

Application in the field:
**Reframing Messages
During Supervision
Orientation**

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**Research
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The Project

Project Overview

In 2019, Multnomah County's Assessment and Referral Center (ARC) partnered with the county's Office of Diversity and Equity and the Research and Planning Team to revise the official Probation and Post-Prison Orientation PowerPoint with a lens toward trauma-informed care, cultural competency, and equity.

This project was undertaken as part of a larger grant initiative aimed at improving the community supervision experience for young adults aged 15-25. In 2015, the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice received a Smart Supervision grant through the Bureau of Justice Assistance to help develop and align a variety of emerging best practices in the supervision of young adults. These best practice areas included the case management approach Effective Practices in Supervision (EPICS), trauma informed care (TIC), brain development science, and cultural competency.

In conjunction with efforts to improve the day-to-day supervision experience for this population, efforts were also made to revamp a number of critical moments during supervision. One identified area in need of attention was the mandatory orientation day that is attended at the start of supervision by all Multnomah County supervisees. This orientation involves a two-hour meeting to learn the supervision requirements, sign the required paperwork, and have an initial contact with a probation or post-prison supervision officer. The orientation is attended by justice-involved individuals (JIIs) who are beginning probation or post-prison supervision, along with their natural supports (family, partners, and friends).

This report details the efforts that were made to improve the quality of the orientation PowerPoint, which is displayed as key speakers discuss their roles, requirements, and services surrounding supervision. As the PowerPoint is the first item on the agenda during the orientation, it sets the tone for both the remainder of orientation, and for the JII's experience on supervision in general.

Improvements to the PowerPoint text were made by convening a workgroup consisting of Community Justice managers, adult probation officers, community corrections staff, and an Equity and Inclusion specialist. Over the course of six meetings, each slide was assessed and modified until consensus was reached. Following the structural changes, a data visualization designer attended to the design elements of the slides.

The Changes

Equity and Inclusion

An equity and empowerment lens was applied in order to reduce the power dynamics and potential for retraumatization inherent in the Probation and Post-Prison Orientation PowerPoint. When an equity lens is correctly applied, “all partners at all levels align around transformative values, relationships and goals moving toward equity, integrating an emphasis on doing less harm and supporting actions that heal and transform” (Balajee et al., 2012).

Equity lens application requires attention to four factors:

Connection to **People**: Consideration of the multiple cultural ways of being

Connection to **Place**: Consideration of locales and social relationships in community

Connection to **Process**: Consideration of policies and norms that create inequalities

Connection to **Power**: Consideration of prioritization and marginalization of people

This application of the equity lens to the Probation and Post-Prison Orientation PowerPoint required the team to acknowledge and challenge the unstated operational assumptions of the PowerPoint, to consider what emotions the PowerPoint evoked for the JIIs, and to identify instances of gatekeeping and power differentials.

Color Theory

Studies across children and adults suggest that the color **red** elicits negative responses (Gil & Le Bigot, 2016). In a summary of the physio-psychology of color, Lean (1984) reviewed that red increases blood pressure, pulse, and respiration, spurs faster muscle reactions, is more tiring, and increases appetite.

In contrast, **blue** slows blood pressure, pulse, and respiration (Lean, 1984). **Green** and **purple** were also on the inhibiting end of the color spectrum for physiological effects. An early review of color use in environmental design and the effects of color on human behavior suggested that cool colors tend to be relaxing, decrease muscle tension, respiration, heart rate, and blood pressure (Wineman, 1979).

In line with this work, the colors red, yellow, and orange were removed from the PowerPoint Slides wherever possible. In their place, the colors blue, green, and purple were inserted. Imagery was chosen that continued to highlight the cool colors motif.

The Slides (Content Changes)

The Old

Not engaging

Not client centered

New Client Orientation

- Steps to success
- Familiarizing yourself with rights, roles and responsibilities
- Who, what, and why of probation

Limited
Identification of
presentation
content

No specific goals

The New

Clear goals

Client centered

Today's Goals



- 1 Connect you with resources
- 2 Understand your rights & roles
- 3 Understand what you are signing
- 4 Provide general supervision info

Engaging
content

Maps out the flow of the remainder of the presentation

The Old

-  Ignores power differentials
-  Enforces gatekeeping
-  Illegitimizes JII experience
-  Negatively valenced

GRIEVANCE FORM

- + Prior to filing a grievance, please consider talking with the person first.
- + Things that do not constitute a grievance:
 - × “I don’t like my PO”
 - × “I don’t like the conditions of my supervision”
 - × “I don’t want to do community service”
- + Filing a grievance
 - × Fill out form, be as specific as possible, dates, times, and persons involved
- × Turn form in to unit supervisor of the employee

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Grievance Policy

-  If you believe your rights have been violated, please fill out a grievance.
-  Pick up and return grievance forms at your PO’s reception desk.
-  If you need help completing the form, assistance can be provided.
-  Be specific! Include dates, times, and people involved.
-  You will receive a copy of the form to keep for your records.

The New

-  Reduces power differentials
-  Clearly details process
-  Validates JII experience
-  Highlights avenues for support

The Slides (Style Changes)

The Old

TEXTING CONSENT FORM

- ✗ This form gives your PO permission to communicate with you via text message.
- ✗ Most of these texts will be quick messages like needing to reschedule your meeting or directing you to go somewhere.
- ✗ In an emergency do not text use the phone to call.
- ✗ We will not send protected information back and forth with you because a mistake could be made sending it to the wrong person.

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Small title font

Ineffective bullets

Contrasting background visual

Wordy text

The New

Texting Consent Form

-  This form gives your PO permission to communicate with you via texts
-  Most texts are brief and regarding scheduling and/or meeting location
-  We will not send confidential or protected information via text
-  Use the phone in cases of an emergency, **do not text**

TEXT MESSAGING CONSENT FORM

Client Name: _____ SID: _____

RISKS OF USING TEXT MESSAGING

Transmitting information by text messaging has a number of risks that individuals should consider. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Text messages are not secure and can be received by unintended recipients.
- Text messages can be circulated or forwarded and may be stored.
- Text message senders can easily misdirect text messages.
- Back up copies of text messages may exist even after the sender and recipient have deleted their copy on a mobile device.
- Employers have a right to inspect work related text messages.
- Text messages can be used as evidence in court.

CONDITIONS FOR THE USE OF TEXT MESSAGING

- Text messaging is not appropriate for emergency situations. Please contact 9-1-1.
- Protected health information and Alcohol/Drug treatment information as well as Criminal Justice Information should NEVER be sent via text messaging.
- Text messages to or from an individual may need to be transcribed by DCJ staff into the client's service record as applicable in accordance with record retention requirements.
- The individual shall immediately notify Multnomah County of changes in his/her cell phone number.
- The individual shall notify Multnomah County in writing when he/she no longer wants to receive text messages from Multnomah County.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT

I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the information Multnomah County has provided me regarding the risks of using text messaging. I consent to the conditions outlined above.

Offender/Client signature _____ Date _____

Additional family member(s)/Guardian

Name: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Texting Consent Form 2017

Large font

Clear bullets

Clean Background

Simplified text

Image of the form

The Old

TSU

Transitional Services Unit

Ask us!! We may be able to help with...

- ✗ Housing
- ✗ Oregon ID
- ✗ Clothing
- ✗ Bus Pass



Ask us!! TSU is here if need additional services or help.

If you do not see what you need help with listed above, please see TSU and we can help guide you to the right resources in the community to help you obtain it.

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- 🔍 Repetitive language
- 🔍 Low contrast background/font
- 🔍 Photographs do not add clarity
- 🔍 Yellow/red color scheme

The New

- ✅ Clear language
- ✅ High contrast background
- ✅ Appealing visuals
- ✅ Blue/green color scheme

TSU

Transitional Services Unit

We may be able to help with...

- 🏠 Housing
- 🆔 Oregon ID
- 👕 Clothing
- 🚌 Bus Passes

Ask Us!

If you do not see what you need help with listed above, please see TSU and we can help guide you to the right resources in the community to help you obtain it.



Conclusion

Summary of Changes

Over the course of six meetings, this team made a number of sweeping changes to the Probation and Post-Prison Orientation PowerPoint. Some broad changes attended to the written elements of the slides. These changes included:

- Highlighting JIIs' rights
- Removal of accusatory language
- Adding detailed instructions
- Adding explanations for rules
- Highlighting services and supports
- Stating orientation goals and processes

Additionally, visual changes were made to improve the clarity and tone of the PowerPoint.

These included:

- A blue-green color scheme
- A white background for better contrast
- Large, relevant photographs
- Clearly delineated bullets
- Larger headings and text
- Digital copies of all forms

Furthermore, some specific slides were modified in accordance with the equity lens.

Connection to people was accomplished through addressing the underlying assumptions embedded in the slides. For instance, the previous version of the PowerPoint began with four slides on weapons violations. The underlying assumption being that JIIs are likely to possess and misuse weapons. In the new version, that information has been shortened to a single slide, and appears much later in the slide deck.

Connection to place was emphasized through the inclusion of new opening slides, which now serve to welcome the JIIs, thank them for their time, and state clear intentions for the orientation.

Connection to process was achieved through the identification of areas of gatekeeping. For example, while the previous PowerPoint asked JIIs to sign all forms immediately after they were explained in the slide deck, the new version asks JIIs to hold off on signing until they meet with their POs if they have any lingering questions about the form's contents.

Connection to power was highlighted by reshaping language to provide the JIIs with more autonomy. For example, the previous version of the Grievance Form slide suggested that JIIs should talk to their PO before filing a grievance. The PO, then, has the ability to discourage grievances from being filed. These instructions were changed in the newer version to direct JIIs to independently file grievances.

Implications for Practice

This endeavor highlights the unique ways in which trauma informed care, cultural competency, and brain development science can be incorporated into community supervision practices. Although the grant supporting this work focuses on building strong relationships between probation officers and JIIs, that is not the entirety of the supervision experience. It is the hope of his project to inspire other organizations to update practices, no matter how small, that might facilitate the success of their clients. Such changes can make a large difference in the perceptions of self-worth, optimism, accessibility, and understanding that JIIs take away from their supervision experience.

For this project, it was important to attend to both what was being said in the Probation and Post-Prison Orientation PowerPoint, as well as how it was visually presented. Unfortunately, attention to both the verbal content and the visual presentation might be overlooked under the pressure of the day-to-day activities of any justice-involved organization. Verbal and visual content occurs in many places, not just digitally. We hope that organizations may be creative in extending the lessons learned from this project beyond the digital realm, perhaps through handouts, hanging posters, interior design, and prepared speeches that might be re-conceptualized with an equity lens.

Limitations & Future Directions

This project was not without areas for improvement. Most notably, due to time constraints, the team which revised the PowerPoint did not include any current or past JIIs. It is in the intention of this team to ultimately request feedback from JIIs who attend orientation regarding the quality of the PowerPoint, its clarity, and its attention to equity and inclusion. In its current state, however, those voices have not been heard.

The second limitation is structural. Many times, the team grappled with the opposing desires to keep the PowerPoint both streamlined and thorough. In order to respect the time of both the JIIs and the facilitators, the PowerPoint needed to remain short and on topic. However, at the same time, the supervision process is complicated and the consequences for missing a rule or requirement are severe. Therefore, the team worked to identify the places which could be glossed over and those places that needed to be explained more thoroughly. However, certainly more refinement is necessary. JII feedback will help continue to optimize future iterations of the PowerPoint.

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