



Operating Procedure

Effective Date	May 1, 2018	Number	010.2
Amended	11/1/18, 6/1/20	Operating Level	Department
Supersedes	Operating Procedure 010.2 (5/1/15)		
Authority	COV §53.1-10, §53.1-25		
ACA/PREA Standards	None		
Office of Primary Responsibility	EBP Manager		

Subject

LEARNING TEAMS

Incarcerated Offender Access	Public Access	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Attachments	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> #4 No <input type="checkbox"/>

I. PURPOSE

This operating procedure provides guidance for Learning Teams in the Department of Corrections.

II. COMPLIANCE

This operating procedure applies to all units operated by the Department of Corrections (DOC). Practices and procedures shall comply with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations, Board of Corrections policies and regulations, ACA standards, PREA standards, and DOC directives and operating procedures.

III. DEFINITIONS

Evidence Based Practices (EBP) - Correctional decision making derived from research findings about practices proven to change offender behavior thereby reducing the risk for recidivism

Learning Organization - An organization that is flexible, adaptive, and committed to creating an environment where all members are equipped with the tools and guiding ideas for continual learning in order to create desired outcomes as a team

Learning Team - A small group of employees that meets regularly (long term) to communicate, learn together, grow professionally, and continually develop the organizational culture to better achieve its mission

- **Ad Hoc Learning Team** - A small group of employees that meet for a specified period of time (short term) to consider a specific topic
- **Executive Learning Team** - A Learning Team designated for the executive team of facilities and P&P Offices that focuses on modeling desired skills and attributes in a manner that encourages employee engagement and supports the creation and sustainment of a healing environment
- **Subject Matter Specialist (SMS) Learning Team** - A Learning Team designated for leaders of learning teams that focuses on modeling desired skills and attributes in a manner in which they share experiences and continue their growth in leading others

Safe Container - An energetic environment in which staff can openly and freely express their thoughts and feelings in a respectful manner, without fear of reprisal, which supports an atmosphere of accountability and change

Subject Matter Specialist (SMS) - A person who is recognized to have the skill set, role modeling, and self-motivation abilities to lead and facilitate a Learning Team after completing adequate training for identified subject matters

IV. PROCEDURE

A. Learning Organization

1. The DOC recognizes that to be a learning organization and to continually improve, it is necessary to create purposeful opportunities for communication and professional learning to support the Healing Environment, evidence based practices initiatives, and the DOC public safety mission.
2. DOC is committed to using unit level Learning Teams as a vessel for developing the various skills and tools in a safe container that may be needed depending on the situation and purpose of each Learning

Team.

3. Learning Teams should operate in a safe container utilizing dialogue practices to support evidence based business practices (i.e., EPICS, motivational interviewing, case planning, risk/needs assessment, effective communication).
4. All DOC employees will be assigned to a Learning Team.
 - a. Unit Executive staff will participate in an Executive Learning Team.
 - b. Subject Matter Specialists (SMS), in addition to facilitating Learning Teams for others, will have a separate Learning Team to share experiences and continue their growth in leading others.
 - c. Typically, Learning Teams should be structured around normal work processes so real world situations can be incorporated.

B. Operation of Learning Teams

1. Each Unit Head will establish Learning Teams to meet at pre-scheduled times during the employee's regular work hours with only minimal need for overtime.
2. Learning Teams should meet a minimum of twice per month for 60 minutes per meeting, though frequency and duration may exceed the minimum.
 - a. Ad Hoc Learning Teams should meet as directed by the Unit Head or designee.
 - b. Based on a temporary operational need at the Unit, the Statewide Evidence Based Practices Manager may approve Learning Teams to meet less frequently on a case by case basis. Exemptions must be approved by the Regional Administrator, Regional Operations Chief, Deputy Director for Programs, Education, and Reentry, and the Chief of Corrections Operations.
 - c. In no case are Learning Teams to meet less than once per month.
3. All employees should be assigned to a Learning Team.
 - a. Contract personnel, hourly wage employees, and any other person whose daily work takes place at the organizational unit are encouraged to participate in Learning Teams.
 - b. Ad Hoc Learning Teams should include those employees that are specific to the topic as identified by the Unit Head or designee.
4. Learning Teams should be small enough to allow for the input and idea exchange of participants and yet large enough to involve diverse voices of employees who work together regularly as a team.
 - a. In most settings, the optimum Learning Team size is 8 - 10 participants, Learning Team size may vary depending on the number of employees available in the Unit.
 - b. Executive Learning Teams may be larger to accommodate all members of the team or may be broken into smaller teams. In P&P Offices and small facilities where the leadership team is smaller, Units may partner with neighboring Units or with partner agencies for Executive Learning Teams.
 - c. SMS Learning Teams will meet at a minimum of once a month in groupings of 8 - 10 participants though may vary in size depending on the Unit.

C. Attendance

1. Once established and approved, all employees at the organizational unit shall attend scheduled Learning Team meetings as part of their regular and expected duties.
2. All employees present at the Unit and not on approved leave are expected to attend Learning Teams as scheduled.
 - a. Absences from Learning Team meetings should be scheduled and approved with as much advance notice as possible through the employee's supervisor.
 - b. The affected SMS shall be notified as far in advance as practical of such absences by the approving supervisor along with the reason for the absence.
 - c. Absences should only be approved for legitimate life, health, or safety needs impacting the operations of the Unit or for professional commitments that cannot be practicably rescheduled such

as required training or Court appearances.

3. The SMS shall use a *Learning Team Attendance Roster* (See [Learning Team Network](#) on iDOC.) to document Learning Team meetings and forward it to the Unit Head or designee upon completion of each Learning Team meeting.

D. Oversight

1. The Unit Head or designee shall establish a schedule to regularly review *Learning Team Attendance Rosters* to ensure absences were approved in advance and granted for legitimate operational needs of the Unit.
2. The Unit Head is ultimately responsible for providing Learning Team oversight, ensuring safe containers are practiced and ensuring Learning Teams meet as scheduled.

E. Learning Team Content

1. The Unit Head will designate an employee responsible for determining Learning Team content considering factors of staff growth and skills, Unit needs, and current situations.
2. All Learning Teams will operate using the *DOC Learning Team Model*. (See [Learning Team Network](#) on iDOC.)
3. Dialogic practices will be used to help maintain the safe container and participation among team members and content emphasis will regularly include evidence based practices initiatives.
4. Staff from all levels of the DOC are encouraged to develop and submit *Learning Plans* for use in Learning Teams.
 - a. The *Learning Plan Template* and *Instructions for Creating New Learning Plans* are available from the [Learning Team Network](#) on iDOC.
 - b. Completed *Learning Plans* should be submitted to the Regional EBP Manager for review and approval.
 - c. Approved *Learning Plans* will be placed in the [Learning Team Network](#) on iDOC to be available for use by Learning Teams anywhere in the DOC.

V. REFERENCES

The VADOC Dialogue Initiative

The VADOC Healing Environment Initiative

VI. FORM CITATIONS

See [Learning Team Network](#) on iDOC for forms and attachments.

VII. REVIEW DATE

The office of primary responsibility shall review this operating procedure annually and re-write it no later than three years after the effective date.

The office of primary responsibility reviewed this operating procedure in May 2019 and no changes are needed at this time.

The office of primary responsibility reviewed this operating procedure in May 2020 and necessary changes are being drafted.

Signature Copy on File

3/12/18

H. Scott Richeson, Deputy Director for Programs, Education, and Re-entry Date