

Staff Development Plans

Importance of Staff Development Plans

Staff development plans, which we are using as a broad term to encompass training plans and career ladders as well, are an important management tool for state and local agencies. These plans represent a long-term commitment on the part of management and the employee to a program of training and other activities that will assist the employee in obtaining the skills and knowledge needed to perform current duties and will also prepare the individual for a future in the program.

There is a continuing need for staff development in state and local agencies, as new staff are hired, staff are transferred from other programs, regulations change, and new programs are created. Some staff development needs can be predicted, based on the requirements of a position; others arise as changes occur.

Staff development can include formal training, through classroom courses, self-study, satellite courses, and computer-based courses; attending professional meetings; and on-the-job training and mentoring. At each stage of an employee's career, the appropriate mix of staff development resources might be different.

Two Types of Staff Development Plans

There are two broad types of staff development plans: "generic" plans for specific jobs, positions, or duties and individual plans for each employee. These two types of plans are complementary, in that it is much easier to plan for individual employee development if there is a generic plan that can serve as a reference.

Tools for Trainers has gathered generic plans from several state and local agencies. Most of these plans identify specific courses, often identifying the suggested provider as well, that should be completed by employees in specific positions. The approach developed by the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission takes the extra step of explicitly defining skills required for each position and then identifying courses that are designed to address these skill areas.

Preparing Staff Development Plans

Staff development and staff development planning are *processes*; staff development plans are living documents. The planning process is a collaboration between the supervisor and the employee that can include the following steps:

- ◆ Assessment of the employee's immediate needs for the job at hand (current skills and knowledge compared to skills and knowledge needed for the position)— if your agency has a generic staff development or training plan for the position, this assessment is much easier since the required skills and knowledge (or required course prerequisites) will be described.

- ◆ Identification of potential resources to meet the needs identified.
- ◆ Development of a continuing plan for updating the employee's skills and knowledge and expanding skills and knowledge in new areas.

Generic staff development plans and individual staff development plans should be updated frequently to reflect the changing environment in which agency staff work. New regulations, new technology, new industry moving into the state, and other factors can indicate the need for changes. Information from needs assessments can be used to update the plan and evaluation of training courses can be used to update provider suggestions in the plan.