



## Missouri Effective Practices Project (MEPP)

### The 10 Essential Skills in New Employee Orientation

**County:** City of Kansas City

**Name of Practice:** The 10 Essential Skills in New Employee Orientation

**Overall Description of Program:** The Kansas City Health Department (KCHD) did not have new employee orientation on a regular basis. Before this program, an orientation would occur every 6 months or so and we felt that was too long. After our accreditation site visit, a large group of employees were not oriented and we thought this component should be improved and regularly occurring. We found that it was something that was expected city wide. But, we don't have the level of commitment we have now. This impetus started a year (2003) before site visit. We learned from our employees that they really did not know much about other programs within the division and the Department as a whole.

**Essential Skill:** Assurance

**Essential Service:** Assure Competent Workforce

**Knowledge Domain:** Environmental Health

**NACCHO Oper Defin:** Maintain a competent public health workforce

**Planning Time:** less than a year

**Experience/Imp of Program:** 2 to 3 years

**Number of staff:** Part-time staff

**Department of Program:** Human Resources and Liason

**Basis for Need of Program:** Our employees are representing themselves, the department, the city, and the public health profession. People come to the department and they are not able to tell a customer/patient about a resource, then it does not leave a good impression and we have lost the chance to teach about public health to our community and connect them to something they need.

**Characteristics of the Program:** During the morning orientation, an overall introduction to the department is given by our Director, Dr. Rex Archer. Then, each Division sends someone to talk about the mission of the Division. What is unique is that each Division Manger reports on at least 2 of the 10 essential skills and how their division and programs fulfill them. The orientation within the division basically focuses on training for the day-to-day activities of the job.

For example, in the Communicable Disease Division, we have a competency list. For each employee in this Division, we have a check list where they've met each one of these competencies, issuance of the equipment for position, necessary skills, and whether they took epidemiology in college. If not, then they must pass the Principles of Epidemiology Test. Food inspectors have to learn the contents of the KC food code because our food code is a city-wide ordinance, not just a health department policy.

Health Education/Health Communication covers the Essential skills 3 and 4 and will give examples of how they cover those areas.

The Environmental Program must be up to date on the food health code, which is based on federal guidelines. Our new employees also have to understand the culture of the Kansas City food industry.

Our Administration fulfills Number 8 Essential Skill and includes such competencies as linking people, enforcing laws, and development of public health policies. This application of the skills, we feel, provides a foundation the employee can always refer to. They understand the responsibilities and the responsibilities of their colleagues.

**Barriers to Implementation:** Scheduling is the number one barrier; if we do not have a new employee for a couple of months; it's keeping that employee from getting the information.

**Evaluations:** We collected, through an evaluation, everything from who attended, how well the orientation went, and then the test Dr. Archer gives at the end. This test covers the code of ethics and several key public health concepts. We provide every comment to the administration and the people who attended. This information is used in the next leadership team meeting to make changes in the way the department runs.

There was a time in this building if someone asked for a service-it was a toss up whether they could tell you or not. Over the last year, we have had 4 employees who left and then returned to work for us again. We recently did a customer satisfaction survey and some of the comments could be tied directly to the orientation (e.g., employees are helpful, can find resources, etc.). The evaluation results showed us some very important information: we do not need to rush through the day so that some programs do not get represented. We also should provide some snacks and drinks.

The reason we feel our Program is so important is that up until 4 years ago our pay grade was much lower than surrounding areas, but our personnel were more highly trained. We found they went through training and with a year of experience, we would lose them to another department for a higher wage. We went through a process of documenting this and worked with the city to raise the pay. We showed through data that we were serving as training program for other departments. Essentially, you train your employees to stay, not to be hired away.

Our new employees have remarked that this new orientation is like "Public Health 101".

**Geographical Description:** 250,000 to 499,999

**Target Population:** Other (please explain)

**Explain Other:** New Employees

**Describe Necessary Funding:** We really don't spend that much money on it aside from staff time. The benefits far outweigh the costs.

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