



Research Snippet

Dynamic Security Practice among Correctional Officers: Acquiring the Skills

KEY WORDS: *dynamic security practice, correctional staff interrelations*

What it means

Correctional Officers report acquiring the skills necessary to practice effective dynamic security through training, mentorship, and on-the-job experience. Correctional Officers also report that the required skill set is, to some extent, a part of an individual's existing interpersonal skills. Therefore, the ability to develop relationships with offenders, establish trust, and communicate effectively is affected by an officer's personal characteristics as well as learned dynamic security skills.

What we found

Formal training was acknowledged as essential to developing dynamic security practice among staff who spoke of both their initial correctional training as well as supplemental training received later in their careers. Correctional Officers' own words best illustrate their perceptions and the following quotes are excerpts from interviews conducted for this study.

They taught you very basic, simple things that let the speaker know that they're being heard and to me that's the success of it all.

...we received a lot of dynamic security training on ways to communicate, on ways to develop a rapport, on ways to work with other people.

...I would say observation skills can always be fine tuned, so that can be taught, and knowing what to look for that's taught; they taught that on CORE very well.

In addition to formal training, many Correctional Officers emphasized the necessity of on-the-job experience (62%) and mentorship (47%).

...it [training] shows you some tools, some aspects of it, but you can't buy experience.

I don't know if they can teach you how to use dynamic security to talk to inmates until you actually work in an institution.

I had the opportunity to learn a lot from a lot of very good, experienced staff...just watching and listening

is what's made me a far better officer than I would have been.

They'll [senior officers] teach you things that you're not going to learn in CORE [training], it's their experience and they're going to teach you, well, this is how I would have dealt with it.

According to 35% of Correctional Officers, some individuals are already equipped with effective interpersonal skills prior to being hired or trained. This aspect of developing effective dynamic security practice underscores the importance of using appropriate screening tools as part of routine hiring practices.

...I think you're going to meet people that have the skills and you're going to meet people that don't have those skills and I think you'll figure that out pretty quick how it is...

...it's not really a skill...it's something that comes with you; you either have it or you don't.

Why we did this study

Dynamic security involves building relationships with offenders to enhance the safety and security of correctional institutions. It is therefore important to develop a solid understanding of effective methods of dynamic security skill acquisition to ensure a well-functioning correctional institution.

What we did

We conducted a pilot study to assess the use of dynamic security practices in correctional facilities. Thirty-four Correctional Officers from two medium security institutions in the Ontario region were interviewed about their understanding of dynamic security practices. The results were analyzed qualitatively.

For more information

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