EBP Step-By-Step Planning Guide: Summary Page

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for Risk Reduction

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Six Phases toward Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices for Risk Reduction

This Step-By-Step Planning Guide was created for community corrections agencies as a result of numerous requests by TCG customers for a simple, short Guide on how to go about building and sustaining an EBP agency. At first, we resisted creating this document. It has been our experience that organizations are so diverse and have so many different needs and cultures that to create a Guide would be foolhardy and potentially misleading. However, after training thousands of corrections professionals and providing on-site technical assistance to dozens of agencies over the years it became clear to us that certain patterns have emerged among agencies that have success with implementing EBP. We have attempted to capture the learnings from these experiences and provide you with a short, concise Guide. We have found that agencies that go through these steps sequentially tend to be more successful in sustaining EBP over time. The reader should be aware, however, that every agency will need to customize these steps based on their own circumstances. Planning may be linear but implementation rarely is. There is no singular "right way" because agencies are unique and the conditions they face are diverse. Nonetheless, we have found that most agencies would be best served if they follow these steps in roughly the order provided herein.

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| Phase One | Prepare for Implementation |

a.   Get leadership commitment and assess strategic fit

An agency will be hard pressed to sustain a change effort without the firm commitment of leadership and an agreement that EBP is the right strategic fit. Starting initiatives are relatively easy. Sustaining them takes persistence and strategy. Organizational resources are finite and activities consume resources especially attention and time. Agencies that simply pile on EBP activities to an existing pool of activities run the risk of marginalizing the importance of those events. Before starting a major change process there should be a "gut check." That is, leadership should revisit their core mission, or their BHAG (Big, Hairy Audacious Goal) as Collins and Porras call it in their book *Built to Last*. It needs to be clear about what is the agency's primary function, whether EBP gets them closer to their BHAG, and what trade-offs may be required to put in motion the EBP activities. There needs to be a "strategic fit" between these new practices and what the agency ultimately intends to accomplish with their resources. If this fit is not clear or if there is not a willingness to make forced choices that may require redirecting existing finite resources the agency should rethink whether it wants to move forward or how.

> "Whenever there is a complex problem there is a simple, fast and wrong solution"
>
> Author unknown

b. Set up an EBP planning work team to devise an EBP master plan

While preparation as the first step toward implementation may seem intuitively obvious a remarkable number of agencies jump right into action only to find out later that they underestimated the resources and did not foresee certain issues which ultimately threaten the effort. This can result in a lot of time and goodwill being expended without advancing the EBP plan. A successful effort requires careful planning up front before significant action steps are taken. In many cases, this preparation stage can take up to a year in order to address a variety of salient issues. Some of the things to consider include

- What exactly does EBP entail? What is the "it" that we are committing to?

- How much time and resources does it take?

- Are we committed to doing the hard work to make the necessary changes?

- Do we have the right personnel in the right places?

- How might this effort be communicated to staff and when?

- Is this the right timing for us as an agency? Do we have issues that we need to address first such as morale, workload, or the immersion of too much recent change to take on yet another?

- Do we need to "get our house in order" before we will be ready?

It is recommended that a work team made up of a diagonal slice of the agency be put in place to examine these and other issues. This team can talk with other jurisdictions, read key documents from others who have preceded them, and perhaps conduct a "field trip" to an agency that has undertaken a similar effort and can provide advice on what to do or not to do. After the team has sufficiently examined, and in some cases addressed their organizational readiness issues, they can be better prepared to move forward. Once the decision is made to proceed, careful messaging should be prepared for staff to ensure that a consistent, accurate, and positive message about the change initiative is delivered.

> "For every minute spent in organizing, an hour is earned"

c. Prepare direct line supervisors and middle management for their role as coaches

One of the lessons learned is that the direct line supervisor serves perhaps the most important role in sustaining risk reduction initiatives once they are in place. It is this individual who needs to know what to look for, address barriers at the line staff level, and be able to guide and coach staff. While they don't need to be the most technically skilled they do need to have in-depth knowledge of the research principles and competencies in order to serve as coaches. It is strongly recommended that direct line supervisors and middle managers get EBP training before, not simultaneously, the line staff. They need to be able to have opportunities to raise anticipated staff concerns and implementation challenges if they are going to be able to address these concerns and be able to positively encourage staff to adopt new behaviors. Throughout the entire planning and

implementation phases direct line supervisors need special attention, encouragement, and skill building. Furthermore, they need to understand their role as coaches which may differ from what they have traditionally done as supervisors. In an EBP environment, staff will be asked to provide direct intervention services aimed at addressing criminogenic needs. This activity will require frequent opportunities to be observed, problem solve around difficult situations, and receive coaching.

d. Train _all_ staff on risk, need, and responsivity

After the supervisors and mid-level managers have been trained on EBP the rest of the staff should be trained on the risk reduction principles of risk, need, and responsivity. It is strongly recommended that supervisors, managers, and directors attend the same training at the same time even though they had received it previously. There are at least three reasons for this. Firstly, since supervisors need to understand EBP more thoroughly than most in the organization, attending the training twice gives them the added advantage of hearing things in the first training that may not have been absorbed. That is, their understanding of the concepts should be deepened due to repetition. Secondly, it is important that staff see management in the training as a way of reinforcing the importance of the subject. Thirdly, supervisors and managers will gain insight as to what issues staff might have about EBP during the training. Exercises and questions posed during the training provide supervisors with a heads-up on the barriers that will likely need to be addressed whether that is workload, union contract, logistics, anxiety over performance, and the like.

Finally, it is recommended that all staff be trained in risk, need, and responsivity. Some agencies have not asked their support staff to attend. However, in the later phases of implementation, all agency staff will potentially be affected whether that is the way the receptionist handles an offender or how the human resource personnel alters job descriptions.

e. Create an eighteen month action plan

Once staff is trained and the agency is moving toward risk reduction, a more detailed action plan is needed. This plan will identify what immediate next steps need to be taken, by whom, and what will be put on hold until these first steps are completed. This plan should not be longer than roughly eighteen months in duration. Most of the landscape changes within a year and a half and planning further ahead is not very useful. Furthermore, despite the best intentions there are often unanticipated delays and changes in direction that will need to be attended to making longer term plans irrelevant. The action plan should contain a significant amount of detail such as how to restructure caseloads, whether to specialize, how to handle the various offender populations based on risk level, what strategies to put in place to involve stakeholders, how to conduct a service gap analysis, and how to get the service provider community involved and aligned with EBP. Many have found that having an outside facilitator work with the agency to guide this discussion can be useful.

a. Select and validate a risk/need assessment(s)

The risk/need assessments serve as the foundation from which most EBP activities flow. They establish the "who;" which populations will receive what kinds of services for how long, the "what;" which needs will be targeted for intervention, and the "how;" in what ways will the intervention be customized to meet the unique traits of the offender. Given how critical these assessments are to guiding the activities of the justice system, the actuarial tools must be received with confidence by the decision makers. This confidence should be based on the assessment validation (i.e., it properly identifies risk and need), normed to the local population (i.e., reflects the unique make-up of the jurisdictional clientele), and is being applied accurately (i.e., is consistently administered in accordance to the manual protocol). As a general rule, there should be three types of actuarial assessments put in place

- a brief screening tool that quickly assesses risk as a means of sorting who should get a longer, more comprehensive assessment

- a full risk/need tool that identifies not only risk but the specific criminogenic needs that become the targets for intervention

- additional "trailer" or specialized assessments for those offender populations whose specific needs may not be properly identified in a more generic assessment (such as the sex and domestic offender populations)

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b. Differentiate supervision by risk level

Once the risk levels of the agency offender population is known, the efficient application of resources can be determined. Evidence-based practice takes time to administer whether that is to conduct a full risk/need assessment or to hold a meaningful one-on-one supervision contact by which criminogenic needs are addressed. Workload is often reported as the primary obstacle to the implementation of EBP. Resources need to be judiciously applied. Fortunately, the research gives guidance on how to target these resources. Low risk offenders can most often be placed in banked caseloads or handled with high probationer/staff ratios thereby reducing caseloads for those officers to work more intensely with the higher risk. Most agencies report roughly a third of their probationers fall within the low risk range and have traditionally been over-supervised. The American Probation and Parole Association has published a paper suggesting that although workload is a preferred method of calculating resource allocation, certain caseload sizes in an evidence based practices environment should be targeted. They are

Case type	Cases to Staff Ratio	
	Adult	Juvenile
Intensive	20:1	15:1
Moderate to High Risk	50:1	30:1

Low Risk	200:1	100:1
Administrative	No limit? 1,000	Not recommended

In most EBP agencies, specialized caseloads are established. This allows for greater clarity of roles. It also facilitates a way for an agency to recruit and train around the competencies required for each role. For example, staff monitoring low risk cases should be highly organized and be proficient with automation. Extreme high risk agents should be street savvy and be able to flex their hours. Agents working with moderate to high risk probationers need to understand social learning, be relationship oriented, and be collaborative. The table below identifies some of the ways agencies have been able to manage resources while clearly delineating staff roles. The third column, primary staff role, describes the area where staff are to focus their time and attention. That is not to say that other parts of their role are to be disregarded (such as restitution collection, accountability, etc.).   Given limited time, it means that this is where their case planning focus should be.

Community Corrections Personnel Specialization Examples			
Specialized Area	**Workload Size**	**Primary Staff Role**	**Types of Activities (e.g.)**
Intake/Assessment	Varies by type of duties	- Efficient processing of cases - Accurate administration of assessment tools	- Conduct record checks - Complete investigations - Administer risk/need assessments
Extreme High Risk Supervision	Very low (e.g., 20 adults/agent; 15 juveniles/agent)	- Surveillance and crime suppression	- Multiple field visits/week for compliance - Random UA's - Share intelligence information with law enforcement
High Risk Supervision	Low (e.g., 50 adults/agent; 30 juveniles/agent)	- Reduction of risk to reoffend	- Case planning - Cognitive behavioral intervention - Effective one-on-one interventions (skill practice) - Collaboration with treatment providers
Moderate Risk Supervision	Moderate (e.g., 125 adults/agent; 50 juveniles/agent)	- Reduction of risk to reoffend	- Same as high risk supervision but less intensely - Collect restitution
Low-Moderate Risk Supervision	High (e.g., 250 adults/agent; 100 juveniles/agent)	- Compliance with court conditions	- Occasional contacts or group reporting - Possible use of phone/mail monitoring - Emphasis on ensuring follow through on court order
Low Risk Monitoring	Very High (e.g., 500 adults/agent)	- Compliance with court conditions in the most efficient manner	- Computerized monitoring of new arrests and notices of condition compliance
Specialized	The caseload/workload size and the role would vary depending on the specialization. In		

Caseloads (e.g., sex offenders, gang, domestic violence, gender, mental health, drug courts)	most cases, the value added from specialized caseloads results from the agent acquiring unique knowledge and skills and being able to work closely with the community based partners to collaborate around common case plan objectives.

Phase Three	Begin Stakeholder Collaboration

a. Collaborate with stakeholders who have vested interest in your agency changes

Agencies can accomplish a great deal around risk reduction by themselves whether that be how staff interact with offenders or what programs are put in place. However, the full potential of risk reduction will not be realized without engaging the key justice system and community stakeholders. Justice system stakeholders make crucial decisions that can support or undermine risk reduction efforts by community corrections. Some of these decisions involve sentencing conditions, plea negotiations, use of diversion, and how violation matters are handled. In addition, community service providers can be strong allies in establishing a unified front in terms of implementing and supporting services that are evidence based.

Most vexing is when and how to engage stakeholders in your efforts. It is recommended that you begin the process of involving the stakeholders when you have some sense as to what you want to do, the reasons for it, and the research behind the change. To approach stakeholders too early when you are not clear in your own mind what you want to do and why could undermine the confidence by the stakeholders over the initiative. Setting the right tone and having a firm grasp of the research underpinnings will greatly assist your efforts to engage them. It is not critical that you have "all the right answers" when you first approach them, but having a solid sense as to the direction will aid you in explaining why these changes are needed and why you will be needing their assistance. Furthermore, it is important to take the time to frame the EBP effort in their reality. Talk to the courts about EBP from their perspective. Describe how it might help them accomplish their goals and address their concerns. Do the same with each of the stakeholders. Give them ample time to absorb the information before asking them to act on a policy issue. If they are open, provide them with reading and other ways of understanding the issues related to risk reduction. Do not ask too much at the front end and give them ample notice of where you are headed as an agency.

> **Implementation Tip**
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> Time your involvement with stakeholders in such a way that you do not approach them too early, when you do not have a solid idea of where you are going with evidence based practices but also not too late when you have been using EBP without taking into account how it affects your stakeholders.

The timing around engagement of stakeholders will need to be customized to your culture and history. For example, some jurisdictions have ongoing Criminal or Juvenile Justice Coordinating Councils where information is shared and policy changes discussed. This might be a good forum to bring up your EBP efforts. Be sure to not wait too long before describing what your agency is doing. For example, it could create stakeholder consternation if they discover in a violation hearing that you are using risk assessment tools to help guide recommendations and decisions and they did not know about it. Your stakeholders will not react well to surprises such as when a prosecutor finds out that certain offenders "under supervision" are placed in a banked caseload and not seen by an officer.   As a general rule, it is recommended that you follow these guidelines

Early on in your planning process – Plan, prepare, and develop your thinking, but delay the sharing of too much information to stakeholders until you are more confident of what you want to do. This strategy will depend on your relationship with the stakeholder. In some cases, it is collegial and you often share ideas in a safe, trusting environment. In others, early negative perceptions can be formed which are difficult to overcome. Use your judgment as to how much information to share with whom in the beginning stages.

As your big picture plan firms up – Once you have a clear picture of where you want to go as an agency around EBP and what the research says begin talking about this with your stakeholders. Give them plenty of lead time to learn and anticipate possible implications.

As you begin to formulate a plan around assessments and differential supervision – Have prolonged conversations with your stakeholders and get their input as to its impact on them and any suggestions they have that might shape your plans.

As you implement the EBP changes – Engage the stakeholders on an ongoing basis letting them know how it is going and what you may need from them to support risk reduction efforts. Enter into a problem solving mode with them around issues that arise. Introduce ways that they can more fully participate in risk reduction activities.

As you assess EBP's impact – Show outcome data to the stakeholders about how the changed policies and practices are affecting risk reduction results. Ask them to assist you in determining how the system can address any concerns and celebrate those areas where positive progress has been made.

Phase Four	Master the Core Correctional Competencies

Once you have set up the foundation and begun the process of involving your stakeholders it is important that you move quickly toward answering the "now what?" question. Assessment information will indicate the need for certain responses whether that be a cognitive behavioral program, a need for a gender responsive intervention, or a need to apply effective case management strategies around a particular criminogenic need. Furthermore, as staff use motivational interviewing techniques

the probationer will more likely open up, disclose more information, and seek assistance. While providing staff with assessment information and motivational interviewing techniques is critically important, to do so without also giving them the intervention tools will only increase frustration. Herein we find a common dilemma. Repeatedly, staff report that agencies adopting EBP will "throw more and more expectations" at them in rapid fire succession never allowing them to master one skill before getting another training or policy change. This could be a valid concern and should be attended to. At the same time, the risk/need assessment does not garner much meaning to the staff when there is not a corresponding set of practices that can help address the issues that were identified in the assessment. Some of those practices include case plans, evidence-based case management techniques, skill practice, and effective one-on-one interactions. The failure to provide these practices and skills will result in a sense by staff that the risk/need assessment is meaningless and another perfunctory piece of work. Under these conditions, the assessment often gets buried into the file, not to be viewed again. This gap between mastering the assessment and applying differential supervision and that of ensuring that the services are available to match the assessment results in a sort of "wilderness" experience and a sense of busyness. The goal should be to keep this interim period of time as short as possible without forcing the next phase of skill development too fast, before the foundation is fully in place.

> ### Implementation Tip
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> Give staff the big picture up front when implementing the assessment and differential supervision plan. Let them know that the missing programs and skill practice will follow soon, after staff master the beginning phase of the EBP plan.

a. Develop and implement a case plan designed to reduce risk of reoffense

A simple case plan that addresses the top criminogenic needs should be developed. In some cases, the authors of the risk/need assessment will have a corresponding case plan. In others, it will need to be developed. There are many prototypes being used across the country and one could easily be customized for your local jurisdiction. The key is to keep them short, user-friendly, and ensure that they focus on the top criminogenic needs. Staff should be trained in how to integrate the assessment results effectively into a case plan.   These plans are not the same as supervision plans which basically spell out the court conditions and rules of supervision. Case plans address the intervention goals and provide concrete steps to accomplishing those goals primarily around risk reduction.

b. Train supervisors on coaching staff on the four core correctional competencies

As noted before, supervisors should be trained first on the four core correctional competencies (skill practice, case planning/management, use of rewards and sanctions, and professional alliance). This training should describe the research behind these competencies, the activities associated with them,

tools to administer the competencies, and coaching skills on how to guide their staff in utilizing these EBP activities and skills. Even when services are not available in the community to adequately address the offenders' criminogenic needs, direct service staff can provide an effective response. It is crucial that line supervisors understand what these competencies are and have comfort in helping their staff become "direct service providers" in their one-on-one sessions. This direct service takes many forms including teaching skills, role modeling, motivational interviewing, and reinforcing the learning from community service provider programs.

c. Train and coach staff on effective one-on-one interactions (i.e., the four core correctional competencies

Once the supervisors are trained, the staff should receive similar training. As noted before, it is preferable that the direct line supervisors attend this training with their staff even though most of it will have been covered in the supervisor-only training. This training will take a minimum of two days. However, it is strongly recommended that additional booster trainings be established. These boosters can be short (as little as fifteen minutes) as a way to refresh the learning and reinforce the risk reduction efforts.

d. Conduct a gap analysis and develop interventions that address criminogenic needs

The risk/need assessment will quantify the services needed from an agency-wide perspective. The criminogenic needs can be tracked so the agency knows what percent of the medium and high risk offenders have a need in each of the eight need areas. This number can be compared to the intervention slots available to determine what needs are most pronounced. This "gap analysis" will provide a roadmap on which interventions are most needed. In the majority of jurisdictions, there are significant intervention gaps in the areas of cognitive behavioral programming, gender and cultural responsive groups, and pre-contemplative primers (i.e., treatment preparation). If the existing budget does not allow for the development of new programs, the agency can collaborate with existing service providers to alter the kinds of programs that are made available or, in many cases, deliver these services in-house by shifting resources.

Phase Five	Implement Continuous Quality Improvement Processes

The Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) step is placed in Phase Five because of the immense amount of work that is required in the first four phases. However, this does not diminish its importance. Furthermore, it may not be prudent to wait until this phase to implement CQI out of concern that bad habits could be formed before CQI processes illuminate a need for retraining or coaching. For example, the risk/need assessment is the foundation from which the EBP risk reduction activities are formed. If the assessment is being administered incorrectly many decisions along the way will be

based on erroneous information. Therefore, it is recommended that whenever possible CQI begin when a risk reduction process is put in place.

> **Implementation Tip**
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> Keep it Simple. Do not complicate the work; 80% of the value added by processes will be achieved by 20% of the activities. To squeeze out the remaining 20% is time intensive and potentially harmful to the long term success

a. Develop and implement a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan

Continuous Quality Improvement is defined as a set of processes that generate continual feedback for the purpose of ensuring that the services and practices provided are being delivered in the intended manner in order for the agency to achieve its mission. The primary objectives of a CQI process is fourfold

1. To identify what practices are working well and what needs improvement

2. To help nurture a work environment that seeks to continuously learn and improve

3. To identify needed enhancements within organizational processes and structures that will support the quality of service delivery (such as staff recruitment, training, technology, incentives, and performance evaluations)

4. To improve outcomes (especially those around risk reduction)

The areas where CQI is immediately recommended include assessment, case management, cognitive behavioral programming, and core correctional practices (effective staff-offender interactions).

Here again, there are many prototypes of CQI tools and manuals that are already in place across many correctional jurisdictions. The important thing to remember is that if something is worth doing then it should be measured to determine if it is having the intended impact and, if not, be modified. Agencies are urged, however, to be judicious with how many CQI processes are put in place. It is better to be effective with a few than ineffective because there are too many and it overwhelms agency resources and tolerance.

b. Identify risk reduction outcome and performance measures in a user-friendly manner

An EBP agency needs to put in place measurements to determine if the activities are achieving the intended outcome. These include process (intermediate), outcome, and performance measures. The numbers should be reported in user-friendly ways in order to achieve its intended result; i.e., to provide a feedback loop to the agency staff and induce practice modifications where needed. Where possible, programs should be evaluated, preferably from an outside source.

c.   Partner with contracted service providers to ensure EBP services are in place

Community service providers are a critical part of the risk reduction effort. Risk/need assessments provide the agency with guidance as to proper case management and service referrals. If the community-based service is not delivered effectively or contains techniques that do not contribute toward addressing criminogenic needs then risk reduction objectives will be diminished. The EBP effort should be a collaborative one whenever possible whereby the justice system partners with the service providers to ensure that targeted and quality services are provided. Community corrections will need to work with these providers to ensure that information as to what is effective is shared both ways and that processes are put in place to demonstrate confidence in the service. Program assessments such as the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory or the Correctional Program Checklist are available to determine the degree to which program services adhere to the research on risk reduction.

> "Evidence-based practices is not rocket science. It is more difficult than rocket science."
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> Paraphrased quote from Joan Petersilia, University of California at Irvine

Phase Six	Develop Infrastructural Supports for Sustainability

Organizational change is not easy as reflected in the number and percent of change initiatives that fail to reach their potential. Entire bodies of knowledge are being built as businesses, non-profits, and government struggle with the difficult task of technology transfer. Fortunately, this means that a great deal about successful change has been learned. It is now incumbent on community corrections agencies to become familiar with and apply that knowledge. Part of this new knowledge is an acknowledgement that an infrastructure needs to be put in place to support and reinforce the behaviors sought after in an EBP environment.

a.   Create a learning organizational culture

For an agency to fully embrace risk reduction strategies it is important that it examine its current culture to determine if there are processes that are misaligned and interfering with the desired state. A culture that is consistent with evidence-based risk reduction processes will be much more effective at implementation than those that communicate mixed messages to staff. Perhaps most important to this cultural alignment is that of becoming a learning organization. A learning organization is one that

constantly seeks new knowledge, more effective ways of doing business, and feedback to determine whether current activities are hitting the mark. This kind of organization views mistakes as learning opportunities – rather than threats -- and supports its staff in developing their skills and enhancing their effectiveness. Agencies that are working to create a learning culture evidence signs of their intent; these may be simple reinforcements such as displaying posters that list the criminogenic needs; providing staff with one-page, at-a-glance laminated guides on how to conduct motivational interviewing; or establishing a routine of case consultation sessions where staff provide one another feedback on how best to manage specific cases.

b. Put in place structural supports that make EBP easier to do than not

Efforts to guide staff toward EBP activities require careful consideration of their day-to-day work challenges whether that be workload, paperwork, equipment, skill deficiencies, insufficient tools, or lack of clear direction. Structural supports will greatly enhance staffs' ability to use EBP in their direct service work. Many examples of tools and structures are available such as worksheets to be used with offenders, tracking sheets to monitor program dosage, offender treatment journals, cognitive behavioral reinforcement guides, thinking reports, automated case plans, etc. The agency should adopt as many of these structural supports as possible to make the difficult job of changing offender behavior more easy than when left to their own devices.

> Implementation Tip
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> A conscious effort should be made to remove as many irrelevant and outmoded work processes, data collection forms, and redundant activities as possible. Substituting evidence-based for traditional supervision activities will indicate to staff that the new way of doing business is not more work but rather more effective work.

c. Align recruitment, hiring and promotional processes with risk reduction competencies

It is people that ultimately deliver the kind of services that increase the likelihood that offenders will change their behavior. Attention should be devoted to the recruitment and development of this resource. The staff with the right skills should be recruited and hired. The staff in place should be placed in the part of the agency where their natural skills can be put to best use. The existing staff should receive targeted skill development to enhance effective staff-offender interactions. Job promotions should be carefully considered based on the kind of competency required as opposed to experience alone. Agency recognition and rewards should be provided consistent with a risk reduction emphasis to ensure that the right messages are given to all staff as to what is deemed most important to the agency mission.

d. Revise staff development plans

Training plans should also align with risk reduction needs. Staff skills in a risk reduction environment are significantly different than those in a compliance or monitoring culture. Staff development plans should be revisited and developed based on the core competencies required of each position.

> "Long range vision and strategic planning are great tools, but we need to get some things done before lunch."
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> *Author unknown*