

## **The Impact of PREA Staff Training**

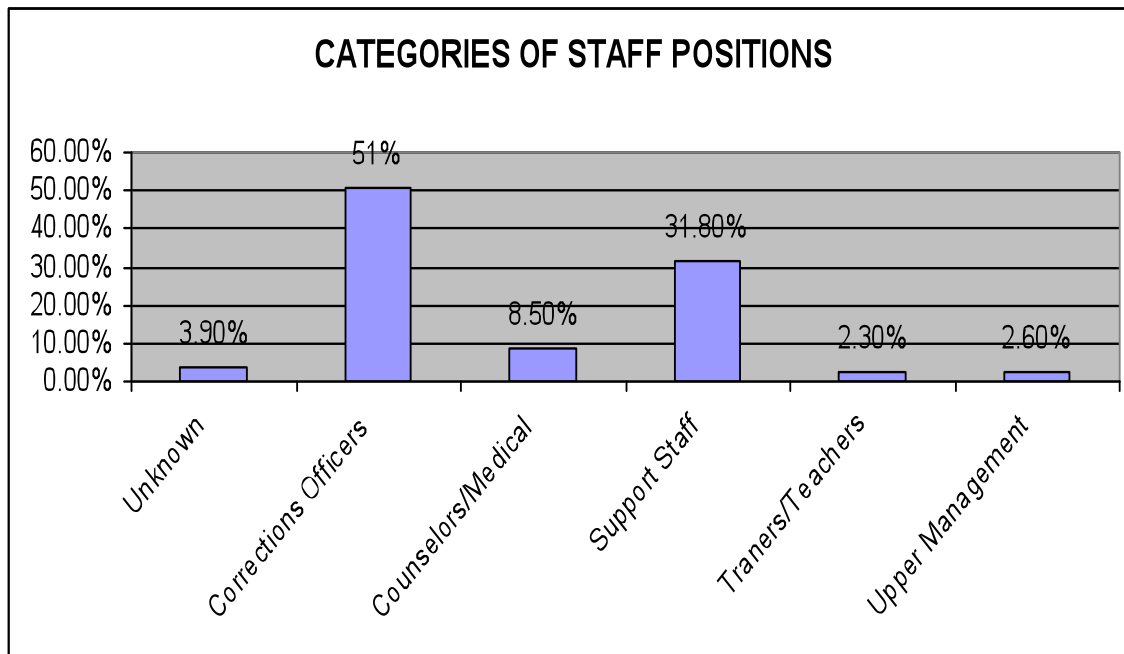
The PREA grant awarded to the Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) contained three goals that required design and delivery of staff and inmate training on inmate sexual assault and increased knowledge on best practices in handling and preventing prison assaults. The first goal was to increase staff expertise on sexual assault awareness, effective handling, and prevention. Tasks to accomplish this goal included researching sexual assault training programs for correctional staff, developing a staff training program on inmate sexual assault, incorporating PREA training in basic training for all new VADOC employees, and conducting process evaluations of the impact of this training. Another goal was to train veteran VADOC staff to incorporate best practices in handling and preventing prison sexual assault on inmates. When this goal was incorporated into the grant, it was envisioned that veteran staff would be handled via a web-based distance learning training program. However, VADOC officials decided to include PREA training in yearly mandatory training for all veteran staff so there was no need to deploy this training via distance learning. A third goal was to decrease the level of inmate victimization. Tasks to accomplish this goal included researching sexual assault training programs for inmates, developing an inmate training program on prevention of sexual assault, and delivering the training to inmates during their reception phase. The inmate PREA training was also offered to all inmates at each institution during 2007 and 2008.

A primary performance measure of the effectiveness of PREA staff training was analysis of knowledge and attitude gains as a result of Virginia Department of Correction's comprehensive inmate sexual assault prevention program. This report details the performance measures of the PREA training for VADOC staff. The performance measures for this goal included gathering the total number of staff who received the PREA staff training. An additional performance

measure required gathering and analyzing pre-test and post-test results (gains in staff knowledge of sexual assault awareness, knowledge of prevention of inmate sexual assault, expertise in eliciting sexual assault reports, and effective handling of inmate sexual assault) of the staff's competency scores. Roughly 9,000 staff completed the PREA training in CY 2007. Of this number, a random sample of pre-test and post-test results of 745 VADOC staff who completed PREA training was analyzed.

**Research Population:** The research population was a random sample of the pre-tests and post-tests of seven hundred and forty five (745) Virginia Department of Corrections staff who participated in PREA training between August and October of 2007. The sample population included VADOC staff who have either direct or indirect contact with offenders. The sample population included support staff such as Correctional counselors, office personnel, medical staff, teachers, and postal assistants. Correctional staff included executive staff (Majors and Lieutenants) and Correctional Officers. The majority of the trainees (51%) were Correctional Officers. Of the 745 trainees sampled, 380 were Correctional Officers. The other staff categories sampled included 63 Counselors or Medical personnel (8.5%); 237 support staff (31.8%); 17 teachers or trainers (2.3%), 19 upper management (2.6%) and 29 unknown positions (3.9%). A visual representation of the staff category percentages in the research sample population is given in Chart 1.

**Chart 1: Staff Category Percentages in the PREA Trainee Research Sample**

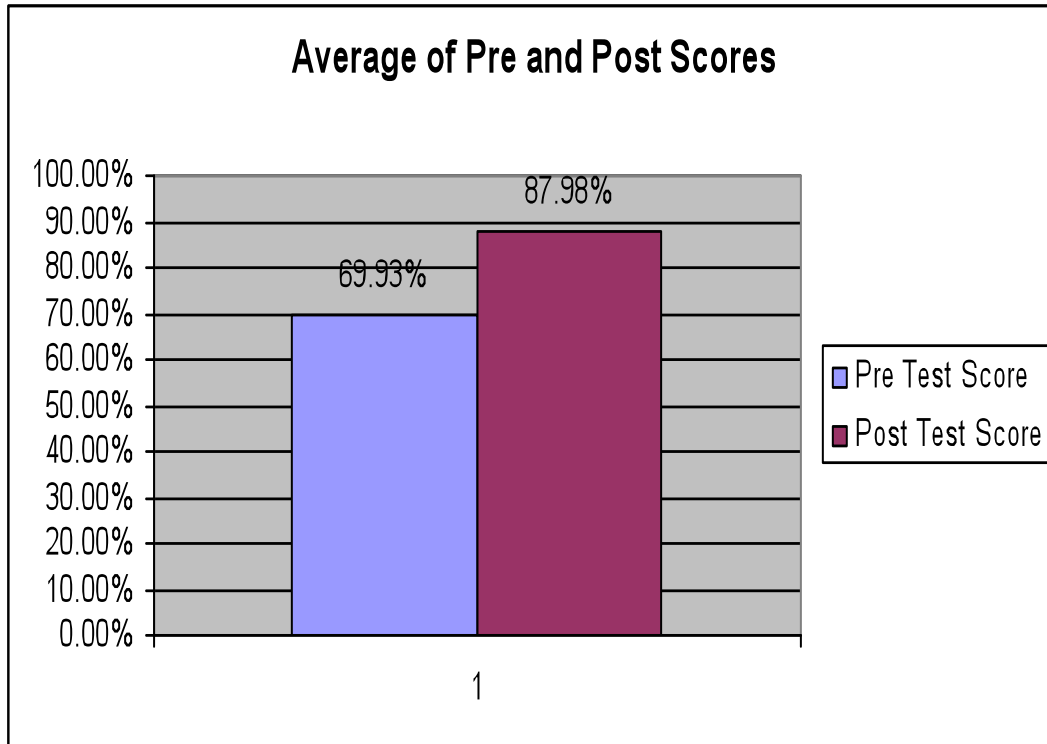


**Methodology:** Prior to the start of each PREA training session, pre-tests were given to trainees to gauge their knowledge level of inmate sexual assault and best practices in handling and preventing sexual assault in prisons. After completing the PREA training course, trainees completed another post-test that re-assessed their knowledge about inmate sexual assault. The paired pre-tests and post-tests were then analyzed by PREA research analysts. Gains (or losses) in competency scores on PREA knowledge were assessed by subtracting the pre-test score from the post-test score of each trainee. The following report describes the trainee population, mean scores on pre-tests and post-tests, and net gains in competency scores after PREA training.

**Results:** Descriptive statistics (mean averages) were used to examine the mean average scores of the sample population on their pre-tests and their post-tests. The pre-test mean average was 69.93. With a passing score of 70, this indicated that the average score before PREA trainees

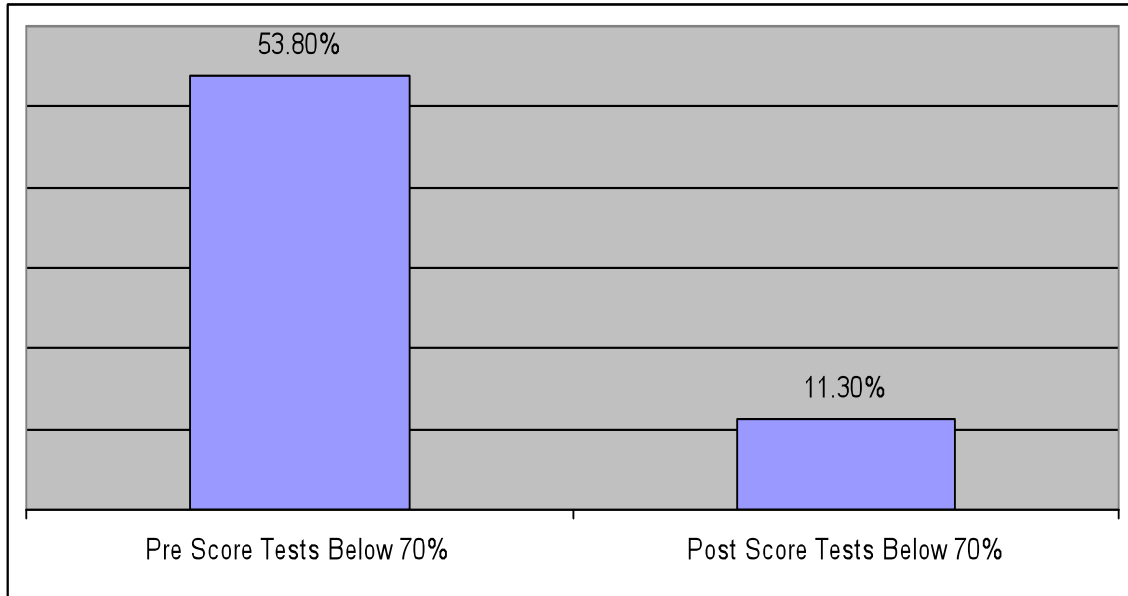
went through the training course was not a passing score. The post-test mean average score increased to 87.98. This is an average score increase of 18 points after PREA training.

**Chart 2: Comparison of Mean Scores on PREA Pre-test and Post-test Scores**

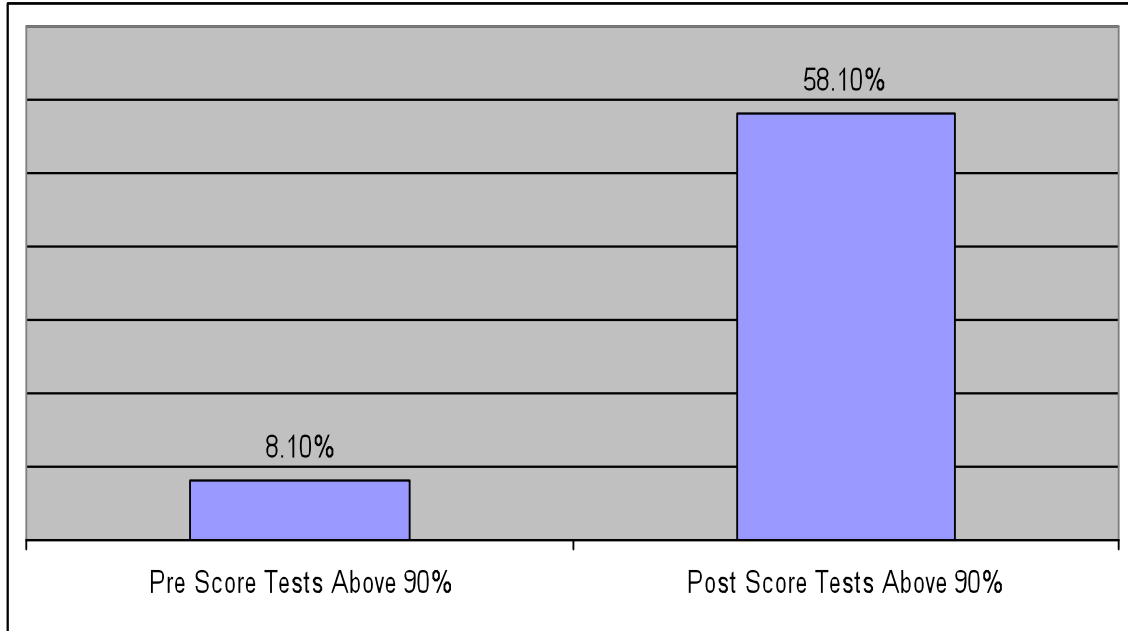


Further analysis of pre-test scores indicated that over half of the staff 53.8% (401) had scores of 70% or below while only 8.1% (61) scored 90% or greater. The post-test scores showed the opposite skew – a majority of trainees (57% or 425 of the 745) scored higher than 90% while only 11.3% (84) staff scored 70% or lower. These data show a reversal in overall scoring totals between pre-test and post-test scores after completion of PREA training.

**Chart 3: Staff Scoring 70% or Below on PREA Pre-tests and Post-tests**



**Chart 4: Staff Scoring 90% or Above on PREA Pre-tests and Post-tests**



**Summary and Conclusion:** Performance measures of the impact of PREA staff training used pre-tests given prior to training and post-tests after completing training to gauge changes in staff knowledge level of inmate sexual assault and best practices in handling and preventing sexual assault in prisons. The paired pre-tests and post-tests of a sample of 745 Virginia Department of Corrections staff were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The sample population included VADOC staff who have either direct or indirect contact with offenders. They included Correctional Officers (51%), counselors or medical personnel (8.5%), support staff (31.8%); teachers or trainers (2.3%), management staff (2.6%) and 29 unknown positions. The staff was trained between August and October 2007.

Analysis using descriptive statistics indicated that the pre-test mean average was 69.93. With a passing score of 70, this indicated that the average pre-test score was not passing. The post-test mean average score increased to 87.98. This is an average score increase of 18 points after PREA training. Further analysis of pre-test scores indicated that over half of the staff 53.8% (401) had scores of 70% or below while only 8.1% (61) scored 90% or greater. The post-test scores showed the opposite skew – a majority of trainees (57% or 425 of the 745) scored higher than 90% while only 11.3% (84) staff scored 70% or lower. These data show a reversal in overall scoring totals between pre-test and post-test scores after completion of PREA training.