

The Oregon Accountability Model

Staff/Inmate Interaction Component

The Oregon Accountability Model encompasses the simultaneous, coordinated and efficient implementation of many Department of Corrections initiatives and projects that provide a foundation for inmates to lead successful lives upon release.

The Oregon Accountability Model has six components. Each of these components stands on its own as a project or a part of the Oregon Department of Corrections' organization and culture. However, woven together these six separate components form a stronger fiber that strengthens the department's ability to hold inmates/offenders accountable for their actions and DOC staff accountable for achieving the mission and vision of the department.

The Staff/Inmate Interaction Component of the Oregon Accountability Model

The Staff/Inmate Interaction Component describes expectations and outcomes of the day-to-day behaviors of line employees toward inmates and peers. It is based on the companion ideas that a) most inmates will be released from custody to live again in our communities; and b) the line staff who work with offenders on a daily basis have more opportunities than most to positively influence long-term inmate success.

The essence of the Staff/Inmate Interaction Component is found in the department's mission which says that all staff are required to hold offenders accountable for their actions and to reduce the risk of future criminal behavior. All staff members have a responsibility to prepare inmates for successful reentry to the community while also carrying out the specific duties of their positions.

Safe, Civil and Productive Institutions – Safety First:

Facility security is every employee's responsibility. Maintaining facility security contributes to long-term public safety by establishing a safe, civil and productive environment within which inmates may learn and practice pro-social skills. Security protocols that control facility access, manage inmate movement, guide the processing of inmate property, maintain key and tool control, assure workplace sanitation, regulate the use of force, and prepare for effective emergency response are all of crucial importance. Each and every employee is urged to carry out these responsibilities diligently, recognizing that offender development and behavior-shaping are impossible when safety and security are compromised.

The mission of the Oregon Department of Corrections is to promote public safety by holding offenders accountable for their actions and reducing the risk of future criminal behavior.

Role Model Pro-Social Behavior:

Decades of correctional research support Social Learning and Cognitive Behavioral principles in staff/inmate interactions. While the concept of a correctional facility as a learning environment is unusual, it is based on sound principles related to behavioral modeling. People learn by watching the behaviors of others who they respect; therefore in a correctional environment, staff members have a responsibility to act in a respect-worthy manner at all times.

It is well known that both staff and inmates contribute to the institutional environment in which they work and live. Focusing on employees' responsibilities for pro-social role modeling begins to establish the necessary conditions for a pro-social institutional environment. Staff members are encouraged to recognize that they serve as immediate pro-social role models. Consequently, their every behavior needs to be worthy of emulation and adoption by inmates.

Reinforce Positive Behaviors:

Staff members are encouraged to actively seek out pro-social behaviors by inmates and positively reinforce them when they naturally occur. These "teachable moments" are likely to occur frequently during an inmate's day, but might be overlooked by employees who are more focused on observing and then responding to security deficiencies. Social Learning research is clear, however, that positive reinforcement is a more powerful behavioral shaping tactic than negative reinforcement. Such positive reinforcement need not be complex or time consuming. It may take the simple form of acknowledging an inmate for doing more than they were asked to do on a work detail, recognizing their contribution to an orderly facility by keeping a clean cell, or attending a scheduled treatment program or class.

Re-direct Negative Behaviors:

Intervening and re-directing opportunities for anti-social behavior will also occur. Expectations of inmates must be clearly stated as well as the consequences for meeting or not meeting them. Employees need not feel responsible for the choices that inmates make. Staff should encourage inmates to see that making better choices is not backing down, but a sign of strength. When re-directing negative behavior, staff must also explain the preferred behaviors.

The nature of interactions and communications with inmates is a key to success. The Staff/Inmate Interaction Component takes advantage of the period of incarceration to clarify and shape pro-social behavior with the ultimate goal of establishing durable behaviors that will translate to the community when inmates leave incarceration and re-enter society. These "3 R's" -- Role Model, Reinforce and Re-direct -- summarize the manner in which DOC employees contribute daily to the successful achievement of the agency's mission.

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The ultimate goal of the Oregon Accountability Model is to improve public safety. The model ties together many concurrent and interrelated efforts of the department and its partners into a cohesive strategy to reduce recidivism and influence inmates into becoming productive citizens.

