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Contents

Introduction

This issue of the *Large Jail Network Bulletin* presents several articles that I think readers will find interesting. From California's Contra Costa and Orange Counties, respectively, we have discussions of health care screening and privatization of jail health services. Perspectives on easing the transition to direct supervision are provided by a University of South Florida contributor. A Fairfax County, Virginia writer outlines that area's recent multi-agency effort to improve minorities' perceptions of the criminal justice system.

A summary of the complex PONI process is provided in an article from Duval County, Florida, and writers from Allegheny County, Pennsylvania describe their mental health services, which emphasize a continuum of care after discharge.

I look forward to meeting with you at the upcoming Large Jail Network meeting in Denver, where we will be discussing issues in privatization, contracting for bedspace, and women offenders' medical and programming needs. Thank you for helping to make the Network an effective information exchange.

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Neutralizing the Negative Impact of Organizational Change During the Transition Process

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Nothing is permanent, except change. – Heraclitus, 500 B. C.

Although large jails represent a considerable portion of budgets allocated at the local level, researchers from the fields of business, psychology, sociology, and criminology have conducted few studies of organizational work issues in correctional settings. Issues such as job stress, anxiety, and job satisfaction have been studied primarily in the private sector, although jails encounter many of these same problems in their organizations. And, like their counterparts in business, jail administrators can benefit from meaningful research that can help improve management practices.

Change creates stress in employees even when the change itself is beneficial.

One area of management research that could be useful to administrators of large jails is the study of change in organizations and the stress, anxiety, job satisfaction, absenteeism, job performance, and job turnover experienced as a result of change by those who work in these facilities. The dynamics associated with change can be assessed by surveying both the organizational climate and the attitudes of staff. There has been a rapid growth in research addressing change and organizational climate. Again, much of this has occurred in the private sector because of growing businesses and executives' subsequent interest in workers' well-being (Sauter, Hurrell, and Cooper, 1989). Previous research has indicated, however, that those who work in human service organizations, especially correctional organizations, are particularly vulnerable to the debilitating effects of stress and other work-related issues (Cheek and Miller, 1983; Brown, 1987). Because most jails are also experiencing unprecedented growth and change, additional studies are needed to improve the quality of life for those who work in these settings.

The impact of change on organizational work issues in jails is especially important in the context of the transition process as jails continue to make the major move in correctional management style from linear intermittent surveillance (LIS) to podular direct supervision (PDS). As a transition signifies change, and change affects employees and their quality of life, the ways administrators and supervisors handle that change can make a considerable difference in how their employees will react to it, and in the subsequent impact the change will have on work-related issues.

PDS has been an accepted method of facility operation for over a decade. However, many organizations attempting to make the transition from an LIS- to a PDS-operated facility often meet with strong resistance. Although a change in correctional management style inevitably creates an atmosphere that is both dynamic and uncertain, this change can be presented and perceived as a positive experience. It has been argued that if an organization " . . . is not growing, not changing, not meeting the current needs of society, and preparing to meet its future needs, it is declining" (Higgins and Vincze, 1986, p. 29).

Change is a predominant factor in the management of organizations today (Hodgetts and Kuratko, 1988, p. 65). Correctional organizations, particularly large jails, must constantly change to keep pace with the many demands placed upon them. Understanding change and developing strategies to implement it successfully have become major challenges for jail administrators. In addressing that challenge, administra-

tors and supervisors must remember that change creates stress in employees even when the change itself is beneficial.

Stressors Related to Organizational Change

Many stressors can develop as a result of organizational change. According to Duffee (1986) and Williamson (1990), change may create:

- new role demands (underload or overload);
- role ambiguity (lack of leadership, goals, and well-defined job descriptions); or
- role conflict.

As part of the transition, new policies and procedures are likely to be implemented. The new work environment may be different from the old one; supervisors may have different expectations for workers' performance. Staff may not be adequately prepared for change because they have not been given sufficient training. Supervisors may fail to provide staff with needed support prior to, during, and after the transition. Conflicts with supervisors, co-workers, and/or inmates may occur. In general, the overall organizational climate may not be conducive to change, which may create resistance. This, in turn, makes it likely that the implementation of new management practices will be difficult or may fail.

Changing from a facility using intermittent supervision to one using direct supervision puts special stresses on staff. For example, in facilities using direct supervision, line staff are expected to assume the role of managers, whereas they had few decision-making powers in the LIS facility. Their new role may initially be uncomfortable for the staff in other ways. Line staff in PDS facilities are required to communicate with inmates; in LIS facilities, communication was generally prohibited.

New policies and procedures that reflect a proactive rather than a reactive management style generally accompany the change in management philosophy, and employees need time to become familiar with these new practices. The work environment is likely to include sophisticated technological equipment utilizing computers for control and communication, which may be unfamiliar to the staff. Line staff will be expected to use good management practices to accomplish tasks, yet they may never have been provided with management training. Any one or a combination of such changes can negatively affect the transition process and create stress/distress in staff.

Stress can be good in some instances and debilitating (distress) in others (Cournoyer, 1988). Although good stress can improve performance, distress can affect workers' well-being and their quality of life. Notably, stress that is debilitating can increase employees' health problems, cause declines in work performance, lower job satisfaction, increase anxiety, and cause burn-out, absenteeism, and job turnover—all

> Changing from a facility using intermittent supervision to one using direct supervision puts special stresses on staff.

of which negatively affect the organization. It is possible, however, by using good management practices, for administrators and supervisors to eliminate, or at least limit, the debilitating effects of stress that can result from the transition process.

Implementing a Successful Change Process

How does a correctional organization implement an effective and efficient transition in its management practices, especially if employees are resisting the change? Three basic phases of a planned-change effort can be identified, borrowing from Kurt Lewin's (1958) definition of the change process:

- unfreezing;
- changing; and
- refreezing.

In the first phase, **unfreezing,** those responsible for facilitating change

must create a consciousness of the need for a shift in the organization's focus. This can be accomplished by pointing to areas of dissatisfaction with current practices. Although in some instances this may involve conflict, the conflict can be a positive force in the unfreezing phase since it helps individuals break old habits and consider alternative ways of doing things (Hodgetts and Kuratko, 1986, p. 65). However, employees may resist management's efforts to encourage change if the attempts involve the following kinds of failures:

- failure to be specific about the change;
- failure to show why the change is necessary;
- failure to allow people affected by the change to have a say in planning it;
- failure to consider the work group's habit patterns;
- failure to keep employees informed about the change;
- failure to prevent the creation of excessive work pressure during the change; and
- failure to deal with employee anxiety regarding job security (Wismer, 1979, p. 31).

Wismer (1979, p. 31) identifies several ways that management can reduce resistance to change:

- involving the employees in planning the change;

- providing accurate and complete information regarding change;
- giving employees a chance to air their objections;
- taking group norms and habits into account;
- making only essential changes; and
- learning to use proper problem-solving techniques.

In the second phase, **changing**, management implements the new practices. Strategies, people, tasks, and technology may require modification (Hodgetts and Kuratko, 1986, p. 66). For PDS, this phase may mean constructing a new facility, although some administrators implement direct supervision without re-designing the facility. This phase may take much longer than originally planned if part of the change process involves new construction. Time constraints can create a great deal of stress and anxiety among line staff and management. All of the stress and anxiety may start to affect employees' sense of well-being as well as to create resistance to the change.

The third and final phase in the change process is the **refreezing** phase, which is designed to sustain the momentum of the change. During this phase, management is expected to provide emotional and resource support, particularly when difficulties are encountered. One important aspect of this support is to give employees positive reinforcement when they achieve the desired

outcomes of the organizational change.

In making the transition from indirect surveillance to direct supervision, most administrators have been able to carry out the first two phases successfully. That is, they have created a sense of the need for change by introducing the benefits of a PDS-operated facility and pointing to areas of dissatisfaction with present management practices. They have also been able to operationalize PDS by constructing new facilities and/or changing management practices.

The aspect of the change process that has proven most difficult, however, is completing the refreezing phase. The biggest problem has been to maintain the momentum of change, often as the result of construction problems associated with opening a new facility. During the transition period, employees are most likely to need positive reinforcement and extra emotional and resource support, but they are least likely to receive them because other problems take precedence over their needs.

The transition period is a highly stressful time for employees. If administrators and supervisors fail to recognize this stress and focus only on construction issues rather than on their employees, they are likely to be disappointed in the outcome of their efforts to change.

Recommendations

It is critically important for administrators and supervisors to do an objective assessment of their organizational climate prior to the transition process. Such an assessment will enable them to gauge the degree of resistance among staff to the changes that are about to take place. When organizations implement change before the employees accept it, there is an increased likelihood that the attempt to change will fail.

A number of instruments are available for assessing organizational climate.[1] Although these assessments can be conducted in-house without hiring outside consultants, employees may be more willing to cooperate when the fear of reprisal from administrators and supervisors is removed. Correctional agencies in which high levels of stress are apparent among employees should do an annual assessment of their organizational climate as a management tool.

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[1] The Federal Bureau of Prisons' Social Climate Survey (Saylor, 1983), Spector's (1985) Job Satisfaction Survey, Spielberger's (1983) State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, Stress Effects Inventory and Stress Behavior Inventory in Human Services (Farmer, Monahan, and Hekeler, 1984), and the Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman and Oldham, 1975) are some of the measures that have been used in previous research and could be used either alone or together to obtain a comprehensive assessment of the organizational climate and related work issues.

In summary, it is important to monitor staff attitudes prior to implementing the change process, during the transition, and after change has occurred. Too often, the most important resources of an organization—the employees—are neglected in the excitement of making a transition to a new facility and/or a new management philosophy.

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