

Results of the Offender Workforce Development Specialist Post-Training Survey

**National Institute of Corrections
Offender Workforce Development Division**

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Executive Summary

I. Background

Many individuals enter the criminal justice system lacking the skills needed for today's labor market and many leave custody without a significant improvement. However, recent studies suggest that an offender's participation in job training and placement programs increases the likelihood of successful re-entry and can lead to a reduction in recidivism.¹

In order to assist this population in obtaining and retaining employment, the National Institute of Corrections, Offender Workforce Development Division (OWDD) realized that offender employment service practitioners must possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide high quality services. To meet this need, OWDD developed the Offender Workforce Development Specialist (OWDS) training, a competency based train-the-trainer program.

The nationally recognized OWDS training requires participants to complete 180 hours of competency work (112 hours of classroom instruction are distributed over three weeks and 68 hours of practicum and homework assignments) in order to receive certification. A sampling of competencies include: Career Development Theory; Transition Interventions for the Offender Population; Job Seeking and Employability Skills; and Job Retention. In addition, communication skills, partnership building, team collaboration, and personal growth are also stressed with an overarching goal of professionalizing the field of offender workforce development. Graduates of the program are expected to facilitate all or some of these modules and skill areas to other offender workforce practitioners and apply what they have learned to the job in their daily activities and responsibilities.

Recently, the OWDD conducted a post-training survey to assess the usability of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the course content by the participant once they return to the job. This survey is consistent with the Council of State Government's (2004) report on re-entry issues and policy suggestions, which stated:

“Evaluation is crucial to the ongoing success of a re-entry initiative. By generating a constant flow of detailed information about the program's operations, successes, and failures, process and outcome evaluations help policymakers and program administrators make informed decisions about program design, resource distribution, and funding streams” (p. 88).

This report addresses the methods, results, and implications of the survey.

II. Methods

The OWDD conducted the evaluation, tabulation, and analysis of the Post-Training Survey which gathered data from participants of 8 OWDS training sessions.² Several outcomes of the

¹ Council of State Governments, Re-Entry Policy Council. 2004. *Report of the Re-Entry Policy Council: Charting the Safe and Successful Return of Prisoners to the Community*. New York, NY: Council of State Governments (http://www.reentrypolicy.org/documents/rpc_report.pdf)

² These training sessions took place from Spring 2001 to Fall 2004.

training program were measured, including team collaboration and internal effects, external support, and personal growth. Participants were given the option to complete the anonymous survey via pencil and paper or on the web. Many of the respondents (89%) choose to complete the survey on the web.

While high response rates are difficult to achieve, the response rate for the OWDS Post-Training Survey was 41%. According to the Market Research Association, response rates for online surveys are approximately 34%.³

III. Summary of Results

Based on data collected by OWDD, results show:

1. Since OWDS training, there has been a change in organizational awareness and attitudes within many organizations in relation to career development and employment issues.
2. Communication has increased between the participants and management in relation to offender related support
3. A majority of respondents have expanded their education development (e.g. pursuing Ph.D's and other career development courses) as a result of attending OWDS training.
4. Almost half of the respondents have increased their certifications as a result of attending OWDS training.
5. Respondents have increased job responsibilities.
6. Respondents have increased communication with federal, state, local, and non-profit agencies/organizations.
7. Almost half of the respondents have increased or plan to increase local business involvement relative to offender workforce issues.
8. A majority of respondents have increased offender involvement in their programs after completing OWDS training.
9. Respondents have created new relationships with referral sources/agencies and partnership alliances after completing OWDS training.
10. Respondents found the training to be very useful or somewhat useful.

IV. Next Steps

The results of the survey are very promising. Participants are using the new knowledge, skills, and abilities to make significant changes in their organization and themselves. This is an indication that OWDS training is assisting in professionalizing the field of offender workforce development.

Post-OWDS Training Surveys will be administered 6-months to a year after participants have completed training. In addition, new questions will be developed and some of the current questions will be re-written as OWDD continues to evaluate the OWDS training program.

³ http://www.dmreview.com/editorial/newsletter_article.cfm?nl=bireport&articleId=1018698&issue=20128H

Post OWDS Training Survey

Surveys Mailed: 172
Surveys Received: 71
Response Rate: 41%

0.) Session Attended

Kansas City (Fall 2003)	15	21%
San Diego (Winter 2004)	15	21%
St. Louis (Fall 2001)	10	14%
San Diego (Fall 2002)	9	13%
San Diego (Fall 2004)	8	11%
Tulsa (Winter 2002)	5	7%
Dallas (Winter 2003)	5	7%
Silver (Spring 2001)	4	6%

Section I: Team Collaboration and Internal Effects

1.) Before the OWDS training, how often did you communicate with your OWDS team (in person, phone, email, etc.)?

Never	28	39%
Monthly	10	14%
Quarterly	10	14%
N/A	8	11%
Weekly	6	8%
Annually	6	8%
Daily	3	4%

2.) After the OWDS training, how often have you communicated with your OWDS team?

Monthly	21	30%
Weekly	18	25%
Quarterly	14	20%
N/A	11	15%
Daily	4	6%
Annually	2	3%
Never	1	1%

3.) How much of your current OWDS "Action Plan" were you already doing before the OWDS training?

None	34	48%
Some	21	30%
N/A	9	13%
About half	4	6%
Most of it	2	3%
All	1	1%

4.) How much of your OWDS "Action Plan" have you completed or you plan to complete within six months of training?

Most of it	21	30%
About half	16	23%
All	14	20%
Some	10	14%
N/A	7	10%
None	3	4%

5.) Since OWDS training, have you seen a change in organizational awareness and attitude in your organization since the OWDS training in relation to career development and employment issues?

Yes	51	72%
No	11	15%
N/A	9	13%

6.) Since OWDS training, have you increased communication with management for offender related support?

Yes	53	75%
No	10	14%
N/A	8	11%

7.) Since OWDS training, have you seen an increase in offender related support from management?

Yes	47	66%
No	14	20%
N/A	10	14%

8.) Because of your attending OWDS training, have you expanded your educational development?

Yes	37	52%
No	18	25%
N/A	10	14%
Plan to	6	8%

Comments:

- Currently pursuing a PH.D. in Criminal Justice with a view toward increasing knowledge with respect to reintegration and issues that impact the same.
- Yes, I have enrolled in other career development courses.
- I take every opportunity to gain Continuing Education Units (CEU's) and relevant professional development.
- Attendance at various Workforce Development Conferences. I also left the state and am now working for one of my fellow teammates in the non-profit field of re-entry...thanks for introducing us!

9.) Because of your attending OWDS training, have you increased your certifications?

Yes	35	49%
No	13	18%
N/A	12	17%
Plan to	11	15%

Comments:

- Yes, all members of our team earned our GCDF certification
- I completed the OWDS, lead to GCDF, then OWDSi
- I obtained the GCDF certification following the OWDS training and completed the requirements for the Master Career Development Professional designation from the NCDA.
- I have a TRUE COLORS certification, a NAWDP - CWDP certification, OWDS, and GCDF, and have submitted paperwork for the JSS with the CWDP.

10.) Because of your attending OWDS training, have you increased activity in Professional Organizations?

Yes	27	38%
No	23	32%
N/A	12	17%
Plan to	9	13%

Comments:

- Four (4) reported increased activity with National Career Development Association (NCDA).

11.) Because of your attending OWDS training, have you joined new Professional Organizations?

No	32	45%
Yes	19	27%
N/A	12	17%
Plan to	8	11%

12.) Because of your attending OWDS training, what else have you done or plan to do to meet your career development needs?

Comments:

Locate additional training to support/reinforce my CDF certification

13.) As a result of OWDS, do you have increased job responsibilities?

Yes	44	62%
No	15	21%
N/A	11	15%
Plan to	1	1%

Comments:

- I am about to take on the ex-offender caseload and I have developed a four day nontraditional job readiness class to prepare ex-offenders for the job developer
- I was appointed to the State's Interagency Council for the Coordination of Homeless Programs, which deals with housing and other wrap-around reentry issues.
- Our Employability And Life Skills classes have grown from 10 to 25. This is not a direct result of OWDS, but my extra experience has helped. I'm also doing training of these teachers as well as supervising them.

- Currently resource to One-Stop staff on offender issues, resource to staff member working with the Federal Probation Officers and the Officers themselves.
- Taking care of anything that is offender related. Providing info to department heads higher ups. Providing info to other providers to help them work with offenders, etc.
- My job title has changed from Career Development Specialist to Coordinator at the Center for New Directions at Lewis-Clark State College. The number of ex-offenders referred to our program has increased. We will be presenting our 3rd Offender Workforce Development Conference in Idaho at Idaho State University in May.
- I have been ask to make presentations to groups interested in developing a program to assist inmates returning to free world society. That had not happened before the training.

14.) As a result of OWDS, have you increased your own career mobility?

Yes	33	46%
No	23	32%
N/A	11	15%
Plan to	4	6%

Comments:

- The information learned in the training expands my knowledge and skill areas and creates new opportunities for me. I have not yet acted on those possibilities, but it is good to know that they are there.
- My supervisor is planning on changing my position description to get me a promotion.
- I have stayed at my present job longer than intended, partially to see the employment project through.

15.) As a result of your attending OWDS, have you developed a structured/systematic way to share information?

No	28	39%
Yes	27	38%
N/A	13	18%
Plan to	3	4%

Comments:

- Use the internet to pass/share information and data for OWD tracking and reporting.
- Documentation of searches. Better use of the internet and internal resources. Better at making cold calls to gather information. Much more comfortable talking in public to gather and give information.
- Better coordination between corrections and workforce agencies. MOU with Parole Board, literacy programs in prison facilities, ongoing collaboration with policy groups, work groups, etc.
- We meet regularly as a team to share information. We are also implementing regular meetings with the newly hired employment specialists which we have trained to share ideas, best practices, etc. I am also a part of a collaborative workgroup between the Dept of Workforce Services and the Dept of Corrections. The goal of this workgroup is also to share ideas and best practices as well as develop pathways to best serve our customers with the resources available.

Section II: Building External Support and Relationships

16.) Before the OWDS training, how often would you get together with or communicate with outside agencies?

Monthly	21	30%
Quarterly	14	20%
Weekly	11	15%
N/A	11	15%
Never	8	11%
Annually	6	8%

17.) After the OWDS training, how often do you get together or communicate with outside agencies?

Monthly	25	35%
Weekly	23	32%
N/A	12	17%
Quarterly	8	11%
Annually	2	3%
Never	1	1%

Comments:

- We established an Interagency Offender Workforce Development Advisory Board consisting of representatives from other agencies, state and federal, having a stake in offender reentry.

18.) What percentage of your OWDS Action Plan related to building external support and relationships have you completed or you plan to complete within 6 months?

Most of it	22	31%
N/A	16	22%
Some	14	20%
About half	7	10%
All	7	10%
None	5	7%

Section III: Additional Information

19.) After completing OWDS training, have you increased local business involvement relative to offender workforce issues?

No	29	41%
Yes	26	37%
Plan to	6	8%

Comments:

- Our community advisory board is a great advocacy group. I plan to use them to increase awareness of the problem our jurisdiction. In addition, presentations planned as part of our team's work plan will hopefully garner increased involvement by area businesses.
- I am now a member of the Business Counsel in our region.

20.) After completing OWDS training, have you increased offender involvement in your programs?

Yes	38	53%
N/A	18	25%
No	12	17%
Plan to	3	4%

Comments:

- The offenders are very interested in offender workforce development programs. However, funding and manpower are the biggest barriers to getting this program off the ground.
- We have a new offender employment program which did not exist until about 4 months ago.

21.) After completing OWDS training, have you increased outside agency (in your local jurisdiction, non-profits, etc.) involvement?

Yes	38	53%
N/A	17	24%
No	12	17%
Plan to	4	6%

Comments:

- With Faith Based and Homeless Agencies
- With Parole, workforce centers, day reporting centers, Drug & Alcohol treatment centers, and Voc Rehab

22.) After completing OWDS training, have you increased state and federal involvement?

Yes	28	39%
No	22	31%
N/A	19	27%
Plan to	2	3%

Comments:

- With State DOC and Department of Commerce
- We've implemented a new program within the state.

23.) After completing OWDS training, have you created new relationships with referral sources/agencies?

Yes	42	59%
N/A	17	24%
No	10	14%
Plan to	2	3%

Comments:

- I was already working with our Community Corrections, however now we have more staff aware of and using NIC resources.

24.) After completing OWDS training, have you created new partnership alliances?

Yes	34	48%
N/A	18	25%
No	16	23%
Plan to	3	4%

Comments:

- Made existing ones better
- An MOU with the Social Security Administration was entered into and one with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is being considered for renewal.

25.) Based on your work experience since the completion of instruction, have you've found the training to be:

Very Useful	45	63%
N/A	15	21%
Somewhat Useful	11	15%

26.) Additional Comments

The OWDS Training gave me new insight on the issue of offender employment, as well as new skills and resources on how to address the issue from my place in the criminal justice system.

We are providing additional information, as it relates to employability, to staff as to the many resources that are available to provide for a smoother transition.

I worked for DOC for two more years after the training but recently resigned the Dept. because I was wishing to take this OWDS further and was in hopes the state would support that. I continued to be in the classroom with offenders and my greatest support, but I have decided now to do community work so I am not so limited.

I used OWDS training to complete my final project in order to receive my Master's in Public Administration.

It was through this training that I was motivated to incorporate a program at my church

We have a team that meets monthly and includes representatives from many disciplines. A rehabilitation treatment team is currently applying OWDS methods to see if it is effective. They match offenders with substance related issues with a community-based mentor. They are seeking ways to improve computer skills and to find a way to provide employment options in this very poor, high offender population town.

Our team is called upon as a team and individually to present to various groups within DOC, state agencies and community groups.