



**MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
TRAINING ACADEMY  
LESSON PLAN**

<b>COURSE TITLE:</b>	Supervisory/Management
<b>CLASS TITLE:</b>	Managing a Diverse Work Environment
<b>MODULE TITLE:</b>	Managing a Diverse Work Environment

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

This lesson is specifically designed to meet the needs of supervisors who are expected to address the implications of all types of diversity at their work place. The dynamics of communication, intervention and coaching are all examined in this program with suggestions for application in diversity situations.

**PARAMETERS**

**Date:** March 2004

*Credit Hours:* 8:00

*Target Audience:* Supervisors/Managers

*Number of Participants:* 30

*Required Training Space:* Large Classroom

**PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES**

**EVALUATION TECHNIQUE**

*At the conclusion of this lesson, participants will:*

*Evaluation techniques utilized by the trainer(s) to determine if the performance objectives have been met.*

1. Given a case study, determine how communications can impact diversity in the workplace;
2. Through a situational exercise, apply coaching techniques designed to enhance employees' abilities; and
3. Through a group analysis, examine the importance of team building in a culturally diverse environment.

1. Guided Group Practice
2. Processing Questions

**REQUIRED MATERIALS/EQUIPMENT/SUPPLIES/NEEDED**

X	Overheads	X	Projector Screen
	Overhead Projector	X	Computer & LCD
X	Slide Show		Television(s)
X	VCR/DVD Player		Video Camera
X	Posters	X	Masking Tape
X	Markers	X	Easel Pads & Stands

**Videotapes:**

"M.E.E.T. Zero Tolerance: Enforcing Zero Tolerance with Fairness & Respect"

**Other:****STUDENT HANDOUTS****Title:**

Student Manual

## INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Lecture, Guided Practices, Discussion

### REFERENCE(S)

*The following books and / or materials were used as a basis for this lesson plan. The instructor should be familiar with the material in these reference documents to effectively present this module.*

#### TITLE

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1. Workforce America, by Marilyn Loden & Rudy Rosener

4. 50 Activities for Diversity Training, by Jonamay Lambert & Selma Myers

2. Beyond Race & Gender, by R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr.

5. Effective Supervisor Training Reports, published by Business & Legal Reports, Inc.

3. Implementing Diversity, by Marilyn Loden

**Prerequisite Training/Certification:** Not applicable

**Curriculum Prepared by:** Denise K. Balazic

**Curriculum Content Approved by:**

**Date Approved**

**Curriculum Design Approved by:**

**Date Approved**

**Original/Revision Date**

**Design Notes:**

Original Date: March 2004

Revision Date: March 2008

Curriculum converted to Word by Debra Bowe

Revision Date:

## LESSON PLAN

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TRAINER NOTES

### ANTICIPATORY SET

**Note to Trainer:** Icebreaker – Introductions (about 15 minutes)

Pair up participants and have them interview each other asking the following questions:

- What is your name?
- What is your job?
- Where do you work?
- Where did your name originate?
- What has your name meant to you over the years?
- How have others reacted to it?

Ask participants to introduce the person they interviewed.

**Note to Trainer:** This exercise serves as an introduction and can lead to a discussion of preconceived ideas and expectations concerning names.

By now, organizations are aware that changes in the general population profoundly affect the make-up of their work force. With the work force becoming more diverse, supervisors need to understand that diversity has a positive impact on the bottom line. In order to grow as individuals and as a company, we must learn how to understand value and manage diversity in the workplace. A new awareness coupled with skills can build bridges of understanding and cooperation which you, as a supervisor can use to positively influence daily performance. This lesson plan is specifically designed to meet the needs of supervisors who are expected to address the implications of all types of diversity at their work place.

### **Performance Objectives:**

1. Given a case study, determine how diversity can impact communication in the work place;
2. Through a situational exercise, apply coaching techniques designed enhance employees' abilities to value diversity; and
3. Through a group analysis, examine the importance of team building in a culturally diverse environment.

### INSTRUCTIONAL INPUT



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What is “managing diversity”? Managing diversity is a process of creating an environment of respect that values and empowers our employees to achieve their full potential and to successfully reach the organization’s goals.

Diversity problems result from a clash of cultures.

The word “Culture” is defined as “A way of life of a given society, passed down from one generation to the next through learning and experience.” It is a complex subject. Culture impacts every aspect of life from the way people behave with one another to their relationship to the environment. It includes beliefs, values, assumptions and perceptions. It is manifested in dress and appearance, food and eating habits, mental processes and learning, work habits and even sense of time and personal space. It is easy to see how cultural clashes often occur in the workplace. To complicate this even further, there is another dimension in that organizations have a culture as well.

Let’s examine culture or diversity from four dimensions or layers.

- The first dimension is **PERSONALITY**. This is the unique aspect of each individual that determines that person’s particular style.
- The second layer, **INTERNAL DIMENSIONS**, is those characteristics which we have little or no control over, such as age, gender, nationality, etc.
- The third layer is **EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS**. These we have a little more control over and are related to lifestyle issues. Marital status, religion and educational background are some examples.
- The fourth and final layer is **ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSIONS**. These are the characteristics related to classifications or work affiliation. These are sometimes referred to as “the work culture”. They are “the way we do things around here”. Some examples are: work location, seniority and custody/classification status and informal policies and procedures.

### Independent Exercise

Please turn to page \_\_ in your manual where you will find a chart listing the four dimensions of diversity we’ve just discussed. Think about how people are treated in your organization or at your work site. Examine each factor and rate it between one and five depending on how each factor effects



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such treatment. Also, determine whether each factor has an overall positive or negative effect.

**Ask Participants:** Who would be willing to share a personal work experience resulting from cultural differences?

**Possible Answers:** Will vary.

**Ask Participants:** How do these factors impact your ability to perform as a supervisor?

**Possible Answers:** It creates unnecessary conflicts; People are judged by issues which are not performance based; Opinions of people are formed based on one or two characteristics instead of getting to know that person as an individual.

The more important a characteristic, especially a value or belief, is to you, the more difficult it will be to accept those who are different from that characteristic. It is often these differences that create conflict in the working environment. If you are liberal politically and that is very important to you, it will be difficult for you to accept someone who is extremely conservative politically. Take a look at the characteristics that you rated as very important. Think about people who are very different from you in those characteristics. How do you feel about those people? How do you get along with those people?

It is important to reflect on your belief systems and try to identify how they were formed. Once you understand how your beliefs were formed, letting go of them, or allowing them to adjust, may become easier. As a supervisor, you are expected to be a role model and set the tone in your work environment. Managing a diverse work force begins with individual self-awareness. It is up to each of you to take a deep look into your own feelings and belief systems in order to determine how to open your mind and change behaviors to more effectively value diversity.

Most of us have heard a lot about work force diversity and have attended diversity training during Basic or Core training. Despite all the talk, many of us are still wondering what diversity means to our organization and why we should care?

We all feel that we get along better with people like us. When you are choosing a person to work with you, who would you rather have – someone similar to you or someone different from you? In the past, white men chose other white men to work with. This was effective when the vast majority of the white-collar workforce was white males, when the majority of qualified



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candidates for jobs were white males, and when white men represented the majority of the buying power. Our country and work force have changed drastically over the last fifty years. Over the next decade, the percentage of white males in the work force will decrease to just over one-third of the workforce. The average age of workers is rising and more women are visible in the work place. There are more immigrants in the workforce with cultural backgrounds that may be unfamiliar to many Americans. These differences among people often create resentment, frustration, confusion and intolerance.

The Department of Labor has identified key multicultural issues that contribute to this problem.

- **Language problems leading to miscommunication and misinterpretation**

One of the most obvious issues is the language problem. According to the latest census, almost 14% of the population uses a language other than English within their home. English speakers have a tendency to equate accents or dialects with ignorance and become frustrated when it is difficult to understand someone whose native language is not English.

Even when English is a speaker's native tongue, communication issues can still be present. Many younger employees use slang or references that an older employee may find hard to comprehend. More experienced employees may use abbreviations or initials that are unknown to a new employee.

- **Incorrect assumptions about diverse cultures**

People are often quick to assume that certain groups are either hard working or lazy and easily satisfied with entry level positions. Generation X and Nexter employees are sometimes viewed as selfish individuals with a poor work ethic. Employees with college degrees but little actual work experience are often discounted by "the school of hard knocks" system. "Educated" employees can forget that experience is a valuable learning tool in any environment.

- **Expectations that others will conform**

A third issue is the expectation that employees will conform to the prevailing work climate. When the work population was homogeneous that was not an unrealistic expectation. However, the reality of the new work force requires "stretching" in all directions to explore new concepts and possibilities. It is more realistic to assume that new employees will work to



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change the environment rather than be absorbed by the old standards. Four day work weeks, flex time and company daycare centers are just some examples of how the work environment has changed to accommodate the needs of employees.

- **Biases against the unfamiliar**

In general, people are uncomfortable with the unfamiliar. It is much easier to do things the way they've always been done that to contemplate change. Often people are shortsighted about their choices and unable to imagine that others could entertain a different approach to life and work. People see their lifestyle, spiritual beliefs, personal choices, political views and sexual preferences the only correct ones. Why is it, that everyone is expected to behave and think in exactly the same way?

- **“Traditional” values in conflict with values of others**

People from other cultures or age groups often have values that differ from traditional American values or may have the same value that is exhibited in a different way. People of different generations have their own ideas about authority figures, family structures and job loyalty based on life experiences that they have had. Who is to say that one set of values is better than another?

**Ask Participants:** Have you ever witnessed an act of discrimination against someone you know? How did it make you feel?

**Possible Responses:** Answers will vary

It seems obvious that there are particular challenges when dealing with an individual born into a different culture when English is not their native language. But that does not explain what occurs from day to day in the work place between people that were born and raised in American and would appear to have a great deal in common. While we may not be aware of it, our ability to clearly communicate and our credibility with others are closely linked to language usage. Communication is the most important tool we can use to help us with diversity issues. In fact, most diversity problems stem from a lack of communication. Your communication skills are valuable tools in negotiating your way through potentially sensitive situations. Treating others with respect and choosing your words accordingly will bring you the respect of others and contribute to a positive working environment. To communicate effectively, we must have the knowledge required to anticipate how our message will be interpreted by others. If we are unaware of the subtle messages contained in our everyday language, we will be more likely to garble communication.



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Here are some communication tips:

- Think before you speak. Be sensitive to others. If you do accidentally offend someone, apologize immediately. To avoid embarrassing you, some people will deny that they felt offended. Even so, your apology will have been heard and silently appreciated.
- Listen more. Being heard increases a person's self esteem and confidence. People who are listened to usually appreciate the person who is doing the listening and are more likely to cooperate with that person. Listening encourages people to be less defensive and to talk through concerns or problems. Careful listening can teach us a great deal about others' thought patterns, belief systems, values and desires.
- Avoid generalized language. Refrain from using words, images and situations that suggest that all or most members of a particular group are the same. We aren't.
- Honor the preference of others when choosing terms of address. (Ms. Versus Miss or Mrs.)
- Avoid adjectives that spotlight others and imply they are exceptions. (black doctor, woman pilot, older supervisor, blind salesperson)
- Avoid joking remarks directed at any diversity dimension. (Age, ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, profession, education, language, work style, etc.) Sometimes people are so relaxed in their conversations that they forget to consider how off-the-wall comments or jokes might hurt others. Most jokes are designed to make fun of a particular group or play on a stereotype. That's why they're funny! Jokes are bound to offend someone. It is best to avoid them altogether.
- Avoid terms that define, demean or devalue others. (crippled, militant, girl, boy)
- Don't have a double standard. Sometimes we allow those who are close to us to refer to us or use labels that we would not like others to use (He's my boy, He's my cracker, Blacks who refer to each other using the "N" word but are very offended if someone of another race uses the same term.) This can be very confusing when even your own personal rules change according to the



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speaker. If you find a particular term insulting only when it is voiced by certain individuals, you are sending out mixed messages which create communicate problems.

- Don't be so sensitive. Recognize other people's intentions when they speak. Don't be hypersensitive to a thoughtless remark and take things too seriously. We wouldn't feel so threatened by diversity if we allowed ourselves to chuckle at our own shortcomings.

It is very common for people to speak and act without thinking about the effect that their choice of words or behavior can have on another. Sometimes people fooling around at work or telling jokes make others uncomfortable or are offensive and insulting. This is a much more common way for people to illustrate their racism, sexism or homophobia. You know how hard it is to confront someone about these issues without fear of retaliation. You know this because even in your capacity as supervisor, you sometimes find it difficult to do. Where does that leave an employee? That is why it is so vital for the supervisor to set the tone for effective communication and model appropriate work behavior. It is your function to help create an environment where all employees feel respected, useful and comfortable.

The following guided practice provides you with an opportunity to sensitize yourself to a variety of common diversity issues that can cause problems for both you and your staff. In addition, it gives us a change, as a group, to discuss specific coaching suggestions.

### **GUIDED PRACTICE**

**Instructions:** Read the common work scenarios on manual pages \_\_\_\_\_. As a group, determine what impact this situation could have on the work environment and how you would address the issue. Select a spokesperson to present your findings to the class. You will have 10 minutes to complete the group work portion.

Two male corrections officers are beginning their day in the visiting room. As Officer Parker is strip searching an inmate, Officer Blake says, "Don't be too disappointed, Parker. I know that you were hoping that you'd be the one that got strip searched today." Officer Parker replies, "Only if I knew for sure that you'd be doing it! On second thought, I prefer to be strip searched by a man." Officer Blake makes a gesture with his arm up and wrist down and replies, "I know you would!" During this banter, their male supervisor comes in and says, "Alright girls, get to work."

**What impact can this behavior have on the work environment?**



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This interchange is disrespectful to both homosexuals and women. Often when people are uncomfortable, they will make a joke to cut the tension. That is okay and can be effective. However, joking around about people with alternative lifestyles is inappropriate and can be insulting. Men often insult each other by referring to other men as “girls” or “ladies”. Few women appreciate this type of comment and find it disrespectful.

#### **How would you address the issue?**

The supervisor must point out to the employees that their playful remarks could be offensive to other people. Why is it necessary to insult women to make a point? It does not benefit the work environment to make fun of a particular group. You have no way of knowing for sure who belongs to that group and off-hand jokes can put people on the defensive.

A female unit supervisor overhears two male probation/parole officers making snide comments about one of the offenders they supervise. They are standing near the reception area and could easily be overheard by other offenders in the waiting room. She takes them aside and coaches them about their disrespectful behavior. After she walks away, one officer says to the other, “What’s up with her? It must be her time of the month of something.” “Yeah,” replies the other officer. “She’s got a lot of nerve considering the way she got her promotion. I guess all of that work on her knees really paid off.” The second conversation is overheard by several other employees.

#### **What impact can this behavior have on the work environment?**

This tactic is often used to undermine female employees or authority figures. It is a not so subtle way of putting ambitious women in their place. It sends out a message to all women that if promoted, their competence and values will be questioned in a way that few men experience. These types of remarks can seed rumors that can grow and damage careers.

#### **How would you address the issue?**

As a supervisor, this issue may be easier to discuss than some. Firstly, employees need to understand that it is the job of the supervisor to coach them on inappropriate work behavior. This is not a function of hormones but part of their work expectations and responsibilities. Secondly, discussing a staff person in such a disrespectful light is obviously beyond acceptable behavior. Also, anyone hearing this remark would wonder if it were true or if they would be discussed similarly should they be promoted.

You are a maintenance supervisor. You have several employees who speak fluent Spanish as well as English. These employees often converse with each other in Spanish



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even when non Spanish speaking individuals are present. Several employees have expressed their discomfort with this behavior and are paranoid that they are being insulted to their faces in another language.

#### **What impact can this behavior have on the work environment?**

As depicted in the scenario, people are often suspicious when someone is speaking in a language they do not understand even when the conversation is perfectly innocent. This can be intimidating and/or frustrating. Many people feel that all persons living and working in the U.S. should assimilate themselves to the English speaking, American culture. Ironically, it is predicted that by 2025, the majority of Americans will be Spanish speaking. Will those of us who only speak English be required to learn Spanish to fit in with the majority? Probably not, so why apply a different standard to non English speaking Americans?

#### **How would you address the issue?**

Good communication is the key to maintaining productivity, high morale and a team spirit. As a supervisor, you need to inform the bi-lingual employees that their use of Spanish is affecting their co-workers in a negative way. Since they speak English as well as Spanish, it should be no problem to choose English to communicate with and around co-workers.

You are a Cook III and supervise the kitchen staff. An inmate, who is mentally challenged, is attempting to have a conversation about the menu with one of your staff. She can not understand the inmate and is becoming irritated. You can hear the sarcasm in her voice. He is asking the same question over and over because she has been unable to provide an answer. Finally, in frustration, the inmate gives up and walks away. After the inmate has left the area, she turns to her co-workers and says, "I wish they would stop putting these wobble heads in the general population! They're so stupid they need a babysitter 24/7. That's a good case for abortion if I've ever seen one!" One of the co-workers she is speaking to have a mentally challenged daughter.

#### **What impact can this behavior have on the work environment?**

These types of remarks directed to or about disabled individuals are cruel and demeaning. They indicate a lack of respect as well as ignorance. Again, this is an example of how a thoughtless remark can have ripple effects beyond what the speaker ever imagined. Even if the speaker never discovered how hurtful her comments had been to her co-worker, it is likely that their work relationship will suffer as a result.

#### **How would you address this issue?**



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You would discuss her unprofessional tone and demeanor toward the inmate. You might mention that people are often uncomfortable around disabled individuals and ignore or cut their conversations short to end the interaction. A disabled inmate deserves the same attention to their questions or problems as any other inmate. Usually patience is required for a successful communication. It is never appropriate to insult someone with labels such as “wobble heads” or take a stand on a value laden issue like abortion.

Ramadan has just started. One hundred forty inmates have signed up for services and special meals. Some staff feels it is necessary to informally monitor the inmates to make sure that they don't sneak food before sundown. You are aware that some employees snicker about the prayer rugs and chanting. While you were entering the building this morning with a Muslim co-worker you heard one of your officer's say to another employee, “Assalamualaikum.” The employee replied, “My leg is fine. How's your leg?” They both laugh.

#### **What impact can this behavior have on the work environment?**

Religion is a fundamental right and a very personal choice. Some Employees have the opinion that our Muslim inmates are not sincere about their religious beliefs. They believe that people claim to be Muslims for certain privileges or to be involved with a particular group for reasons which are not religious. While that may or may not be true, that has no bearing on the religion itself. Many people have no concept of the Muslim faith or any other faith to which they have not been exposed. Their lack of knowledge or misunderstanding creates problems. It is never appropriate to criticize another religion or an individual's beliefs. There are few situations which can be taken more personally.

#### **How would you address this issue?**

You would caution the employee about discussing religious issues at all. Making light of someone's religious beliefs is to tread on dangerous ground. You might want to discuss how the employee would feel if his/her religious beliefs or traditions were the object of ridicule. Caution the employee about judging the Muslim religion based on their experience in the correctional system. Whether or not an inmate adheres to the Ramadan fast is a matter of their own conscience and not the business of staff. Are co-workers trying to “catch” Christians committing adultery, treating other people badly by gossiping, lying, etc? **Regardless of their feelings, staff must understand that comments about religion are unprofessional, disrespectful, and can be considered a form of harassment or discrimination.**



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**Ask Participants:** How do these scenarios fit in with your previous ideas of what constitutes a “diversity” issue?

**Possible Answers:** Will vary.

**Ask Participants:** What barriers do you think you might encounter when you begin to coach someone on these issues?

**Possible Answers:** Will vary.

It is likely that you will experience some resistance when coaching someone on any issue. Diversity issues can be particularly tricky because of deep-seated feelings and value-laden topics. Also, you may have reasons of your own that cause you to hesitate about correcting an employee’s inappropriate behavior. In this next section, we will discuss and examine your personal feelings about coaching and provide some helpful guidelines when coaching is necessary.

### INSTRUCTIONAL INPUT

Because every person brings different experiences and cultural backgrounds to the workplace, the supervisor must take the time to get to know each employee to build a strong relationship. There is no way you can appreciate the individual gifts of each employee until you know what they are! This can not be discovered from inside your office. It requires some real interaction in the places where your employees perform their job. Additionally, the supervisor needs to model appropriate behavior as the actions of the supervisor speak more loudly and clearly than any words or policy ever could.

Often employees are not aware that subtle remarks, gestures or behaviors can be offensive or insulting to some one else. In some cases, employees are well aware that their intolerance for others is creating tension, hurting feelings or even angering their co-workers, but persist anyway. As a supervisor, it is your job to promote a harassment free environment where everyone can feel comfortable and do their best work. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to attempt to correct any inappropriate behavior. This is when it is essential that you coach your staff about problematic behaviors.

Coaching is a way to offer encouragement, promote growth and develop employees to help them make a greater contribution to the organization. It can assist employees who may be encountering difficulty. It provides the opportunity to point out areas where the employee may be straying from the desired performance level so they can self correct. This can help a



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good employee become more productive in his or her current position. Coaching is a way to empower an employee and show the organization's commitment to a program or policy. The benefits of coaching to both the supervisor and the employee are profound and numerous. So why do supervisors avoid coaching?

To explore some common reasons, please turn to page \_\_\_ in the manual. You will find a series of questions designed to help you examine your feelings about coaching employees. Check those that apply to you and be prepared to discuss your answers with the entire class.

#### Independent Exercise – (Why Supervisors Often Avoid Coaching)

- \_\_\_ 1. I don't have time; it takes too long and I have too many people to deal with.
- \_\_\_ 2. I don't want to overwhelm the employee.
- \_\_\_ 3. Nobody spent much time with me and I did OK.
- \_\_\_ 4. I am uncomfortable in discussions about employee abilities.
- \_\_\_ 5. Employees don't ask for or really want my help.
- \_\_\_ 6. They aren't really going to listen to me.
- \_\_\_ 7. Employees get defensive and argumentative.
- \_\_\_ 8. I have been guilty of the same behavior myself.
- \_\_\_ 9. Overall, this employee's performance is so good I don't want to nitpick about small problems.
- \_\_\_ 10. They should be able to learn...I did.

Additional reasons because of diversity factors:

- \_\_\_ 11.
- \_\_\_ 12.

**Note to Trainer:** Process the below information with entire group

Coaching is an essential job function of supervision. If you feel that you can't take the time, you might consider delegating more of your work. Employees expect and want advice from their supervisors. Even "good" employees need guidance and fine tuning. If your feedback is balanced between positive and negative aspects, employees will more readily accept coaching and shouldn't become defensive or insulted. Most employees want to do a good job but are often clueless as to what that means. Don't make the guess!

Do you want to provide coaching to your employees but are unsure of your role? The following steps can help you:



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- 1) **Listen to your employees.** If you feel more comfortable talking than listening, you'll have a problem becoming a coach. Get in touch with your employees and find out how they view the world, themselves and their jobs.
- 2) **Focus on insight first, information second.** Spend time watching employees work and working alongside them. This will give you valuable insight into their current levels of performance, attitude and general interaction with others. This will enable you to understand their personal issues and tailor your coaching to their needs.
- 3) **Show concerns for your people as individuals.** Coaching is not psychological counseling, but it does involve genuinely caring for your people and conveying your concern to them. As a supervisor, you should have a strong stake in their success and contribution to the work environment.
- 4) **Find out what motivates your employees.** Until you learn what your individual employees are working toward, you won't be able to coach them. For some it might be obtaining recognition, achieving advancement, acquiring more responsibility or experiencing accomplishment. For others, it may simply be a paycheck with benefits.
- 5) **Focus on collaboration, not competition.** Coaching should emphasize assisting one another in meeting individual as well as group goals. Ideally, you want to encourage employees to be the best they can be – while helping one another do the same.
- 6) **Aim high, but keep improvement goals within reach.** Coaching can not change an attitude, a deep-seated prejudice or a religious belief. It can and should help employees improve their behavior and performance level. No matter what personal issues one has with another, there is a professional and accepted standard of behavior which must be adhered to.

We've just discussed some general guidelines for effective coaching. Now, we will watch a video which will introduce a specific technique for coaching regarding zero tolerance situations.

**Note to Trainer:** Video – "M.E.E.T. Zero Tolerance: Enforcing Zero Tolerance with Fairness & Respect" 29 minutes.

**Ask Participants:** What is a zero tolerance policy and why does it exist?



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**Correct answer:** Zero tolerance is the concept that any and all forms of harassment and/or discrimination have no place in the work environment and are considered inappropriate, disrespectful and in some cases, illegal. These policies are in place because every employee has the right to work in an environment where they feel comfortable, respected and valued.

This video is designed to help managers guide their discussions with staff on how to enforce zero tolerance situations while maintaining fairness and equity for all employees. This program focuses on the four-step M.E.E.T. model. The M.E.E.T. technique is designed to ensure that a coaching situation is conducted with respect for everyone involved and that the solutions reached are consistent with department policies.

#### Processing Questions

**Ask Participants:** What is the supervisor's role regarding our zero tolerance policy?

**Correct Answer:** A supervisor must learn to recognize and correct situations that cross the line. The role is actually two-fold in that the supervisor must be proactive to prevent violations and correct unacceptable situations that occur.

**Ask Participants:** How does the supervisor benefit by using the M.E.E.T. process?

**Possible Answers:** The M.E.E.T. process provides a framework for the supervisor to follow; following the M.E.E.T. process helps insure that you get the entire story.

**Ask Participants:** When deciding on appropriate disciplinary action, what are some of the issues that need to be considered by the supervisor?

**Possible Answers:** The seriousness of the situation; the intensity of feelings that the situation created; agency policy; common sense; union requirements; legal protections.

The following guided practice will give you an opportunity to practice coaching using the M.E.E.T. technique.

#### GUIDED PRACTICE

Instructions: Read the case studies on manual pages\_\_\_\_. As a group, determine what diversity issues may be affecting both the employee and the supervisor. Come up with a plan to coach the employee using the



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M.E.E.T. technique. Select a spokesperson to present to the class. You will have ten minutes to complete this exercise.

You are a female sergeant who supervises a male correctional officer who is much older than you. This employee is a retired drill sergeant and has no correctional or law enforcement experience. He is highly competent, has excellent attendance and has considerable energy. He often questions your orders and continually reminds you of his vast experience and makes references to "the way things were done in the military". You feel that he does not respect you and are afraid that his behavior may be undermining you with the rest of the staff.

#### **What diversity issues could the employee be experiencing?**

He may have an issue with taking orders from a younger person. He may not like being supervised by a female. He may not like taking orders from anyone. He may be having a difficult time adjusting to the new work environment and be embarrassed to ask questions that may make him appear foolish. He may have a hard time adjusting to "civilian" life. The new environment may be intimidating.

#### **What diversity issues could the supervisor be experiencing?**

She could be unsure about her role as supervisor and be intimidated by his age and experience. Maybe this guy is "a know it all" with everyone and his behavior is not a reflection of lack of respect. She could be an inflexible supervisor and not open to any good ideas this man may have.

#### **How would you coach this employee?**

Acknowledge that he performs well and has experience as a supervisor that you do not. Explain to him that you are open to his ideas and appreciate his advice but have a concern about his method for bringing them to you. Since he is retired military, he is probably comfortable with the classic "chain of command". He may need a gentle reminder that you are his supervisor and wished to be treated as such.

You are a unit supervisor at a local probation and parole office. A probation officer from another district recently transferred and has been assigned to your unit. This officer often arrives to work late and takes extended lunch hours. You suspect that she also runs personal errands or may be cutting her work day short when she is supposed to be in the field doing "home visits". You have discussed these issues with her. On several occasions you have asked for annual leave to cover her late arrivals. The last time you attempted to coach her about her schedule, she accused you of racism. You are aware that she has made this accusation against two previous supervisors.

#### **What diversity issues could the employee be experiencing?**



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She may genuinely feel that your behavior toward her is racist. She may have successfully played the race card before and gotten her supervisor to back off of discussions about her performance.

#### **What diversity issues could the supervisor be experiencing?**

The supervisor might be racist and treating this employee differently from the other staff. If that is the case, the supervisor has painted herself into a corner. Race may not be an issue at all. However, it is common for supervisors to be fearful about coaching employees that they view as belonging to one of the “protected classes” (age, race, disability, gender, national origin and religion). It is often easier to ignore inappropriate work behavior than defend oneself against accusations.

#### **How would you coach this employee?**

Firstly, the supervisor needs to examine his attitude and behavior toward this employee. If race is not an issue, than race is not an issue! When coaching about the employee’s tardiness or long lunch breaks, the conversation should revolve around the employee’s behavior and nothing else. Be clear that you are discussing work performance and not attitudes. If the employee wants to pursue her accusation of racism, refer her to the proper channels. Do not back down from your duty as supervisor, or the morale of your entire unit will be affected.

You are a supervisor at a correctional institution in a rural area. One of your employees is openly gay. He often discusses the remodeling he is doing to his home, his weekend activities and mentions his” partner” by name. He is one of your most dependable employees, is good-natured and has an excellent rapport with most inmates and staff. A few of your employees are uncomfortable around him. They feel that he is flaunting his life style and would like you to speak with him about this. They claim that his sexual preference does not bother them but they do not want to “hear about it” at work.

#### **What diversity issues could the employee be experiencing?**

The employees may be homophobic but unwilling to admit it. Although they say that their co-worker’s life style does not bother them, in reality that is not the case. This could also be a religious issue. They could be judging his sexual preference based on their personal religious philosophy.

#### **What diversity issues could the supervisor be experiencing?**

The supervisor may be homophobic as well. The supervisor may be sympathetic to the gay employee but hesitant to take a stand for fear of being judged as “gay” or as lacking values.



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### How would you coach this employee?

This would be an excellent opportunity to use the M.E.E.T. technique. You would need to speak with the “uncomfortable” employees and find out what specific issues they have. You could remind them that when they mention their spouses’ name, speak about their children/family activities or discuss their home life, they do not view that type of behavior as flaunting their heterosexuality. Why should someone with an alternative life style be held to a different standard? Unless an employee’s sexual preference is interfering with their ability to do the job, it is not an issue. Certainly, people are entitled to their personal opinions and religious beliefs but they should have no bearing on work performance.

You are a functional unit manager. One of your new caseworkers is a young, attractive female. Although technically she conforms to the dress code, her shirts and slacks are very tight. Occasionally she wears short skirts. This caseworker is flirtatious with all male staff. Most of them seem to enjoy her behavior and encourage her flirting. Some male staff workers are uncomfortable when dealing with this employee. The female staff feels that she has used her sexuality to become a “favorite” although her behavior is clearly unprofessional. Several male and female staff members have asked you to speak with her about her mannerisms, dress code and demeanor.

### What diversity issues could the employee be experiencing?

The caseworker may lack communication skills. Using her attractiveness and sexuality has worked for her in the past. It only makes sense that she would continue this behavior as long as it is tolerated and effective.

### What diversity issues could the supervisor be experiencing?

The supervisor could be guilty of flirting with the employee and be embarrassed to coach her on behavior that he, himself, is engaging in. The supervisor could be afraid to discuss her dress and demeanor for fear of a sexual harassment allegation.

### How would you coach this employee?

Since the employee “technically” dresses within the dress code, this will be a delicate conversation that may hurt her feelings. You will need to explain how a more professional approach to dressing is warranted in our environment. You might start by telling her that you recognize her desire to do a good job but feel that her wardrobe is an impediment to her goals. The flirting will have to be confronted directly. It is likely that she will deny that she is flirting. You may need some examples of her different approach to male and female staff members to bolster your claim of flirtation. The



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other employees that are engaging in this behavior must be coached as well so the caseworker is not singled out.

You are a regional training coordinator whose job includes scheduling the safety trainers for Probation & Parole. The trainers work in pairs and alternate defensive tactics, verbal judo and firearms classes. The trainers are all male. One of the trainers, Turner, recently had an addition to his family. His wife is currently on maternity leave but will return to work shortly. In three weeks, Turner plans to take six weeks of family leave to bond with and care for his new daughter. One of Turner's fellow trainers, Murphy has teased and ridiculed Turner about this ever since he was informed that Turner would be away from work for six weeks. He never misses the opportunity to inform others that Turner will be on family leave "breast-feeding" his daughter while they are working. You over heard Murphy making this comment to several staff.



#### **What diversity issues could the employee be experiencing?**

The employee may have a history of working with men who did not have to attend to childcare issues. He may not feel that it is necessary for males to take family leave or that the employee is abusing FMLA because it is available to him. The employee may have a more "traditional" view of male and female roles and be uncomfortable with males choosing to exercise their right to parent a newborn.

#### **What diversity issues could the supervisor be experiencing?**

Although more men are assuming greater childcare responsibilities than even a decade ago, paternity/bonding leave is still not commonplace. Since the passage of FMLA legislation, more men are availing themselves of the opportunity to spend time with their families or care for sick children. Attitudes about the changing roles of males and females regarding childcare have sometimes lagged behind the law. Staff needs to be reminded that childcare duties are increasingly shared by couples. There are also more single fathers whose children are their sole responsibility and require and use work time for childcare.

#### **How would you coach this employee?**

You might remind the employee that the roles of men and women have changed significantly within the last 20 years. More women are in the workforce than ever before. The "traditional" family is a rare phenomenon these days. Many families are headed by single parents, some of whom are male. Men are sharing more parenting responsibilities which involves taking time off from work for births, daycare and illnesses. It is wrong when an employee teases or belittles a male employee for choosing to be involved with his children. It is also insulting to women who have been the

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“traditional” care takers and sends a message to them that they are taking advantage of sick leave and FMLA when they care for their children.

#### Processing Questions

**Ask Participants:** Why is coaching in these instances crucial to maintaining a healthy work environment?

**Possible Responses:** The problems must be addressed as soon as they occur to keep the situation from escalating; When situations like these are allowed to continue without intervention, people become uncomfortable, frustrated and angry with their co-workers and their supervisor; When the supervisor does not address these issues, she is giving tacit approval and setting the scene for further occurrences.

**Ask Participants:** Why is it important for a supervisor to know his employees in order to be an effective coach?

**Correct Answers:** The better you know your employees the easier it is to approach them about problems or reinforce what they are doing well; Unless a supervisor takes the time to observe an employee and get to know her, the supervisor may be unaware of problems that could be solved by coaching.

#### INSTRUCTIONAL INPUT

Dealing with a diverse work force requires special knowledge, sensitivity and common sense. Gaining cooperation among diverse people is critical to all team effectiveness. Teams can form to solve problems, create a sense of belonging, motivate each other and protect members from failure. Fostering a team approach can help break down diversity issues that separate members.

#### Round Robin Activity

Ask the participants to call out words to describe a “team”. List them on an easel chart. Then ask for words that describe a “group” and list them on a separate sheet. Discuss how a “team” differs from a “group”. Ask the group to list the advantages of a team over an individual on a given assignment.

A variety of approaches can positively affect the success of the team. Such approaches may be based on different values, personalities, perceptions, motivation and ideas about “team” versus “group” into a practical situation. This activity offers the participants the opportunity to



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understand the elements of a successful team as well as appreciate the impact that diversity has on team effectiveness.

### **GUIDED PRACTICE**

Divide the class into groups of 5 to 7 depending on the number of participants. Hand out the task assignment to allow participants a moment to read it. On a random basis, hand out as many different role assignments as there are people in the group. Be sure that each group has someone in the role of 'The Observer'. Tell the participants that they are to keep their assigned role a secret from the other participants.

**Note to Trainer:** I feel that role plays often fall flat because very few students will really "get into" their role. Often, people are confused about how to act or what to say to get their point across. After the roles have been assigned, it might be helpful to form groups of persons with the same assigned role. They could spend a few minutes talking about how they plan to put the role into action during the activity. This could relieve some anxiety and provide each other with useful ideas.

Task assignment: Plan your office Holiday Celebration

You are a committee whose task is to plan your office Holiday celebration. Your plan must be completed by the end of the meeting. The date has already been decided. What is needed are specific instructions on the location for the event, the menu, entertainment (if any) and decorations. In addition, you must decide on whether to donate money to a charity or exchange gifts between staff.

You each have a role to play and adhere to at all times. There is no assigned leader. You have 10 minutes to accomplish the assignment.

#### **Role A – The Individualist**

You personally enjoy challenging projects but prefer the freedom of working alone. You feel that group work is not productive and wastes a lot of time. You appreciate the ability; to achieve independent success and enjoy receiving immediate rewards for your personal accomplishments.

Do not be too obvious, but try to influence the group to come up with an individual plan. Resist the idea of a group leader.

#### **Role B – The Group Oriented Member**

You like shared work and group consensus decision making. You believe strongly that the group decisions should take precedence over any one individual. You honor your elders and those with more experience in committee meetings. You think in terms of long term goals that would benefit the company. You are concerned about the department's public image.



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Do not be too obvious. Try to get the group to work together on the project and end up with a product that represents a consensus of the group and not any one person's ideas.

#### **Role C – The Uncertainty Avider**

Your desire for advancement is not as great as that of some of your co-workers. You do not appreciate the way some employees push for recognition. You go out of your way to avoid conflict. You are intolerant of ambiguity and have to have every detail spelled out. You are resistant to change and unwilling to take risks. You prefer consensus decision making and feel the majority decision should rule.

Do not be too obvious. Try to get the group to use the same format as last year.

#### **Role D – The Leader Needer**

You need strong leadership and feel most comfortable when told what to do. Although this involves little responsibility on your part there is little chance of making a mistake. You operate well within a strong chain-of-command organization. You would like a leader to emerge to make decisions for the entire group.

Do not be too obvious. Try to influence someone in the group to take over the leadership and make the decisions.

#### **Role E – The Achiever**

You want to be successful and are very competitive. Relationships within the group are not important to you. You don't mind pushing the group to work harder and are not afraid of conflict.

Do not be too obvious. Try to have the men dominate the decision process, while discouraging the women. Be very critical of the ideas presented, especially those of the women.

#### **Role F – The Nurturing Member**

You need to have a good relationship with the other group members. You want them to like you and seek their approval and attention. You are not competitive and will not force your ideas if someone else disagrees. You don't want to hurt anyone's feelings.

Do not be too obvious. Try not to give any ideas of your own. Agree with and support those of the other group members.

#### **Role G – The Observer**

You are to observe the leaderless group activity and note what is going on. You will not say anything during this task. Observe and take notes on the group interaction. At the conclusion of the exercise, you will discuss your observations with the entire group.

**Ask Participants:** What diversity issue was at play during this activity?



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**Possible Answers:** Personalities, ambition.

**Ask Participants:** Would your group have proceeded differently with a leader?

**Possible Answers:** Answers will vary.

**Ask Participants:** If you were the supervisor, how could you have prepared the participants to overcome any problems that might arise?

**Correct Answer:** By fostering a “team” atmosphere in your work place; By choosing individuals whose skills are suited to this type of assignment.

### EVALUATION/CLOSURE

Building and maintaining a team atmosphere is the best way to bridge diversity issues. In fact, the diversity among staff can be your greatest asset to a successful team. It is not enough to gather people together and tell them that they are a “team”. A winning team must be built and cultivated by the supervisor. Nothing does more to create team spirit than a sense of loyalty among members and between the members and the supervisor. It grows through a daily give-and-take of mutual trust and respect. Before you can expect your employees to pull together and operate as a cohesive unit, you must wholeheartedly embrace the team concept yourself. As I go through the following checklist, evaluate your daily behavior.

- Does your attitude always convey respect for your people?
- Do you encourage your people to bring their work problems to you?
- Are you consistent in your handling of employees?
- Do you appreciate your employees' efforts and tell them so?
- Are you fair?
- Do you stay in close touch with your people?
- Do you go to bat for your workers?
- Do you set a good example for your employees?



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- Do you give clear and accurate instructions?

The more 'Yes' answers you give to these questions, the more likely you are to create an atmosphere where all employees feel valued and fairly treated. When employees see that they are respected despite their differences, the diversity issues are not divisive.

When you lead a team of diverse individuals, you need to be aware of how the group interacts. You should be cognizant of how each member of the group treats the other members. You want to encourage an open form of communication and dialogue between team members. People don't have to like each other, but they do have to respect each other and work together. What an employee thinks is his business – what he does at work is yours.

#### **Let's review our performance objectives:**

1. Given a case study, determine how communication can impact diversity in the work place;
2. Through a situational exercise, apply coaching techniques designed to enhance employees' abilities to value diversity; and
3. Through a group analysis, examine the importance of team building in a culturally diverse environment.

#### **Processing question**

**Using a "whip", ask participants:** Name one thing you learned today that you found useful and will be able to use on the job?

