

## **Session C: Creating and Sustaining an EBP-Ready Workforce**

### ***General Overview***

Implementing evidence based practices requires employees to do their work in a fundamentally different way. Preparing the workforce with the competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) needed to operate in an evidence-based environment is essential for success. Two jurisdictions, Maricopa County, AZ, and Orange County, CA, have examined the competencies required of a probation officer and are applying those competencies to select human resources processes in their organizations.

### ***Major Themes***

#### **Competencies**

A competency model is an approach that identifies the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to be successful in a particular job. Using a competency library, approximately twelve competencies are selected, and can then be used as the basis for most human resources processes: recruitment, selection, training, promotion, performance management, etc. Ideally, the competency model is applied to all human processes to encourage consistency and alignment. In many cases, organizations begin with a limited number of processes that are in need of attention, such as hiring practices.

In Maricopa County, AZ, a competency-based approach is being used to improve the hiring and promotional process. This will ensure that new line staff and newly promoted supervisors have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to fulfill their job role. This is being accomplished primarily by adopting a behavior based interviewing process; candidates are asked to describe past experiences where they applied the desired competencies. In the future, the agency hopes to expand the competency approach to the performance appraisal process, so that employees are being assessed on the same knowledge, skills, and abilities for which they were hired or promoted.

In Orange County, CA, the competency model is being applied to the performance management system. Based on the competencies for each position, objective performance measures are being selected so that employees can be evaluated based on their contribution to agency goals. In addition, competencies will be used to establish professional development goals for the year based on the needs and aspirations of the individual employee.

#### **Communication**

Like any new way of doing business, implementing a competency model is not without its challenges. Communication is key to successful implementation, so that everyone in the agency understands the reason for the changes and how it will impact their work. Also, a diverse working group is essential to ensure that viewpoints from across the department are considered. External stakeholders such as unions or county human resource departments can also contribute to the process.



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### *Concluding Thoughts*

Successful reform requires a successful workforce. Considering the competencies needed to do evidence based work and preparing workers to apply those competencies requires a thoughtful effort and the contributions of many individuals, but will pay dividends in improved organizational readiness.

“You can teach a turkey to climb a tree, but it is easier to hire a squirrel.”

Spencer, Lyle M. and Signe M. Spencer, 1993.  
*Competence at Work*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.