

# Addressing Sexual Abuse of Youth in Custody



## Module 7:

## Agency Culture

# Objectives

- Define agency culture
- Understand the components of culture
- Identify influences on agency culture
- Understand specific issues related to juvenile agencies
- Understand the impact of culture on juvenile agencies
- Identify strategies for changing culture

# Webster's Definition of Culture

- The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations;
- The customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group;
- The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization;
- The set of values, conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic.

# Foundation of Culture

- Culture is communication, communication is culture



# Components of Agency Culture

- Beliefs: Shared explanations of experience
  - Example: Youth should be treated with respect and dignity.
  - Example: Youth cannot be trusted and youth will always lie.
- Values: What is considered right and good
  - Example: If it's youth vs. staff, the decision supports the staff member.
    - If its youth vs. staff, err on the side of believing youth.

# Components of Agency Culture

- Norms: Shared rules, “the way things are done”.
  - Example: Don’t volunteer for assignments.
  - Example: Don’t be late on third shift.
  - Example: Don’t use bad language.
  - Example: Don’t turn in fellow employees that violate rules.
- Norms are often **MORE** powerful than formal guidelines.

# Components of Agency Culture

- Phantom Rules: Rules that people create that they THINK are the real rules based on their own misunderstanding or past history - these rules have NOTHING to do with the actual rule.
  - Example: TJPC will always believe the juvenile versus the detention officer
  - Example: If you restrain a kid, you will be investigated.
  - Everyone wears blue on Fridays.

# Influences on Culture

- History: critical events
- Hiring process: qualities sought, backgrounds considered, questions asked, fairness of process, objectivity
- Promotional process
- Leadership and agency ethics
- Public opinion



# Influences on Culture

- Staff-staff interactions
- Staff-youth dynamics
- Youth-youth dynamics
- Agency policy and procedures
- Language
- Disciplinary process



# Impact of Culture: Staff

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# The Employee ‘Code of Silence’

## ■ What is the “Code of Silence”?

- A code of silence is when a person opts to withhold what is believed to be vital or important information voluntarily or involuntarily.
- A shroud of secrecy, agreement to keep quiet.
- The code of silence is usually either kept because of threat of force, or danger to oneself, or being branded as a traitor or an outcast within the unit or organization



# The Employee ‘Code of Silence’

- How prevalent is the “Code of Silence” in our organizations today?
- National Institute of Ethics conducted survey of 3,714 police officers regarding “code of silence”.
- 42% admitted to having witnessed misconduct by another employee but took no action.

# The Employee 'Code of Silence'

- Protection of self and co-workers and even management or supervisors
- Non-cooperation with management and investigators
- Staff will risk discipline and even termination rather than violate this powerful norm
- Culture imposes penalties on staff who break the code of silence

# Impact of Staff Culture on an Investigations

- Culture can either support or obstruct an investigation
- Need to understand culture in which investigations take place
- Important for participants from other agencies to understand the features of juvenile justice culture
- Outcomes of investigations can in turn influence culture
- Understand the challenge of conducting independent investigations in close / small communities

# Red Flags

- What is a “red flag” and why is it important?
  - A warning signal.
  - Something that demands attention or provokes an irritated reaction.
  - Red flags are actions, words, situations or settings that should warn a person that something may be wrong.

# Red Flags: Staff Sexual Misconduct

- Over-identifying with any resident or their issues (i.e., blind to offender's actions)
- Offender knows personal information about staff
- Resident has letters or photos of staff
- Staff granting special requests or showing favoritism
- Resident in unauthorized area or repeatedly out of their assigned space



# Red Flags: Staff Sexual Misconduct

- Staff spending an unexplainable amount of time with a resident
- Staff taking resident out of cell at unusual times
- Staff in personal crisis (divorce, ill health, bankruptcy, death in family)
- Overheard conversations between staff and resident which is sexualized in nature, or refers to the physical attributes of staff or resident

# Red Flags: Staff Sexual Misconduct

- Hygiene changes for officers (wearing makeup suddenly or dressing nicer)
- Contraband
- Creating opportunities to be alone
- Familiarity with youth
- Extra interest in unpopular kids;
- Being only person who understands the kids, etc.

# Challenges for Leadership

- Discover the root of the problem
- Can be a symptom of the culture
- Addressing the problem in a systematic way is about cultural change
- Cultural change is the challenge for leadership
  - Must shift deeply ignored norms and attitudes
  - Ideology and attitude lies in key positions



# Impact of Culture: Youth

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# Youth Culture: *A Toxic Recipe*

- 'Normal' teen behavior
  - Impulsiveness, raging hormones, short-sighted
  
- Typical youth profile in the juvenile justice system
  - History of abuse & neglect, mental illness, behind academically / special education
  
- Questionable staff ethics
  - Sexual joking and innuendos, tolerance, complacency

# Red Flags of Victim: Youth on Youth Sexual Abuse

- Refusal to shower, eat or be in certain less supervised areas
- Self abuse or suicidal behaviors
- Withdrawing or isolating themselves
- Increased medical complaints and attention seeking
- Uncharacteristic acting out in an effort to stay in segregation or facilitate transfer

# Red Flags of Victim: Youth on Youth Sexual Abuse

- Letters between youth
- Graffiti
- Bedwetting
- Kids exchanging food, sharing food...using food for favors; giving away commissary items
- Will not shower with others; afraid to shower
- Drama, fighting over stuff
- Homicidal threats

# Red Flags of Perpetrator: Youth on Youth Sexual Abuse

- Verbal harassment
- Grooming of potential victims
- Blatant sexual harassment
- Prior history of sexual assault
- Past victimization
- Difficulty controlling anger
- Poor coping skills / strategies
- Voyeuristic / exhibitionistic behavior



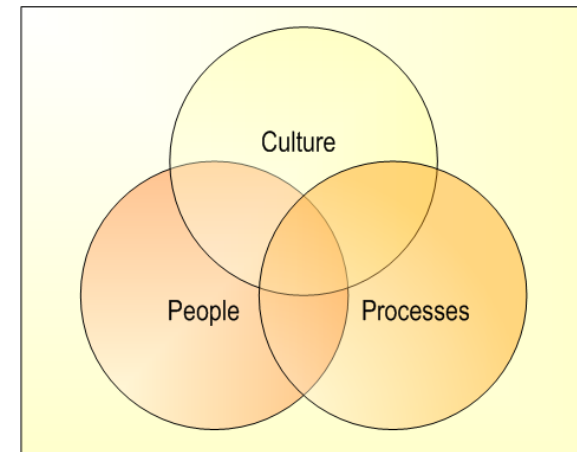


# Changing Culture

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# Changing Culture

- 3 Steps to Culture Change
  - Understand the current culture (the way things are now)
  - Decide what the organizational culture should look like to support success
  - The individuals in the organization must decide to change their behavior to create the desired culture



# Strategies for Changing Agency/Organization Culture

- Involve all key entities:
  - Line Staff, mid management, management
  - Governing boards/CJPO/CEO
  - External stakeholders (law enforcement, prosecutors)
- A top-down approach is essential to success of culture change
- Create a culture and community of accountability
- Model the behavior

# Strategies for Changing Agency/Organization Culture

- Leadership matters!
- PREA Report states:
  - Sexual abuse is not an inevitable feature of incarceration. Leadership matters because corrections administrators can create a culture within facilities that promotes safety instead of one that tolerates abuse.

# Strategies for Changing Agency/Organization Culture

- Envision the big picture
  - Define your agency/organization mission, vision and values
- Change the organizational culture
  - Executive Support
  - Training

# Strategies for Changing Agency/Organization Culture

- Create value and belief statements
- Practice effective communication
- Review organizational structure
- Redesign your approach to rewards and recognition
- Review all work systems

# Strategies for Changing Agency/Organization Culture

- Juvenile justice experts need to meet with local officials (juvenile board, law enforcement, prosecutors, DPS troopers, etc.).
- Train your local officials on your new culture of juvenile corrections.
- Impress upon local officials your new culture.
- Involvement of key stakeholders is essential to a successful culture change

# Strategies for Changing Agency/Organization Culture

- Idea: change terminology to change culture.
  - “Correctional officer” to “youth leader” or “child care worker”, etc.
  - Youth Care Officers
  - Residential Youth Care Officers



# Strategies for Changing Staff Culture

- Conduct appropriate screening during hiring process
- Define boundaries for employees through policies that are clear, concise and definitive about what is acceptable and unacceptable
- Provide employees appropriate tools for self assessment, to help them learn when they might be crossing boundaries
- Provide employees with access to advice and assistance when they have concerns and questions about boundaries
  - A safe environment for the discussion of concerns and questions without fear of embarrassment or retaliation

# Strategies for Changing Staff Culture

- The PREA Report states:
  - Exemplary staffing practices are needed to change culture.
  - Leaders need the right staff to create a genuine culture of zero tolerance.
  - Rigorous vetting is crucial; so are supporting and promoting staff that demonstrate commitment to preventing sexual abuse.

# Strategies for Changing the Staff “Code of Silence”

- Create a culture where officers place loyalty to INTEGRITY above loyalty to other officers/staff/peers.
- Place honor above loyalty to other staff members/friends/peers
- Behavior must be modeled from all levels of management on down to line staff
- Regular training on ethics is absolutely necessary

# Strategies for Changing Staff Culture

- Make it clear that you take the issue of sexual abuse of youth seriously
  - Develop a firm zero tolerance policy
  - Zero tolerance must mean zero tolerance
  - Consequence: Something has to happen to someone
- Model the behavior daily
  - Insist that all managers and supervisors do the same
  - The culture will not tolerate hypocrisy
  - Consequences must be fair and consistent
- Train, train, train on expectations

# Strategies for Changing Staff Culture

- Educate staff
  - Requirements of the law
  - Liability of management and staff
  - Criminal consequences
  - Professionalism and ethics
  - Adolescent development

# Strategies for Changing Staff Culture

- Train and support first line supervisors in their efforts to supervise employees, and recognize red flags
- Ensure that there are open dialogues specific to the issue
  - Regular employee meetings
  - Regular discussions and sharing of information and concerns

# What Are the Strategies for Changing Youth Culture?

- Change the environment
  - Create an environment in the facility where youth feel safe reporting sexual abuse and are confident their allegations will be investigated.
- Orient and Educate Youth
  - Teach youth about boundaries, being safe and how to report abuse
- Empower youth
  - Allow youth to have responsibilities; peer mentors