Facility Youth Worker Training Needs Assessment and Job Task Analysis Project

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Commonwealth Research Consulting, Inc.

Dr. James B. Wells ~ Dr. Kevin I. Minor
J. Stephen Parson ~ Thor Morrison ~ Earl Angel
This project was funded by Personal Services Contract PON2 523 100002316 from the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice: Comprehensive Evaluation of Youth Worker Academy. Points of view expressed in this report are those of the authors alone and do not represent the official position or policies of the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice.

For further information on the project, Comprehensive Evaluation of Youth Worker Academy, please contact James B. Wells of Commonwealth Research Consulting, Inc., at jbwells@cwrc.us
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Commonwealth Research Consulting, Inc.
staff and consultants who conducted this project and authored this report include:

James B. Wells, Ph.D.
Kevin I. Minor, Ph.D.
Stephen Parson, M.S.
Thor Morrison, M.S.
Earl Angel, B.S.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The idea to conduct this study was initially conceived by Commissioner J. Ronald Haws in a meeting at the central offices of the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) on May 1, 2008. At the meeting, the Commissioner expressed a desire to learn more about whether youth workers are being properly trained to effectively address youths’ needs and carry out the various responsibilities required by the job. He commented that it would be useful to study the relationship between these needs and responsibilities on the one hand, and the knowledge and skills taught at the DJJ Basic Training Academy on the other.

Twenty-two months later on March 17, 2010, DJJ issued a request for proposal (RFP) for a project involving a full job task analysis of youth workers and corresponding analyses of training processes for these workers. Commonwealth Research Consulting, Inc. (CwRC) submitted a proposal later that month to conduct this research. The proposal had two major objectives: (1) conduct a needs assessment to identify the discrepancy between the present performance of academy graduates and the level of performance desired; and (2) conduct a job task analysis to identify the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be addressed in the basic training curriculum.

On July 1, 2010, DJJ awarded CwRC a personal services contract to conduct this research. CwRC began the work shortly thereafter.

The reports that follow summarize both the primary and supporting research activities completed in order to accomplish the project’s two major objectives. The report is divided into two major sections, each designated by a large tab. The first section (which is behind the first large tab) contains all of the research activities that were conducted to support the needs assessment. After the primary Training Needs Assessment Report, the activities undertaken to support the needs assessment survey are summarized in 12 ancillary reports, each designated by a smaller tab. Behind the second large tab is the second major section of the report, which contains the primary Job Task Analysis Report and the research activities conducted in support thereof.

Given that many different protocols, communications, instruments, and data matrices were used to generate a variety of different data sources and results over the course of this project, these documents have either been incorporated into the body of the report where appropriate, or appended to the back of each individually tabbed report.
SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Consistent with the project proposal, the training needs assessment component of this study utilized the following methods.

1. A review of literature relevant to training needs and job tasks in juvenile corrections (please see ancillary report titled “Summary of Related Literature Documenting Best Practices with Regard to Training Report”)

2. A phone survey of juvenile corrections training agencies in other jurisdictions (please see ancillary report titled “Results from Telephone Surveys of Juvenile Justice Training Academies Report”)

3. A review of the DJJ Training Academy curriculum (please see ancillary report titled “Academy Curriculum Review and Summary Report”)


5. A review of relevant in-house evaluation data collected by the DJJ Training Academy (please see ancillary reports titled “DJJ Academy 65 Evaluation Forms Summary 2010 Report” and “Analysis of Exit Interviews Report”)

6. A review and content analysis of previous reports relevant to training prepared by the research team as well as analysis of existing data relevant to training in the research team’s possession (please see ancillary reports titled “Review of DJJ Evaluations Related to Training Report” and “2008 DJJ Staff Focus Groups on Training Report”)

7. Conduction of focus groups with DJJ administrators and managers (please see ancillary report titled “Upper Level Management and Facility Superintendent Focus Group Interview Data Report”)

8. Conduction of curriculum development focus groups with youth worker staff from the various DJJ facilities followed by managerial review of focus group results (please see ancillary reports titled “DACUM Group Interview Data from Staff Report” and “Developing a Curriculum: Youth Worker Job Analysis Report”)

9. Field observation of the workplace across different facilities (please see ancillary report titled “Academy Graduate Interview Data Report”)

10. A training needs assessment survey of relevant DJJ staff (please see primary report titled “Youth Worker Training Needs Assessment Survey of Supervisory Staff Report”)

The primary purpose of each of the first nine of the above listed methodologies was to inform development of the tenth methodology (the Training Needs Assessment or TNA Survey), and subsequently, development of the Job Task Analysis (JTA) Survey. Note that the ancillary reports use a variety of methodologies to tap critical sources of information that were needed for the needs assessment component of the project. Although these ancillary reports do not contain the major findings of this project, each of them do contain important findings that we encourage DJJ personnel to review and utilize.
The TNA survey was developed from a variety of data sources and solicited ratings on 87 training topics. Among other things, respondents were asked to rate the degree of knowledge and skills new academy graduates should demonstrate on the job, the adequacy of new graduates in actually applying knowledge/skills on the job, and the type of training needed to best prepare youth workers to apply knowledge/skills from each topic area. Administration of the survey via US mail to DJJ trainers, administrators, and supervisors during fall 2010 and early winter 2011 resulted in an overall response rate of 86.1 percent (N=142).

Also consistent with the project proposal, the JTA was designed to measure the frequency and criticality (importance) of tasks performed by youth workers as well as where tasks should be learned, with the objective of specifying essential tasks performed by entry level youth workers. The task list included in the surveys was developed by conducting three regional focus groups, each with eight youth workers from various types of facilities and various shifts. The 354 job tasks identified during the focus groups were categorized into 14 areas to facilitate survey construction and administration (see Appendix 4 at the end of the JTA Report.) Two JTA survey instruments were developed, one that asked youth workers (I and II) to identify the frequency with which they perform tasks, and the other that asked supervisors to rate criticality and where learning should take place (“where learned”). Mail and follow-up administration procedures conducted during the summer and early fall 2011 resulted in a 73.08 percent return rate for the instrument measuring frequency (N=323) and a return rate of 78.42 percent for the one measuring criticality and where learned (N=218).

In the case of both the TNA and JTA survey data, appropriate quality control precautions were taken to help insure reliable and valid databases. In addition, the TNA data were subjected to analyses for response set and logical inconsistency in response patterns, and appropriate steps were taken to counter these issues.

**SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS FROM TNA AND JTA SURVEYS**

Deficit ratings (defined as discrepancies between the levels of knowledge/skill supervisory staff believe youth workers should demonstrate upon academy completion, versus the level supervisors report actually observing on the job) were calculated for the topics included in the TNA survey. Because the deficit ratings provided by administrators, direct supervisors of youth workers, and academy trainers were not correlated highly enough to combine the three categories, for purposes of additional analyses the research team focused on the data supplied by youth workers’ direct supervisors.

Analyses revealed average or above average deficit ratings on 16 academy training topics and 28 non-academy topics. The non-academy topics dealt primarily with the treatment or helping role of a youth worker, while the academy topics were disproportionately related to security or custody. Supervisors from detention facilities assigned lower deficit ratings for both categories of topics compared with supervisors from other types of DJJ facilities, suggesting the current academy may be better suited to training detention center youth workers. While each facility type analyzed (detention centers, youth development centers,
and other facilities) had a fairly distinct collection of average or above deficit topics, small groups of academy and non-academy topics had relatively high deficit ratings across facility types; also, deficit ratings associated with the “other facilities” category were notably skewed toward the treatment/helping role of youth workers.

Deficit ratings were also analyzed in relation to data on the type of training supervisors saw as necessary for youth workers to become best prepared to apply knowledge/skills associated with the training topics. The following academy topics had average or above direct supervisor deficit ratings and were also topics that supervisors believe needed to be trained at the academy. Topics designated by an asterisk were corroborated by a focus group conducted with relatively new youth workers shortly after the TNA data were analyzed.

- 07. Report Writing and Documentation*
- 09. Crisis Prevention
- 24. Searches*
- 25. Riots and Hostage Situations
- 23. Contraband*
- 08. Conflict Resolution
- 20. Disciplinary Actions against Staff*
- 35. Identifying and Dealing with Gangs and Security Threat Groups*
- 19. Service Complaints / Youth Grievances
- 26. Behavior Management
- 31. De-escalation Scenarios*
- 16. Special Needs Offenders*
- 04. Cultural Diversity*
- 22. Human Sexuality

The following non-academy topics had average or above direct supervisor deficit ratings and were also topics that supervisors believe needed to be trained at the academy. Topics designated by an asterisk were corroborated by the focus group mentioned above.

- 38. Positive role modeling for youth
- 52. Crisis management / intervention
- 60. Dealing with youth manipulation / testing
- 72. Establishing / communicating expectations to youth
- 62. Showing / gaining youth respect*
- 82. Maintain safety for staff, youth, and facility
- 63. Teaching problem solving for youth
40. Supervision and monitoring of youth
64. Professional judgment and decision making
74. Understanding and dealing with peer group dynamics
41. Interpersonal skill development for youth
66. Individual counseling*
73. Holding youth accountable to promote positive learning*
39. Youth learning styles / human learning basics
77. Demonstrating active listening skills
58. Treating youth as individuals
65. Building on youths’ assets/strengths
69. Stress management
51. Writing / grammar skills*
50. Balancing custody and treatment roles

The most important step in analyzing the JTA data was to derive decision rules for identifying essential job tasks from a list of 334 ranked tasks sorted by mean rating. Two rules were derived: (1) a task is considered essential if, on average, it is performed at least monthly, the consequences of inadequate performance are serious or worse, and at least 40 percent of respondents stated that task competence should be partially or totally achieved during academy training; and (2) a task is considered essential, regardless of how frequently it is performed, if the consequences of inadequate performance are worse than serious, and at least 40 percent of respondents stated that task competence should be partially or totally achieved during academy training. Application of these rules resulted in a listing of 139 essential job tasks. These tasks are shown below in descending order from most to least frequently performed. (Tasks are also sorted by importance and by “where learned” in the JTA report.)
1. Communicate with co-workers and supervisors
2. Conduct informal (ongoing) head count
3. Conduct formal head counts
4. Communicate with youth in a way that gives youth a chance to explain themselves
5. Touch base with all youth/residents (set the tone for the day)
6. Supervise meals/breaks
7. Issue consequences for violations of youth behavior protocol
8. Teach youth behavior protocol (daily expectations)
9. Monitor compliance with youth behavior protocol
10. Supervise hygiene activities (shower, shave, etc.)
11. Escort youth within the facility (to work assignments, class, breaks, meals, etc.)
12. Chart/log youth behaviors (individual)
13. Conduct 10/15 minute bed checks
14. Supervise recreation activities
15. Supervise youth work details
16. Observe/discern reason for misbehavior
17. Conduct interior check (for ex., interior doors, spaces, etc.)
18. Write up daily progress summary/notes for each youth
19. Search youth (visible/pat/wand/frisk/strip as appropriate)
20. De-escalate/resolve conflict (individuals)
21. Communicate with control/supervisor/destination/etc. during escort
22. Mentor youth about their future
23. Complete timesheets, leave slips, comp time, overtime, etc.
24. Search individual areas (for ex., room, desk, etc.)
25. Review handbook/rules with youth
26. Chart/log unit activities (unit/pod/house)
27. Observe medical restrictions, special hygiene requirements, etc.
28. Monitor youth carrying out disciplinary sanctions
29. Search common areas (for ex., cottage, unit, school, bathroom, gym, etc.)
30. Secure/log/distribute razors and other hygiene products
31. Monitor compliance with restrictions/sanctions
32. Teach youth about behavior cycles/triggers/outs
33. De-escalate group disturbances
34. Monitor youth phone calls
35. Inventory/secure supply closets, cleaning supplies, etc.
36. Collect youth for escort (within the facility)
37. Log movement
38. Update/maintain sleep log
39. Monitor/control the flow of movement
40. Supervise/verify KP (kitchen duties)
41. Monitor/assist in classrooms
42. Inform youth of the limits of confidentiality
43. Monitor/supervise youth mentoring other youth
44. Inventory/secure sharps
45. Conduct/refer to sick call
46. Conduct outdoor rec check
47. Write restrictions and penalty slips for inappropriate actions
48. Conduct hourly medical/wellness check at night
49. Scan incoming and outgoing mail for contraband, etc.
50. Conduct intensive supervision (suicide watch, AWOL watch, 15 minute log, etc.)
51. Conduct a feedback session (touch base w/group; address potential problems; etc.)
52. Closely monitor gang members who have contact with each other
53. Monitor group counseling
54. Conduct key control checks
55. Complete shift report
56. Notify counselor regarding youth behavior and consequences
57. Periodically evaluate youth for release from isolation, intensive supervision, timeout, etc
58. Conduct/coordinate facility headcount (as control room operator)
59. Administer medication (prescription)
60. Inventory/secure meds; pass on med keys
61. Update/maintain observation logs for suicide watch, isolation, intensive supervision, etc.
62. Observe/report potential medical (physical health) issues
63. Identify signs of gang activity
64. Inventory/secure toxics, flammables, etc.
65. Distribute OTC (over the counter) medications
66. Secure/log/distribute tools, gas, chemicals, safety equipment, etc. for work details
67. Recognize/confiscate/process contraband
68. Respond to staff calls for assistance
69. Complete required hours of ACT (Aikido) training (for self)
70. Monitor/respond to inclement weather alerts
71. Take steps to ensure gang members remain separated (if possible)
72. Report/refer irregularities or abnormal behavior
73. Review/study applicable policies/procedures
74. Report a major rule violation
75. Conduct emergency drills (fire, tornado, earthquake, etc.)
76. Report any abnormal/unalusual event
77. Monitor youths' use of computers/internet
78. Observe/report potential mental health issues
79. Check vitals (temperature, blood pressure, etc.)
80. Enforce "keep separate" orders (court ordered and local/informal)
81. Conduct secondary search based on wand alert
82. Complete MAR sheet (medical administration record)
83. Check/maintain emergency medical equipment (epi-pen, inhaler, glucagon, etc.)
84. Clear area/move youth during restraint/disturbance
85. Conduct intake search (frisk and/or wand, etc.)
86. Prepare incident reports
87. Report/refer disturbances
88. Admit visitors
89. Conduct intake body screening/body IDs (tattoos, marks, lice, etc.) shower/delouse
90. Respond to calls for back-up within the facility
91. Monitor/screen youth during intake for hostility, intoxication, etc.
92. Respond to alarms (fire, security, etc.)
93. Complete mechanical restraint training
94. Report signs/threats of harm to self or others
95. Escort visitors
96. Report evidence of youth misbehavior/delinquency/crime
97. Report/call in an issue requiring an incident report
98. Ensure police visitors secure weapons upon entry
99. Transport/escort youth outside the facility (school, work, medical, counseling, court, etc.)
100. Collect youth to be transported/escorted outside the facility (court, outings, etc.)
101. Conduct protocol for medication/treatment refusal (i.e., declination form)
102. Check youth for lice, scabies, vermin, etc.
103. Ensure youth have all necessary medication
104. Provide youth access to hotline/log use of hotline
105. Monitor personal/unofficial visits (for ex., family, friends, etc.)
106. Return youth after transport (to facility, home, etc., as appropriate)
107. Deal with urine/fecal accidents (get youth showered, linens/clothes washed, etc.)
108. Apply/remove restraints
109. Update/maintain contraband log and chain of custody
110. Hand out/retrieve medical testing supplies (for ex., diabetic/asthma)
111. Restrain out of control youth
112. Search visitors
113. Conduct safety training for youth (saws, lawnmowers, personal water safety, etc.)
114. Communicate with control/supervisor/destination/etc. during transport
115. Get authorization to use isolation
116. Complete post-restraint paperwork
117. Supervise/monitor youth during transport, especially during funerals, etc.
118. Collect PRN (as-needed medical supplies) for youth (epi-pen, inhaler, glucagon, etc.)
119. Report a potential threat to security
120. Receive/release medication from/to parents
121. Report use of restraint to supervisor
122. Collect meds for youth being transported
123. Apply mechanical restraints for transport
124. Debrief of youth witnesses after restraint
125. Get authorization to use intensive supervision over four hours
126. Check vitals after restraint
127. Respond to/clean up hazardous materials/spills (blood, chemicals, sewage, etc.)
128. Report inappropriate staff behavior
129. Get authorization to use mechanical restraints
130. Report inappropriate visitor behavior
131. Report use of emergency medical services
132. Get authorization prior flagging a youth as an AWOL risk
133. Report use of mechanical restraints after the fact
134. Administer First aid/CPR
135. Evaluate/respond to diabetic emergency (beyond basic first aid)
136. During AWOL secure facility/residents; notify supervisors/police as per local policy
137. Get authorization to strip search
138. Pursue escapee as per local policy
139. Get authorization to remove mechanical restraints when outside the facility
A final analytic procedure involved threading or linking the essential job tasks to the training topics from the TNA survey. Although all 139 essential tasks threaded back to one or more training topics from the survey, two sets of essential tasks dealing with “transportation of youth” and “maintaining safety for staff, youth, and facility” did not thread to any of the topics in the academy topic listing; instead these sets threaded only to non-academy topics. Seven other sets of essential tasks threaded back to training areas that included both academy and non-academy topics. In addition, numerous sets of essential tasks were threaded to the following academy topics that had average or above supervisor deficit ratings in the TNA database:

12a. Interpersonal Communication with Youth
12b. Interpersonal Communication with Co-workers
19. Service Complaints / Youth Grievances
20. Disciplinary Actions against Staff
07. Report Writing and Documentation
26. Behavior Management
08. Conflict Resolution
09. Crisis Prevention
25. Riots and Hostage Situations
31. De-escalation Scenarios
35. Identifying and Dealing with Gangs and Security Threat Groups
23. Contraband
24. Searches
16. Special Needs Offenders
02. Definition of Youth Worker
04. Cultural Diversity
22. Human Sexuality
SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The 139 essential job tasks identified by the JTA must serve as the basis for further developing the DJJ Basic Training Academy Curriculum. The curriculum’s scope and depth must align with the frequency and criticality of essential youth worker job tasks. Likewise, the TNA survey results indicate the most pressing training topics for which additional and/or modified academy training is warranted, both by and irrespective of facility type. These results also indicate, as corroborated by high performing recent academy graduates, which topics with relatively high deficit ratings the direct supervisors of youth workers believe need to be trained at the academy, rather than (or in addition to) at the facility. The threading work summarized in the immediately preceding section of this executive summary (and detailed in the JTA Report) must be drawn upon to add training material where essential tasks are lacking adequate counterparts in the academy curriculum and also to modify curricular content and/or delivery where academy topics display relatively large supervisory deficit ratings vis-à-vis essential tasks. It is critical that academy cadre and other relevant DJJ staff avoid the temptation to transfer material from the old curriculum without making the essential tasks the objectives of the training.

In order for the findings of the TNA and JTA research to inform and guide further development of the academy curriculum, collaborative work between the research team and DJJ academy training staff must be initiated and sustained. Accordingly, the ensuing Program Implementation Assessment and Impact Evaluation is the logical next step in the process. The goals of the project are, first, to utilize findings of the present study to implement evidence-guided changes to the curriculum, and subsequently, to monitor the impact of those changes so that, based on an ongoing flow of evidence generated from well designed and executed research, DJJ organizational operations can gradually be tailored in directions appropriate for best serving the interests of youth and the public.
Commonwealth Research Consulting, Inc. is extremely grateful to the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice for the opportunity to conduct this basic training needs assessment and job task analysis for facility youth workers.

We are especially grateful to Commissioner J. Ronald Haws whose vision foresaw the need to conduct this important study. We also benefited from his cooperation and leadership in facilitating this study’s progress from inception to completion.

We are also grateful to the many DJJ personnel who helped us complete our work. In every meeting, and at every site, we received excellent cooperation and support. DJJ administrators, facility managers, academy cadre, supervisors and youth workers assisted us in too many ways to mention here. These DJJ personnel were true partners in this work. We are particularly appreciative because we know that research projects often compete with the demands of daily operations and can challenge staff in accommodating the requests of outside researchers. We are very grateful for their help.

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Commonwealth Research Consulting, Inc. staff and consultants who conducted this project and authored this report included Dr. James B. Wells, Dr. Kevin I. Minor, J. Stephen Parson, Thor Morrison and Earl Angel.