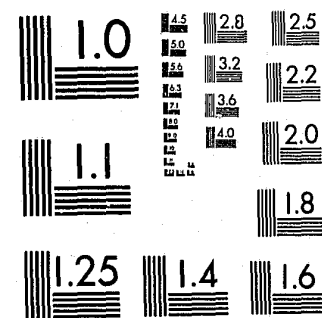


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National Evaluation Program Phase I Assessment of Correctional Personnel Training Programs

Volume 1 — Executive Summary

Howard C. Olson
Merri-Ann Cooper
Albert S. Glickman
Robert Johnson
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Technical Report
March 1980

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NATIONAL EVALUATION PROGRAM PHASE I
ASSESSMENT OF CORRECTIONAL PERSONNEL TRAINING PROGRAMS
VOLUME 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Merri-Ann Cooper
Albert S. Glickman
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Technical Report

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Office of Program Evaluation,
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Advanced Research Resources Organization
March 1980

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ACQUISITIONS

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PREFACE

This Phase I report deals with the state-of-the-art of training of correctional personnel. On the basis of the knowledge gained by way of visits to 17 correction agencies across the nation, a questionnaire mailed to a national sample of corrections agencies, plus review of literature dealing with the field of program evaluation, evaluation models appropriate to correctional personnel training have been generated and documented. The models are intended to be general techniques that an agency may apply to its own training programs without the aid of additional evaluation experts. The Phase II plan for demonstrating the models is outlined.

The report is organized as 12 chapters and published in 4 volumes:

<u>Volume</u>	<u>Chapters</u>	<u>Title</u>
1	I	Executive Summary
2	II - IX	Correctional Personnel Training-- Conceptual and Empirical Issues
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Many persons other than the ARRO project staff have contributed significantly to the project. Among others, Mr. Thomas Rosazza of the Maryland Training Academy, Lieutenant Jeffrey Paskow of the Montgomery County (MD) Training Academy, and Corporal Robert Strickland of the Fairfax County (VA) Jail gave of their time and expertise to assist in the development and pretest of the interview guides and questionnaire used in the national survey of correctional personnel training.

Our hosts at the various training sites visited were outstanding in their cooperation, reception of team members, and support for the project. Training directors and their staffs spent much time sharing with us their experience with and knowledge of the training process.

Those who responded in the national survey demonstrated genuine concern and conscientious efforts to provide the information requested. Without the interest and assistance of the many individuals involved in the training of correctional personnel, the goals of the first phase of this project could not have been accomplished.

The government project monitors, Dr. Harold Holzman, succeeded in December 1979 by Dr. Richard Laymon, have created the climate for an excellent working relationship with the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. They have been understanding and supportive, providing valuable comments and guidance throughout.

Several former members of the ARRO staff contributed significantly to the project. Dr. Jeffrey Kane constructed the original conceptual models of a generic training system. Ms. Nancy Yedlin assisted in project management, participated in many site visits, and helped draw out site visit findings. Ms. Sharyn Mallamad organized site visits and developed initial versions of the evaluation strategy proposed. Special recognition is due Ms. Patti Vernacchio for her outstanding secretarial talents, organizational abilities, and high enthusiasm and drive throughout the project.

CHAPTER I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROBLEM

Training of correctional personnel occurs in the context of wide divergences of views on key philosophic issues plus differences regarding the nature and significance of correctional agency tasks and personnel roles. A host of evaluative, policy, and practice issues must be taken into account. The capacity to use training to meet this complex demand situation is limited by shortages of funds, by mixed administrative and political support, and by many other factors that contribute to low staff morale and resistance to change.

Uniform training standards for corrections, however desirable, may prove unworkable, simply because they cannot accommodate to the diversity found in the field. Additionally, correctional training is significantly affected by the orientation of the correctional agency to its larger environment, in particular, by the agency's capacity to manage environmentally induced stress. The interactions between the correctional agency and its larger environment, and its response--in terms of training--are the subject of this project. In particular, how may an agency evaluate the success of its training in such a milieu?

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The National Evaluation Program of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration has as one of its objectives the assessment of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of training programs for correctional personnel. The assessment is intended to describe the kinds of training being offered and the state-of-the-art being demonstrated by agencies in evaluating the usefulness of correctional personnel training. Out of the assessments and evaluation literature will come stylized models of the evaluation process. The project is organized in two phases.

Phase I Objectives

Through the use of existing studies (including the National Manpower Survey, the work of the National Institute for Corrections, and related efforts), select from a variety of correctional units or agencies up to 20 agencies to visit, and (making use of site visit information) prepare a survey questionnaire for distribution to some 1,000 correctional facilities across the nation. Drawing from these sources of information:

- Describe the types of training programs offered by state and local governments for different types of correctional personnel.
- Examine the nature of these programs in terms of length, curricula, selection of trainees, instructional techniques, and training objectives.
- Identify gaps and opportunities in preprofessional, pre-service, in-service, midlevel management, and specialized training.
- Develop preliminary conceptual models of the training and evaluation processes.
- Identify and review pertinent training evaluation efforts.

Phase II Objectives

Phase I has produced information to influence the ultimate forms of the models. The Phase II demonstration of the models should show how evaluation practices and procedures developed as part of the models can locate, define, and indicate corrective action for differences between expected job performance and actual job performance.

The objectives of Phase II of the project are to:

- Adapt the assessment and evaluation models, with appropriate evaluative criteria, so that they can be applied across a wide range of correctional personnel training programs in a wide range of training environments.

- Demonstrate the utility of the models by applying them to three training programs selected especially to test and illustrate the broad applicability of the models.

CONDUCT OF THE PROJECT

The project began in September 1978. This report concludes Phase I; Phase II is planned to end in April 1980. Work has proceeded in five steps:

- (1) Development of conceptual models of the training and evaluation process.
- (2) Site visits, each 2 to 3 days in length, to a variety of 17 corrections agencies that were conducting training or evaluations of training.
- (3) Preparation and mail-out of a detailed correctional personnel training questionnaire to administrators of more than 1,100 corrections agencies in the United States.
- (4) On the basis of site visit and survey information, shaping of conceptual models to correctional personnel training.
- (5) Demonstration of the applicability of the revised models to training personnel of three corrections agencies.

Model Development

Three models were developed: (a) conceptual, generic, Instructional System Operations Model of the training process; (b) an Instructional System Evaluation Model of the evaluation process, for both formative evaluation (evaluation of the training process itself), and for summative evaluation (evaluation of the outcome of a training program); and (c) a Correctional Issues Model that illuminates the evaluative, policy, and practice issues in correctional personnel training. These models were developed both as guides to the research and as models that could be used together to give a wide-ranging evaluation of training.

We have devoted considerable attention to issues and policies in the field of corrections that often have an overriding influence on training. Early in the research, it became clear that elements of the Correctional Issues Model--the turbulent nature of the corrections environment; organizational climate; individual worker dissatisfactions with progress, change,

and reward in corrections work; changing the attitude of correctional job incumbents and correctional organizations from survival in the correctional environments to innovation and problem solving so as to effect change and improvement in the system--are and should be given explicit consideration in shaping the other two models.

Both the Instructional System Operations Model and the Instructional System Evaluation Model are deductive logic models of the complete training and evaluation process. We have used the Operations Model as a generally all-inclusive guide to assess the development and completeness of training. It is rare that training programs are complete with respect to all aspects of the model. This does not diminish the usefulness of the model, as it is better able to emphasize those parts of programs that appear to suffer in their development or implementation because of lapses or inattention to particular aspects of a model.

Each of the three models requires a different perspective in applying the model to a specific training program. Each model presents a thorough set of requirements that should be addressed and the concerns that should be taken into account in examining a training program. Questions that should be answered are laid out for each model. The extent to which the questions can be answered become the criteria by which to judge the thoroughness of an evaluation.

Site Visits/National Survey

Teams made up of two or three project members visited 16 correctional agencies (one additional agency was "interviewed" by telephone) of many different types during January to April 1979. The conceptual models served as the general format for interview questions. The paper-and-pencil survey instrument evolved largely from site visit findings. The site visits provided case study information of high heuristic value about a small number of training programs. The survey employs a more standard approach to provide a more panoramic picture of conditions and more generalizable set of comparisons and interpretations.

The survey instrument consisted of a section that collected information about the characteristics of the agency (type, staff size, clients, population, training budget), a section dealing with training courses offered, and an extensive section requiring the responding agency to contrast many characteristics of a "very useful" and "less useful" course attended by correctional personnel of the agency.

A total of 1,170 questionnaires were mailed to agency directors of all types of corrections agencies in the United States. The sample includes prisons, probation and parole agencies, juvenile agencies, halfway houses, prerelease and work release centers--most types of nonfederal corrections agencies.¹ Questionnaires were mailed 18 September 1979, follow-up reminder letters were mailed to nonrespondents on 1 October. A total of 485 responses received by 26 October were included in the analysis. This was a 41 percent response rate. However, on the basis of responses received after the keypunching deadline, those returned undelivered, "aggregated" responses submitted by some state agencies, and information from a follow-up telephone survey of a subsample of addressees that had not then responded, it is estimated that the "constructive" response rate was about 48 percent.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Site visit and survey data have been analyzed in the context of determining the extent to which they fit and support the original conceptual models. The findings of the project center on the following areas:

- The goals and objectives for correctional personnel training.
- The kinds of training offered and how training is developed and evaluated.
- The influence of forces outside the immediate correctional environment that often dominate and control correctional training efforts.
- The problems in training, especially the financial and personnel resource problems that limit training program development and effectiveness.

¹It might have been desirable to have studied the impact of training from the perspective of trainers, current and previous trainees, supervisors, as well as administrators. This approach, however, was not feasible.

Nearly all agencies (96 percent) of those contacted conduct training. Across all agencies of all types, two-thirds of the personnel received 40 hours of training over the preceding year at a median cost of \$270 per person trained. Agencies that describe themselves as temporary care, halfway houses, jails, probation agencies, and residential facilities for juveniles train the highest proportions of their personnel, while prerelease, parole, and combination probation/parole agencies train smaller proportions of their total staff.

As could be expected, courses that agencies find to be the most useful courses are tailored to the needs of the agency. In addition, courses perceived as most useful were developed by the agencies' own personnel, and conducted by the agencies' own trainers or by coworkers. The courses noted most often as useful as well as offered frequently are basic orientation training, crisis intervention, supervision and leadership, security procedures, human relations/communication skills, and counseling techniques. In general, the courses found to be most useful are taught using instructional techniques of role playing/practice of skills and group discussion methods.

Agencies indicate they need additional courses in human relations and communication skills, in crisis intervention, decision making, and in supervision and leadership.

These findings are highlighted in Volume 2. They are rich with implications for raising the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the training offered to those working in the several fields of corrections. But, it appears evident that all attempts at constructive application and implementation of the findings lie in the shadow of one overwhelming obstacle--lack of commitment by our society; hence, low political priority; hence, inadequate funding. So long as the prevailing conditions are minimal budgeting for corrections in general, and for training in particular, it insures that constraints will be imposed on the release of staff to engage in training activities, and on investment in development and experimentation with training programs. Evaluation of training

will continue to be regarded by those who are its "targets"--participants and administrators to whom is assigned the "blame"--as an exercise in futility. The willingness to do good and the knowledge of how to do better will continue to be subject to the frustrations of deficient access to the means of remedy.

The following conclusions are drawn from Phase I of the project:

1. Lack of Resources. The problem most dominating correctional personnel training is lack of resources.

Problems most often cited were insufficient staff (so that personnel could be made available for training), and inability to pay overtime for staff being trained. Factor analysis of agency goal questions reveals a constellation of concerns closely related to financial resource deficiencies, including lack of support by and cooperation of the press, the courts, and the public. When there is not public support, there is not likely to be legislative and financial support.

2. Correctional Personnel Training. Nearly all correctional agencies (96 percent of those responding to the national survey) maintain that they train their personnel.

While training is accepted as a part of modern staff development practice, site visit data suggest that much training offered may be somewhat pro forma and not necessarily directed toward the most pressing problems in corrections. Agencies indicate they would like to be able to offer more training in three general areas: in supervision and leadership, in human relations and communication skills, and in crisis intervention/emergency procedures, and decision making.

3. Agency Goals. Goals considered most relevant by agencies concern training correctional staff to enforce agency rules and getting compliance by offenders to agency regulations.

In terms of relevance, agency goals fall generally into two broad categories, maintaining control of offenders, and equipping offenders to be able to conform to community and social values. Although there

are some absolute differences across types of agencies in the relevance assigned these categories, all types of agencies rank these goals in the same order. That is, jails and prisons rank the relevancy of their goals essentially the same as do probation and parole agencies, as do temporary care agencies, and so on.

4. Useful Courses. Agencies differ in the courses they judge to be more useful to them; relevance to agency and trainee needs determine the usefulness of the course.

In general, training courses judged very useful by questionnaire respondents were the procedural courses, such as basic orientation and security procedures; the communication courses, such as counseling and human relations; and the decision making courses, such as crisis intervention and supervision and leadership.

5. Characteristics of Useful Courses. Very useful courses, as compared to less useful courses, are characterized by clear and specific goals and the demonstration of clear relevance to the trainees' work.

Not only is the value of careful course development demonstrated, but teaching methods that involve group discussion, demonstration, and practice of knowledge and skill gained (as by role playing) contribute to the perceived usefulness of courses.

6. Training Program Development. Conduct of a job analysis, development of written standards for work performance, and assessment of need, all done prior to training program development, characterize courses judged most useful.

These time-honored techniques associated with more useful correctional personnel courses are supported by other survey evidence, e.g., respondents did not know who had developed the less useful course, or how the less useful courses came about; there was less evidence of evaluation of the less useful courses; the goals of less useful courses were not clear.

7. Sense of Powerlessness. There is a general sense of powerlessness of persons responsible for correctional personnel training.

This feeling of lack of effect seems to stem from a sense of isolation in the correctional organization and lack of political and administrative support, inadequate resources to perform the work required, a lack of opportunity to be self-correcting in training, and either no clear goals, or conflicting goals, for training.

8. Relating Training to the Correctional Environment. Correctional personnel training programs perform both maintenance and adaptive functions for the organizations they serve, the two kinds of functions rarely sufficiently integrated.

As a formal component of correctional organizations, training serves as a mechanism for the socialization of personnel, equipping them to perform basic work tasks. As an informal component of correctional organizations, training serves as a vehicle for coping with environmental demands and pressures. What seems conspicuously absent in correctional organizations is an explicit linkage of organizational goals to the environmental conditions in which the agencies operate.

9. Need for Evaluation Procedures. The need for evaluation procedures to be used as training is contemplated, developed, and progress is documented by interviews and questionnaire responses.

All three of the models developed in this project provide effective methods for evaluating different aspects of training. Together they represent an effective way to evaluate training.

The Instructional System Operations Model provides an effective instrument for use in the development of a training program and for its formative evaluation as the program is carried out. The model has proven to be easily understood by correctional training personnel and appropriate for application to their programs. It is particularly useful in that it (a) focuses on assessment of training in terms of employee performance, and (b) examines the entire training process through step-by-step investigation of each of its components.

The Correctional Issues Model offers a useful conceptual structure to guide recognition and understanding of external forces influencing the correctional system and training activities. The model addresses social, political, and legal forces in corrections from both a theoretical and practical viewpoint. It requires that the users identify and confront Valuable, Policy and Practice issues impacting upon the correctional system and on training activities in the system.

The Instructional System Evaluation Model develops strategies for evaluation dependent upon when in the training process evaluation is to be conducted, and then leads the evaluator through the steps of evaluation, directing attention to the factors that should be observed.

The usefulness of all the models will be demonstrated in Phase II of the project.

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