of behavior occurs automatically or in reaction to a demand or anxiety. Only five percent is consciously directed (Loehr and Schwartz, 2003). Therefore, if a change in behavior is going to become a habit, it needs to fit easily into the person’s life so it becomes a part of his or her daily ritual.

The importance of optimism for direct support staff was discussed earlier in this manual. Optimism is also critical for supervisors. Comments like those listed below zap energy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I just can’t do it</th>
<th>I just know it won’t work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’m not creative enough</td>
<td>I can’t ever get along with my boss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never have time to get things done</td>
<td>Some people have all the luck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I just can’t seem to get organized</td>
<td>I just know it’s going to be another one of those days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These statements increase stress and the risk of burnout for the person making the statement as well as those who listen. There is also a danger of creating self fulfilling prophesies when supervisors predict negative outcomes. Supervisors need to ask themselves, “How much negative energy do I invest in defense spending – frustration, anger, fear, resentment, envy as opposed to positive energy?” “How often do I use ‘never’ and ‘can’t’?” These words and phrases are crippling for managers and for those who hear them.

Instead, it is recommended that supervisors ask themselves the following series of questions:

What am I doing about this?  
What would I like to do about this?  
What do I choose to do about this?  
What am I going to do about this?
This series of questions makes the manager look at his or her personal responsibility and empowerment as opposed to blame and victimization. Practicing positive comments until they become natural is important to making lasting behavior change. Supervisors may need to have visual aids with these statements on post-its, on bulletin boards, and in planners until they become more natural than the negative phrases.

**Renewing Yourself**

There is clear research showing that exercise and other healthy habits can help people immensely in their jobs. *The Power of Full Engagement* cites several other notable studies. In one study, people who exercised regularly committed 30% fewer errors on tasks involving concentration and short term memory. In another study of 80 leaders, there was a 70% improvement in their ability to make complex decisions when compared to a control group that did not exercise. In another study, 63% of people involved in an exercise program reported being more physically relaxed, less tired, and more patient (Loehr and Schwartz, 2003). These studies have huge implications for human service agencies. Could exercise help improve retention and reduce burnout? Additionally, this data supports the benefits of exercise for people with disabilities, who often experience a variety of stressors that sometimes serve as antecedents to inappropriate behavioral responses.

If supervisors are expected to be an effective role model and support people with disabilities as well as staff, they need to take time for relaxation and renewal. Ask yourself how many hours a week you devote to activities that are purely for the pleasure and renewal they provide? What percentage of time would you describe yourself as feeling highly relaxed? Jot your answers below.
Chapter 9 Feedback Exercises

1. What tasks are recommended for the last 15 minutes of the supervisor’s day?

2. Waiting until the deadline approaches to work on projects typically does ________ make people more effective.

3. List two other tips for time management.

4. Some kind of break every _______ minutes significantly improved performance in the work place.

5. How do your habits of eating, sleeping and exercising affect your available energy?

6. List the four questions supervisors can ask of themselves when negative thoughts are prevalent.

7. If supervisors are expected to be an effective role model and support people with disabilities as well as staff, they need to take time for ____________________ and ____________________.
Chapter 10: Having a Vision

Maintaining the Big Picture

One of the biggest challenges for managers is maintaining the big picture, not only for the employees they supervise, but also for themselves. If they aren’t careful, the day-to-day issues that come up often keep them confined to focusing on that day, week or maybe month – forgetting about the next year or two. Being able to define and direct effort toward long-term goals, however, helps attain far more than focusing on only the here and now.

A Yale study looked at students who were about to graduate. When asked about life goals, about 10% said they had specific goals. Three percent of that group said they had specific life goals but had also written them down. In a 20 year follow up with the students, researchers found that the 3% who had specific goals which they wrote down outperformed the other 97% combined. Our minds are powerful tools. Time spent establishing goals, writing them down, and visualizing how they will occur leads to great results. Dr. Edward Banfield of Harvard University conducted 50 years of longitudinal research in which he found that people’s ability to think about and plan for the future was the most accurate predictor of success.

Being a leader means “leading” – not only reacting to immediate events. Block off some time this week to set aside for planning. Answer the questions below and come up with a plan for yourself and your team. How would you like your program to develop in the next 1-3 years? What skills would you like your staff to develop? What progress would you like to see in the lives of the people with disabilities receiving support?

Have a clear vision of progress you want to see occur and help your employees see this as clearly. You set the tone for the culture in your settings. Employees will be looking to you to establish whether something that happened is horrible or merely a bump in the road. Make sure you use the power of a clear vision to move your programs to a higher level.

When everything listed below is present, your work and personal lives will improve, employees will want to work in the program you supervise, and people with disabilities and their families will receive quality supports:

- Self-knowledge
- Ability to hire the best
- Coaching skills
- Ability to facilitate teamwork
- Insight into ways to address poor performance
- Effective staff development strategies
- Meaningful staff recognition practices

93
• Firm commitment to the services you provide
• Balance between work and personal life
• Strong vision

You have the opportunity to have meaningful work that can greatly affect a lot of people. Employees and people with disabilities grew and developed through your support and you grew and developed as well. Hopefully you might be able to look back and see you’ve had a hand in something that was excellent, your time was well spent and you did something that mattered.
Resources

• Advocating Change Together (ACT) has put together a wonderful resource video entitled, “My Choice, Your Decision” which can be used for teaching people working in the disability field positive ways of interacting with people with disabilities through a humorous but poignant depiction of staff doing anything but that. They also have outstanding self advocacy tools. They can be reached as www.selfadvocacy.com or phone 1-800-641-0059.

• Dave Hingsburger has a number of books and videos available to teach staff how to deal with behavioral challenges. A favorite is “Behavior Self” which uses humor to get people to better understand the aspects of why we behave the way we do. Their website is a good way to find out more about them – www.diverse-city.com or phone 1-877-246-5226.

• The Minnesota Frontline Supervisor Competencies and Performance Indicators is a very thorough list of staff competencies. This could be very useful when writing up job descriptions and developing evaluations for a variety of staff positions. Get more information at www.ici.umn.edu or call 1-612-624-6300

• Cherry Hill Books is a good resource for books and information on disability as well as the larger topic of leadership. They can be reached at www.cherryhillbooks.com or 1-800-469-9461

• The Quality Mall also has some good resources in the areas of leadership. This is a web based store located at www.qualitymall.org.
Bibliography


M. Marum (personal communication, April 8, 2004)

New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. (1990) *Competencies for First-Line Supervisor*


Chapter 1: Feedback Answers

1. List four critical skills for effective leaders:
   - Ability to understand people
   - Ability to know what motivates people
   - Ability to predict what will elicit emotions
   - Ability to predict the consequences of these emotions
   - High level of optimism
   - Ability to respect people
   - Ability to establish positive relationships
   - Ability to demonstrate emotional intelligence

2. What difference does it make when people are in an upbeat mood when they are at work?
   When people are in an upbeat mood they:
   - think more clearly
   - understand information better
   - are more flexible in their thinking
   - can make complex decisions.

3. Why is it important for leaders to be optimistic?
   - Many people receiving services have experienced much pessimism
   - Today’s workforce has often had difficult life experiences which may lead to pessimism
   - Because leadership is not an easy task, optimism on the part of the leader can offer some helpful support in reflecting on the reasons why they are here when times are not easy
Chapter 2: Feedback Answers

1. What are two reasons the hiring process is important?
   - The number of prospective employees is shrinking
   - Working short staffed may lead to staff burnout
   - It’s a barrier to growth for an agency
   - It can negatively affect quality

2. Why are people more apt to stay at a job when they have been told about it from an inside source?
   - They tend to get more information about the job

3. What are three groups of alternative sources for new employees?
   - older or displaced employees
   - recent immigrants
   - welfare-to-work program participants
   - high school career exploration programs
   - universities that need post-secondary internship and practicum sites

4. Define a RJP (realistic job preview).
   A realistic job preview is a system of enabling a person to get more information about what the job actually entails. It will typically involve some time spent at the site observing.

5. Describe three types of effective interview questions.
   - Superlative adjective: best/worst, most/least, hardest/easiest
   - First and last: when was the last time you…..
   - Accomplishments: describe your most significant accomplishments in……

6. Identify at least five areas people with disabilities could start participating in the hiring process.
   - developing job descriptions and job titles
   - designing an application form
   - advertising positions
   - deciding which applicants to interview
   - planning the interview and preparing questions
   - interviewing applicants
   - selecting successful candidates
   - informing all applicants of the decision
Chapter 3: Feedback Answers

1. Why is the relationship a supervisor has with an employee important?

   It largely determines the success a supervisor will have in changing behavior.

2. What do people who believe Theory X believe? Theory Y?

   Supervisors who believe in Theory X believe that most people don’t like to work, have little
   motivation to do so, prefer to be told what to do rather than taking initiative, and are not
   creative problem solvers. These supervisors also believe that people only work as long as
   they’re watched, and are motivated only by money/benefits and punishment. Supervisors
   who believe in Theory Y don’t believe that employees are typically lazy but do believe if
   employees get the right amount of coaching, they can be motivated to do what they need to
   do to accomplish things on their own.

3. Herzberg saw **achievement** and **recognition** as the biggest motivators of employees?

4. People do what they do because of what happens to them __after____ they do it.

5. Supervisors that have decided they cannot affect poor performance are relegated to
   the role of __observer______ rather than coach.

6. Your ability to be an effective __**listener**_____ enables you to drop everything when
   someone is speaking to you.

7. There is no more effective way to teach people something than by __**example**______.

8. A good ratio of positive to negative comments is 4:1.

9. Keep a pen and paper nearby when you have a block of time in which you will be
   interacting with employees for at least two hours. For two hours track the number of positive
   to negative comments given to them. What is your ratio?

10. Feedback needs to be __**specific and clear**__.

11. People who reinforce the __smallest__ improvements get the fastest change.

12. When giving feedback informally or through an evaluation process, it’s most
    effective to be specific and clear. Circle the behaviors below that are specific and clear.
    (specific and clear are in bold)

   a. You have a bad attitude.
b. Nothing ever gets done on your shift.
c. I’d like to hear more positive comments from you. What do you think would be an example of one?
d. I need you to use this checklist to make sure all the duties get done at the end of the night and let’s look at it in the morning.
e. I want you to be more professional.
f. I’d like you to wear pants to work as opposed to sweat pants.
g. I’d like you to give a greeting when you answer the phone.
h. You’re always late.
i. You’ve been at least 10 minutes late three times this week.
j. You don’t get along well with others.
k. You’re doing great! (Good comments to hear but more specific is even better)
l. I loved the way you interacted with Chris when he was getting upset – not insisting he do that was definitely the way to go.
m. The house looks great! (Again, nice to hear but being more specific will better assure you’ll see the behavior you want again)
n. I’ve never seen the floor this clean!
o. Others have relayed to me that they feel tense when they work with you.
Chapter 4: Feedback Answers

1. Explain why it’s important to get feedback from employees.
   - It’s often very accurate
   - It increases self esteem
   - It helps employees feel respected
   - It helps employees feel they are listened to
   - If increases commitment level on the part of employees

2. Employees need to be supported in professionally relaying their opinions at meetings. (At other times too, but employees are more likely to have a difficult time relaying opinions in meetings)

3. Why might getting bad ideas be a good sign?
   It shows that you have employees that have enthusiasm and interest enough to submit ideas – when there are lots of ideas, some are bound to be better than others.

4. A strong negative reaction to a staff member’s idea can ensure that the supervisor will have ______ (more or less) ideas from the employee?
   Less ideas – employees will be more hesitant when there are strong negative reactions

5. List three reasons staff should participate in decision-making.
   - They will feel they have some measure of control
   - They will feel they have some ownership
   - They will have an increased level of commitment
   - It tells staff they’re respected
   - Employees are more likely to stay
   - It generates better decisions

   - Authoritative - Other staff members are not involved in the decision making process.
   - Consultative The supervisor consults employees before making a decision.
   - Participative Staff members make decisions as a group.

7. Change is often not an inherent distaste for change itself but more related to a fear of the unknown.

8. Relationship skills are important to develop with employees since helping people with disabilities develop ______ relationship skills/relationships____ is a major objective for this field.

9. Effective supervisors do their best to match employees to their ______ strengths ______ as much as possible.
Chapter 5: Feedback Answers

1. What are the effects of not addressing problem employee behavior?

The supervisor will lose respect from employees
Relationships with employees in good standing will be damaged
There may be increased animosity toward the employee with the problem behavior
Stress and tension in the environment will increase for employees
Stress and tension in the environment will increase for people receiving services
Behavioral incidences may increase
Turnover may increase
Job satisfaction will decrease
Morale will decrease

2. In the Fournies study, what was the #1 reason people didn’t do what they were supposed to do?

They didn’t know what they were supposed to do

3. List the top 10 reasons Fournies found employees didn’t do what they were supposed to do.

• They don’t know what they are supposed to do
• They don’t know how to do it
• They don’t know why they should do it
• They think they are doing it
• There are obstacles beyond their control
• They think it will not work
• They think their way is better
• They think something is more important
• There is no positive consequence to them for doing it
• There is a negative consequence to them for doing it

4. List and describe the 4 steps in the intervention process.

Step 1 – Tell the employee about the poor performance and help them to determine how to make corrections or changes. Follow-up to check improvement, reinforce for any improvement.
Step 2 – If performance has not improved, identify the poor performance; ask why it doesn’t match the agency or supervisor’s expectations; ask for specific behavior change; give assistance as needed. Follow-up to check for improvement, reinforce any improvement.

Step 3 – If performance still does not improve, use analysis of Fournies’ 16 reasons to understand why performance is unsatisfactory and take action to eliminate what, if anything, is influencing the poor performance.

Step 4 – If poor performance is by employee choice, use the 5 feedback discussion stages to get the employee to change his/her choice.

5. List and describe the 5 feedback discussion stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th>Stage 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get agreement that a problem exists.</td>
<td>Mutually discuss alternative solutions.</td>
<td>Mutually agree on action to be taken to solve the problem.</td>
<td>Follow-up to measure results.</td>
<td>Reinforce any achievement when it occurs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Supervisors need to be comfortable in the knowledge that giving honest feedback to people even when delivered in the most caring way possible will not always be received positively.

7. What are two things to keep in mind when dealing with a complainer?

- Listen attentively
- Acknowledge what they’re saying
- Don’t give an unusually long period of time
- Don’t argue or apologize
- Don’t use “always” or “never”
- Ask “Why do you think that is occurring?” or “What do you think could be done to improve that?” or “What ideas do you have that might help?”
- Lavish verbal praise when the complainer does come up with an idea or suggestion
- The supervisor should ensure that the employee leaves the conversation knowing that his/her ideas were valued and that he/she had an opportunity to provide positive input

With an unresponsive?

- Ask as many open-ended questions as possible
- Use the friendly silent stare
- Attempt to discuss the situation by asking, “I expected you to say something and you’re not – what does that mean?” With still no further comment another open
ended comment that works could be, “How do we get out of this bind?” or “Can you talk about what makes it difficult for you to say what you’re thinking?”

With a superagreeable?

- Starting out conversations with something like, “I really want an honest response.”
- Clarify the importance of the topic by bringing them back to the reason we’re here
- Make every effort to show genuine concern, superagreeables need every assurance that they are valued
- Listen to the humor – there may be hidden messages in their jokes and humorous remarks that give insight into their opinions

With a know it all?

- Listen and acknowledge what the person has to say
- Question firmly but don’t confront
- Acknowledge their competence
- When getting them to consider other perspectives, state them as alternative versions rather than a situation in which they are completely wrong
- Provide a means of saving face if you want a positive outcome
- Addressing differences face-to-face and in private are critical

With a negativist?

- Avoid getting drawn into negativist thinking
- State realistic optimism
- It’s not helpful to argue
- Encourage them to consider the worst thing that could happen
- Ask them, “How much is this going to matter five years from now?”

8. List three suggestions to keep in mind for helping manage or prevent conflict and disagreement.

- Spend time getting to know staff on a personal basis. Listen and respond to their requests for assistance.
- Make sure everyone knows what the expectations are at the beginning, during and at the end of a shift.
- Make sure people are made aware initially and on an ongoing basis that ALL written communication needs to be professional in nature.
- Ensure everyone is on the same page regarding the way persons with disabilities are supported.
- Let employees know that increased stress and tension directly affect persons with disabilities.
• Stress the benefits of keeping conflict with coworkers between the parties who disagree.
• Stress the staffs’ responsibility as role models in relationship skills for people with disabilities.
Chapter 6: Feedback Answers

1. Define worker centered orientation.

A form of orientation focusing on helping new workers cope with the stress of starting a new job. The agency uses it to welcome new people, promote positive attitudes about the decision they made to join the organization, and acquaint them with the organization’s history, values, and goals. A worker-centered orientation gives enough information about work and behavioral expectations of their new position and agency policies and procedure to ensure the worker will be successful, but not overwhelmed. Planned opportunities to get to know other workers and service recipients help ease fears about that first solo shift.

2. Supervisors can learn from current employees about ways to improve training.

3. List at least two suggestions for improving training.

- Community agencies often have people willing to provide presentations on a variety of topics. Calling the county health office or other nearby medical facilities can result in some great speakers on a variety of topics.
- The use of films can be very engaging for employees. Why not have a monthly or quarterly Film Fest where you can view films and discuss?
- Rotating the responsibility for planning training can be a great way to extend the training resources in an organization. Put all leadership staff (and others who have information to share) on a scheduled rotation.
- Although it may be hard to get employees to read an entire book on management or programmatic issues, frequently, employees will read a chapter or two at a time which can be used for regular discussion.
- Think about hiring a consultant who will work for a fraction of the cost of a full or part time employee, providing trainings on a monthly or quarterly basis.
- Subscribe to journals and newsletters in our field to get regular information you may be able to disseminate to your staff.

4. Appropriate training can make an incredible difference in the way people deal with change.
Chapter 7: Feedback answers

1. Studies show that generally, when people leave an organization, it is not due to the job itself or other factors as much as issues with the ___supervisor__.

2. If there’s not a ___plan___ for recognition, it’s likely that little will occur in busy environments.

3. The key ingredient for any recognition initiative is that it has ___meaning___ for the individual being reinforced.

4. Celebrating accomplishments together can be a great team builder and source of ___recognition____.

5. List at least 3 points to Max Dupree’s book, “Importance of Friendliness.”

- Say please and thank you
- Look at people’s faces when they are talking to you and showing a pleasant face
- Greet people with a good morning or good afternoon before talking about work
- Be prompt in keeping appointments so people don’t have to waste time waiting for you
- Treat people who come into your office as guests by not making them wait or talk to the top of your head
- Apologize when you are late or have to interrupt a meeting
- Never insult them and wasting their time by accepting non-related phone calls during meetings
- Hold conversations with people versus lecturing them and not interrupting people when they are speaking
- Control your emotional outburst because you don’t have the right to speak loudly or otherwise abuse your employees
- Don’t make sarcastic comments
- Don’t eat or drink while meeting with your employees unless you offer them the same privilege
Chapter 8: Feedback Answers

1. Why are ethics, integrity, and personal values important?
   - Ethics, integrity, and personal values determine what a person does and how he or she sets priorities.
   - People lacking grounding in their values are easily swayed when things become difficult or when others try to steer them another way.
   - When we don’t make a firm commitment about what our values are, we let events and other people drive us.

2. What is a leemer?

   Leemers are instincts that tell us something is wrong – some may refer to it as a gut feeling.

3. The pain experienced when working ______ short staffed ______ is less than the pain of bringing someone into the organization that can negatively influence other staff or worse, harm people receiving support.

4. Good teams work together to develop ______ coping ______ strategies ______ for supporting individuals with complex needs.

5. List 4 strategies to help prevent staff from becoming overstressed.
   - Plan as a team, when things are not in crisis mode, how you will handle a crisis and the best way to prevent problems from escalating.
   - Have a thorough discussion after a crisis to assess what was done well and what can be improved next time.
   - Discuss what supports employees can give to each other when times are difficult.
   - Frame the effort of asking for help as a strength rather than a weakness.
   - Ensure staff know that they are expected to work with people with disabilities in a way that builds trust with them, not fear.

6. Sometimes supervisors may unknowingly give staff a message that says they want to avoid problems and incidents regardless of the cost. In these situations, staff feel free to use ______ threats ______ and ______ fear ______ with people with disabilities.

7. List two questions that may work out well as means to assess your performance through your employees.
   - What do you expect and need most from your supervisor?
   - If you were “in my shoes” what key areas or matters would you focus on?
• What significant areas are there in the organization where you feel you can make a contribution?
• What two things could we do together to work toward building a better team, department, or organization?
• In the past year, was there anything that affected your sense of integrity, either positively or negatively, in the organization?
• What are some signals that would make you concerned about the services we provide?

8. What are some things you’ve gained from working in the disability field?
Chapter 9: Feedback Answers

1. What tasks are recommended for the last 15 minutes of the supervisor’s day?

   Make a list of the things to be accomplished the next day

2. Waiting until the deadline approaches to work on projects typically does ___not___ make people more effective.

3. List two other tips for time management.

   - Always accomplish the tasks that are the ones most likely to be put off for later, first and get them out of the way
   - Work on a monthly, weekly and daily list of things that need to be done
   - Group similar activities together
   - Block off time to finish bigger projects
   - Delegate things that others should be doing
   - Determine what the most productive time of day is and schedule more difficult tasks then
   - Don’t start out the day taking care of a myriad of little things but work on things that will make a lasting change first
   - Agree to finish one part of a project or agree to work on it for a specific period of time rather than procrastinate

4. Some kind of break every ___90___ minutes significantly improved performance in the work place.

5. How do your habits of eating, sleeping, and exercising affect your available energy?

   Personal account

6. List the four questions supervisors can ask of themselves when negative thoughts are prevalent.

   - What am I doing about this?
   - What would I like to do about this?
   - What do I choose to do about this?
   - What am I going to do about this?
7. If supervisors are expected to be an effective role model and support people with disabilities as well as staff, they need to take time for **relaxation** and **renewal**.