



BUILDING BETTER EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE THROUGH SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Participant's Manual

Comprehensive Public Training Program (CPTP)

Sponsored by the Louisiana State Civil Service

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Revised 7/11/16

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Course Description

Although many agencies invest time, money and energy in various training and development opportunities for their employees, the knowledge and skills gained from training are not always fully applied by the employee on the job. Learning transfer is often impeded by various barriers in the workplace. This course outlines tips and strategies to aid supervisors and managers in achieving better employee performance by ensuring that their employee's have both the necessary job skills and opportunities for learning transfer. Class participants are encouraged to examine their work environments carefully in order to recognize the factors that may be affecting worker performance.

Learning Objectives

- Define supervisor's role in employee development
- Identify various types of trainings and skills in the workplace
- Learn adult learning principles and learning styles
- Discover strategies to facilitate learning transfer in your agency and/or department
- Develop a plan to promote transfer of learning to enhance job performance

Job Outcomes

- Provides opportunities for **employee orientation, training and development**



GROUP DISCUSSION



Activity: *In your group or with a partner, discuss and identify your work unit's current philosophy toward employees' training and development opportunities, then discuss similarities and differences among the different approaches represented in your group.*

Consider the following:

- Who is involved in identifying training needs?
- How is the decision about training requirements made?
- What efforts do others take to encourage learning transfer after the training event?
- What role do you play in your employee's training? What role do the employee's co-workers play?

LEARNING TRANSFER

Training consists of instructional experiences provided primarily by employers for employees designed to develop new skills and knowledge that are expected to be applied immediately upon (or a short time after) arrival on or return to the job.

Learning Transfer is the effective and continuing *application* by learners/employees to their jobs of the knowledge and skills gained in training both on and off the job.

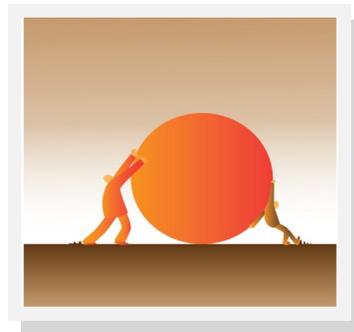


Studies have shown that about **40%** of the content taught in a typical training class was actually applied and transferred to the work environment. After 6 months after training the percentage of skills that are applied in the workplace falls dramatically to **25%**. Furthermore, **15%** of the concepts taught were still being applied at the end of the year.

IDENTIFYING BARRIERS



Activity: *In your group or with a partner, discuss and identify some of your agency's barriers and obstacles to learning transfer in the workplace. Write a list down on your flip chart and be prepared to discuss with the class.*



FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

The ultimate goal of any state agency is to provide quality services to the individuals and communities served. The knowledge and skills of an agency's staff is a critical factor in establishing and sustaining quality services. However, there are many other factors in the work environment that can directly or indirectly affect the quality of services, and influence the ability of employees to apply their knowledge and skills in the services they provide. **What other factors might affect the quality of services?**



Although it is not always the answer, training is often a good method for teaching an employee the knowledge and skills critical to their performance. Although these skills are critical to an employee's success, as we just have learned good training often fails. **What do you think is the number one reason training fails?**

In order for agencies to ensure transfer of training, leaders must understand the impact of:

- The work environment
- Supervisors' role and responsibilities
- Employee's learning style
- Strengths and limitations of different types of training opportunities
- Needs analysis/ performance gap

SUPPORTIVE WORK CLIMATE



Group Activity: *In your group or with a partner, discuss and identify some characteristics work environments should demonstrate to encourage and facilitate learning transfer. Think about what you as a learner need to apply the skills you are learning in this class back on the job.*



STEPS FOR SUCCESS



IDENTIFYING A PERFORMANCE GAP

Supervisors should conduct a performance needs assessment so they can fully understand the nature of the performance needs at their facilities.

A **performance gap** is the difference between desired performance and what the performance actually is.

To assess a **performance gap**, supervisors should ask themselves:

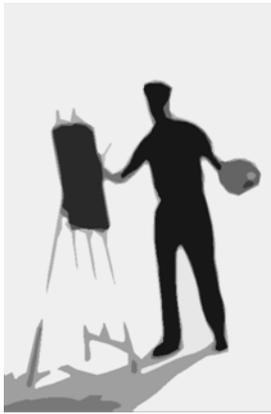
- What is the desired performance?
- Is there a gap between what the staff is actually doing and what they should be doing?
- Do I understand the root causes of this gap?
- What is the agencies' mission and how does these skills align with overall mission?
- What competency does this skill fall under, what are the behaviors that the employee need to master in order to learn the skill?
- Is training the right solution to improve job performance?

To help determine **root cause** of the performance gap, consider the following possible reasons for deficiency:

- Incompatibility– improper job match
- Performer's inability to perform job or task (knowledge, skill, expertise, competence)
- Prevalence of old habits, personal beliefs that interfere with new skill, performer's perception of a better way
- Performer's lack of confidence to perform task or job
- Vagueness of performer's role, responsibilities, performance expectations, or performer's lack of information
- Perceived lack of consequences or lack of personal benefit
- Inappropriate tools, equipment, technology, or resources available
- Inappropriate workload distribution, design of work, job, tasks, policies, procedures, or processes

As a supervisor, you have unique knowledge of staff members' on-the-job performance and can describe the specific gaps in knowledge and skills that a training intervention needs to address. Although training is a popular intervention for improving job performance, other interventions might be more appropriate. Before you initiate a training intervention, be sure that training is the right solution for the problem. **For each of the above possible causes of a performance gap, which one of these do you think can/should be solved through training?**

EMPLOYEE LEARNING STYLES



Visual Learner

See it

- Is good at spelling but forgets names;
- Needs quiet study time;
- Has to think awhile before understanding lecture;
- Is good at spelling;
- Likes colors & fashion;
- Dreams in color;
- Understands/likes charts;
- Is good with sign language.

Kinesthetic Learner

Do it

- Can't sit still for long;
- Is not great at spelling;
- Does not have great handwriting;
- Likes science lab;
- Studies with loud music on;
- Likes adventure books, movies;
- Takes breaks when studying;
- Is involved in martial arts, dance;
- Is fidgety during lectures.

Auditory Learner

Hear it

- Likes to read to self out loud;
- Is not afraid to speak in class;
- Likes oral reports;
- Is good at explaining;
- Remembers names;
- Enjoys music;
- Is good at grammar and foreign language;
- Follows spoken directions well;
- Can't keep quiet for long periods;
- Enjoys acting, being on stage;

ADULT LEARNERS

There are a few things to keep in mind to ensure your training intervention is successful.

- **Adults want to know why they should learn.** Motivation of the learner is a key ingredient to successful learning or developmental experiences. If the learner can't verbalize why the skill is important to their success or understand how it will benefit them, they will be less likely to invest the time and energy into the learning process. Be sure to link the skill to the overall agency's mission as well.
- **Adults already have experiences that they bring to the training.** It's important to value and acknowledge the education and experiences that they already have. Frame the new skill development in a way that they can see that it will complement what they already know.
- **Adults want to focus on tasks rather than concepts or theories.** As a supervisor, explain what tasks the employee needs to master and how they will apply the task back on the job. Be as specific as possible!
- **Adults are ready to learn when they need to use the new skill.** Learners will not need too much convincing if they can feel the tangible need to learn the new skill. As supervisors, provide training at the right time.
- **Adults are self-directed and learn by doing.** They should be in charge and responsible for their own learning. This means they need to take an active role rather than a passive role. They should be given chances to apply learning on the job, demonstrate what they have learned, and given plenty of practice in the classroom.

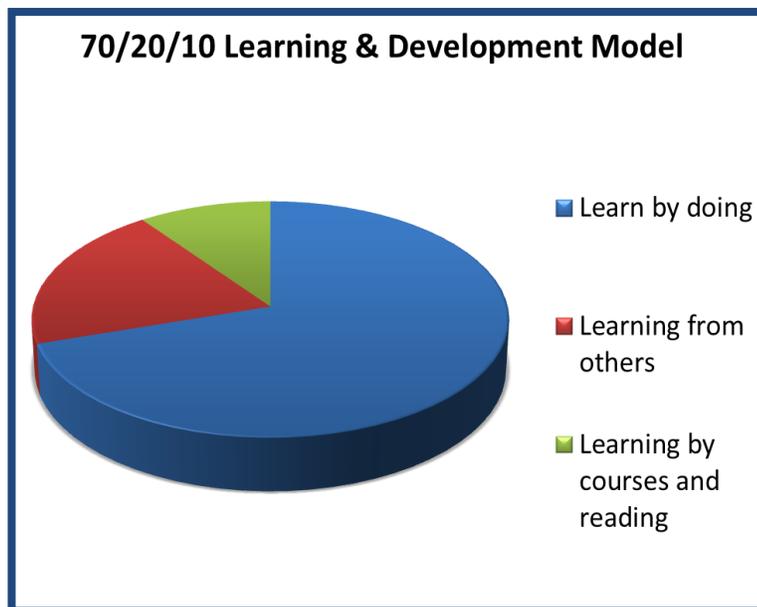


TYPES OF LEARNING/TRAINING

The **70/20/10 Learning and Development Model** is based on on-going research conducted from the 1960s. It states that the typical manager or employee learns 70% from doing, 20% from working with others, and 10% from traditional training methods, including on-line and classroom options.

As you can see, employees learn most effectively by doing. Learning by doing includes completing tough assignments, managing a project, completing a new task, job shadowing/rotation, participating in a cross-functional team. Studies have shown that adult learners learn most effectively through the challenge of trying out the task or skill directly on the job.

Learning from others is the second largest category that includes learning from a mentor or role model, through coaching from your supervisor or other, participating in a committee, etc. This is another powerful and effective way that employees learn skills on the job.



Lastly, traditional methods include learning in a formal classroom environment, taking a on-line course, or reading and studying articles and books. These more traditional educational opportunities are an important part of the learning process for someone learning a new skill, but it is important for supervisors to acknowledge the larger role that they should play by also providing opportunities for the learner to learn through some experiential activities and working with others. Creating these on the job experiences can further reinforce the learning transfer on the job.

ON THE JOB EXPERIENCES



Group Activity: *In your group or with a partner, make a list of some on the job experiences you can provide your employee's to aid them in learning new skills on the job. Write your list on a flip chart and be prepared to present them to the class.*



LEARNING FROM OTHERS



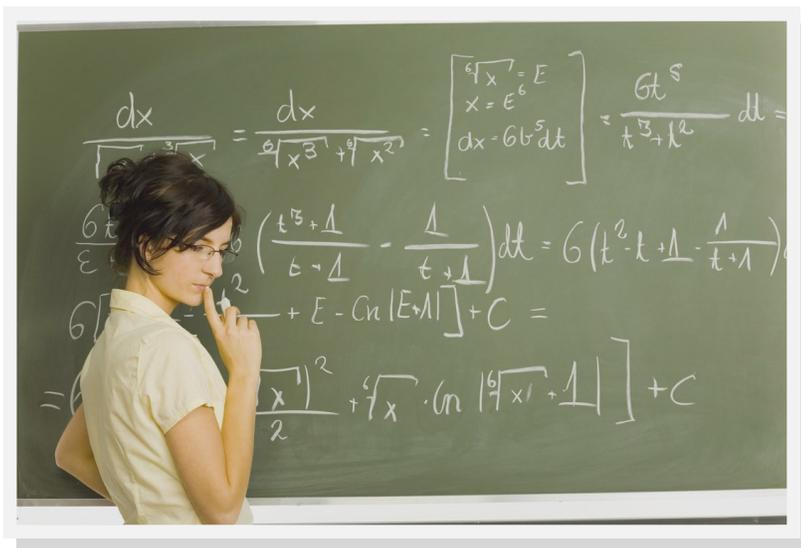
Group Activity: *In your group or with a partner, make a list of experiences involving interactions with others that you can provide your employee's to aid them in learning new skills on the job. Write your list on a flip chart and be prepared to present them to the class.*



TRADITIONAL LEARNING METHODS

Traditional learning methods include **traditional classroom courses** like the one you are taking now! But there are other options that you can offer to your employees.

Seek out the on-line training that your agency offers, either through CPTP or some other avenue. Look for seminars and conferences in the local area. Consider allowing your employee to attend a conference in another state. Attending a national conference is a good investment as it provides the employee with the latest information and provides them with a greater perspective of the industry. Webinars and podcasts are a affordable and easy way to offer individual training that employees can take in the comfort of their office.



It is important that supervisors support employees in their skill development by supplementing these traditional training and learning methods with experiential (on-the-job) experiences and opportunities to try out their new skills by working with others.

SUPERVISOR ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisors and managers have a critical role in ensuring success of any training opportunity for employees. These are some of the important roles and responsibilities for supervisors before, during and after a training activity.

BEFORE TRAINING

- **Understand the performance need.** Conduct a performance needs assessment before embarking on a training intervention to ensure training is the appropriate solution to the problem.
- **Communicate to learner about the performance need, purpose of training, expectations for learning transfer after training, resources available.** Communicate positive messages to learners about the importance of training. Identify and share with them specific expectations about performance. Before the training activity, ask the learners what they hope to get out of the training. Then explain precisely what you anticipate they will be able to do with their new knowledge and skills. Consider creating an action plan. Supervisors can help learners understand how their new knowledge and skills contribute to the work unit by working with the learners to develop action plans. Discussing the action plan gives both supervisors and learners a chance to clarify expectations related to the training. Generally, learners will further refine their action plans with the help of a trainer.
- **Support and encourage learners.**
 - ⇒ *Reassign each learner's workload during the training.* Make sure your office functions smoothly during a learner's absence by delegating his or her workload to co-workers. Take care, however, not to make co-workers resentful by overwhelming them with additional tasks. Make plans to lighten the learner's workload for a period after training to ensure that he or she will have the time and energy to share new knowledge and skills with others and to implement changes.
 - ⇒ *Reassure learners of your support.* Assure learners that you will give them time to become proficient in their new skills. Encourage learners to include post-training debriefings with co-workers on their action plans so they can share what they learn. Offer to help by organizing staff meetings and assisting with the distribution of training information and job aids. Encourage co-workers to be supportive of learners.
 - ⇒ **Note:** Unless learners have been trained to train others, they should not be expected to train their co-workers in the skills they will learn, especially complex procedures.

SUPERVISOR ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

DURING TRAINING

- **Protect learners from interruptions.** Supervisors have an important role in guarding the learners' time by not allowing others to interrupt or take learners away from training activities. Be prepared to limit your demands on learners during the training period. Missed sessions create learning gaps that decrease the training's positive impact and affect performance. By your actions, you can communicate that training is a priority and that mastering the new knowledge and skills is essential.
- **Plan post-training debriefing.** Set aside some of your time to meet with learners soon after the training to discuss the implications of what they have learned. Allow a few days for the learners to prepare their notes and organize their thoughts prior to this meeting. Also schedule some time for the learners' co-workers to meet with the learners to share ideas and discuss implementation.
- **Provide supplies and space, and schedule opportunities for learners to practice.** If learners will be introducing a new procedure or service in the work unit, you may need to procure additional supplies and possibly some new instruments or equipment. Some procedures and services may require a dedicated space and equipment within the agency. You should arrange for supplies and regular maintenance of equipment, schedule time for learners to practice with the instruments and equipment, and help ensure that learners have opportunities to master the new procedures.

AFTER TRAINING

- **Monitor progress of action plans with learners and revise as needed.** Supervisors, trainers, and learners have invested time and energy in creating action plans. Now is the time for those efforts to pay off. Meet with the learners to review together the current action plan and make sure that you are in agreement regarding expectations and how and when they will be met. Supervisors and learners can use action plans as a monitoring tool to gauge progress, identify problems, and work on solutions. Routine supervisory meetings are a great time to provide constructive feedback and check learners' progress toward mastering and using their new skills, as well as to ask what more you can do as their supervisor to support the transfer of learning. When necessary, action plans should be revised to correspond with changing needs in the work unit. Using action plans can also help to identify feedback for agency administrators about problems and solutions that only they can address.



SUPERVISOR ROLE AFTER TRAINING, CONT.

- **Conduct post-training debriefing with learners and co-workers.** Supervisors and learners should involve other staff in the work unit in the transfer of learning process by briefing them shortly after the training. This is a good time for you to identify your expectations regarding implementation of action plans and for learners to share what they have learned with their co-workers. Supervisors and learners should set clear objectives for debriefing meetings to make sure that the discussion stays focused. Consider using these meetings for the following purposes:

- ⇒ *Sharing* with co-workers the key concepts learned during the training.
- ⇒ *Providing* an opportunity for co-workers to ask the learners questions about the training.
- ⇒ *Reviewing* the needs assessment findings and discussing how newly acquired knowledge and skills can address current needs in the work unit and be of value to everyone.
- ⇒ *Brainstorming* on how to integrate newly acquired knowledge and skills into present services.
- ⇒ *Reviewing* key activities from the learners' action plans and assigning resources to facilitate implementation.



Conducting a post-training debriefing provides an excellent opportunity to update all staff and discuss how the transfer of learning will improve service delivery. It is critical that your staff understands the reasons for any new interventions, services, or changes in procedures, and knows how to implement them. This is an appropriate time for you to voice your support for the change process and the newly acquired knowledge and skills.

- **Be a coach and role model — provide encouragement and feedback.** Encourage and, when possible, coach learners as they incorporate new knowledge and skills into their work. A coach must be able to demonstrate the skill, observe and give feedback, and evaluate learner performance against a standard. If you cannot coach the learners, identify someone with appropriate expertise to provide coaching. Even though you may not be able to coach learners in a particular skill, you can still provide encouragement to help them build their self-confidence and realize their full potential as they master new skills. Encouragement and coaching are very important to the transfer of learning.

SUPERVISOR ROLE AFTER TRAINING, CONT.

- **Give frequent reinforcement and immediate constructive feedback to learners as they try out new skills.** Voice your support as you observe learners properly implementing newly acquired knowledge and skills by giving immediate positive feedback.
 - ⇒ *Use mistakes as learning opportunities.* When learners make errors while practicing a skill, call the mistakes to their attention in a tactful and culturally appropriate manner. Your comments should describe the specific behavior that you observed; include steps that the learner performed correctly and those that need improvement.
 - ⇒ *Coach learners as they try new skills.* When learners begin practicing skills that are difficult or involve many steps, their skill levels will likely vary—some learners may still be novices while others may be closer to mastery. Offer to assist individual learners in a manner that is appropriate to the degree of progress they have made toward mastering the particular skill. When providing guidance, remember to always point out something that the learner is doing well before you offer suggestions for improvements or ask what the learner perceives he or she is doing well. Very often learners can make appropriate suggestions for self-improvement when given the opportunity to reflect on their performance.
 - ⇒ *Model new skills or behaviors in your work.* To show that you support the changes that learners are implementing, adopt new behaviors along with the learners and their co-workers. Don't expect your staff to make changes if you don't model changes as well.
- **Evaluate learners' performance.** Supervisors can have a significant impact on the transfer of learning by evaluating performance and providing feedback. Discuss with learners the reasons why evaluation is important, emphasizing that the goal is to provide them with feedback so they know how they are doing. Assure learners that you will provide ongoing guidance as well as formal periodic evaluations. It may be appropriate to include these periodic evaluations on the learners' action plan. If you cannot evaluate the learners' performance because you lack the technical expertise, identify someone who can.



GROUP DISCUSSION



Group Activity: *In your group or with a partner, discuss examples from your work experiences that illustrate one or two of the techniques and strategies that we just covered. The examples may be from any of the three timeframes: supervisor before, supervisor during, or supervisor after. You can use an example from your experience as a supervisor or as an employee working for a supervisor who did one or more of these techniques.*

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY



Take a moment to analyze your current practices in the skill development process. The following checklist includes a number of steps, tasks and or actions relating to the supervisor role in the skill development process. Read each item and indicate whether this is something that you always do, sometimes do, or seldom do.

ACTION ITEM	Always	Sometimes	Seldom
Understand the performance need			
Participate in any additional assessments required for training			
Influence selection of learners			
Communicate with trainers about the learning interventions			
Help learners create a preliminary action plan			
Support and encourage learners			
Participate in or observe training			
Protect learners from interruptions			
Plan post-training debriefing			
Provide supplies and space and schedule opportunities for learners to practice			
Monitor progress of action plans with learners and revise as needed			
Conduct post-training debriefing with learners and co-workers			
Coach and role model – provide encouragement and feedback			
Evaluate learners' performance			

ACTION PLANNING

An action plan is a key tool to enhance the skill development process. An action plan is a written document that describes the steps that supervisors, trainers, learners, and co-workers will complete to help maximize the transfer of learning.

It is likely that some of the skills and abilities possessed by an employee with effective job skills are due, in part, to an informal learning process. A supervisor or co-worker with significant job skills often “transfers” some of the job skills to less-experienced employees by virtue of working with them over time.



However, when identifiable skills are absent or undeveloped, a more structured learning transfer approach is necessary. One reason for this is that more and more supervisors and employees are retiring from state employment – as an effect of the demographics of the “Baby Boom.” These changes in workforce demographics indicate that it will become necessary to use a more structured approach to learning. In order to bridge the gaps caused in part by the retirement of large numbers of competent and experienced employees, managers and supervisors can use structured action plans, initiated prior to the training event so that everyone who can support the transfer of learning is involved from the beginning. Such a plan is refined during the training event and usually is not completed until after the event when learners are implementing new skills on the job. As you will see, action plans are a recurring topic throughout this guide. The content and layout of an action plan should support the users of the plan, especially the learners. In developing an action plan, keep in mind these important points:

- Write activities as distinct steps that are realistic, measurable, and attainable.
- Clearly identify responsibilities for learners, supervisors, co-workers, and trainers.
- Develop a specific time schedule for completing activities.
- Identify resources necessary to complete the activities, including plans for acquiring those resources.

A sample action plan is provided on the next page.

SAMPLE ACTION PLAN

Sample Action Plan (Family Planning/Counseling)				
Learner: Sally Jones Training Intervention: Family Planning/Counseling Update		Trainer: Cindy Washington		Date: April 7, 200X
Support Team:	Supervisor: Jack Thomas	Co-Workers: Tim Miller, Lee Chin		
Specific Areas to Improve: <i>(Think about distinct accomplishments and activities to be achieved.)</i>	I want to improve my ability to provide appropriate counseling about Family Planning methods.			
Problems to Overcome: <i>(Describe the barriers that must be eliminated or reduced and how this will be done.)</i>	I don't have access to a setting for confidential conversations. Identify and discuss possible options with clinic supervisor.			
Detailed Specific Actions in Sequence <i>(Include regular progress reviews with the support team as a part of the specific actions.)</i>	Responsible Person(s)	Resources	Date/Time	Changes to Look For
Step 1: Participate in post-training meeting to review and endorse my action plan (and Tim Miller's); compare with/update procedures manual as needed (follow-up to pre-training meeting).	Entire support team	Action plans; procedures manual	May 1 2 pm	Plans and manual; teams roles/actions clarified
Step 2: Rearrange furniture in the clinic supervisor's office to create small private area for counseling.	Sally, Tim	Chairs and tables	May 2 2 pm	Staff using space appropriately
Step 3: Create poster that encourages clients to ask their provider about FP; hand in waiting area.	Sally, Tim, Lee	Poster board and markers	May 3 2 pm	Clients reading poster and asking questions
Step 4: Review counseling job aid and notes from training activity; place job aid on table in counseling area.	Sally	Job aid from training	May 3 2 pm	Feel ready for practice session
Step 5: Conduct a practice counseling session with co-worker in counseling area, using FP samples and job aid.	Sally, Tim	Counseling area; samples; job aid	May 4 2 pm	Build confidence; ensure suitability of space design
Step 6: Observe and provide feedback during practice counseling session (Tim and Lee to practice as well).	Jack, Tim, Lee	Counseling skills checklist	May 4 2 pm	Useful feedback (peer/supervisor)
Step 7: Participate in action plan review session; revise and/or update plan depending on progress to date.	Entire team	Action plan	May 7 2 pm	Team agrees that I'm ready to counsel clients
Step 8: Discuss questions/issues with co-workers and supervisor (as needed)	All peers	Notes	Ongoing	Insights regarding improvements
Step 9: Observe counseling session and provide feedback (Tim and Lee to be rated as well).	Sally, Jack	Skills checklist	Ongoing	Ensure proficiency matches standard
Commitment of Support Team: I support the action plan described above and will complete the actions assigned to me. If I am unable to complete an activity, I will make arrangements to modify the plan accordingly.				
Signature of Learner:		Date: April 7, 20xy	Sally Jones	
Signature of Supervisor: Date:		April 7, 20xy	Jack Thomas	
Signature of Trainer:		Date: April 7, 20xy	Cindy Washington	
Signature of Co-worker:		Date: April 7, 20xy	Tim Miller	
Signature of Co-worker:		Date: April 7, 20xy	Lee Chin	

YOUR ACTION PLAN

Sample Action Plan				
Learner:		Trainer:		Date:
Training Intervention:				
Support Team:	Supervisor:	Co-Workers:		
Specific Areas to Improve: <i>(Distinct activities and accomplishments to be achieved.)</i>				
Problems to Overcome: <i>(Describe the barriers that must be eliminated or reduced and how this will be done.)</i>				
Detailed Specific Actions in Sequence <i>(Include regular progress reviews with the support team as a part of the specific actions.)</i>	Responsible Person(s)	Resources	Date/Time	Changes to Look For
Step 1:				
Step 2:				
Step 3:				
Step 4:				
Step 5:				

YOUR ACTION PLAN

Detailed Specific Actions in Sequence <i>(continued...)</i>	Responsible Person(s)	Resources	Date/ Time	Changes to Look For
Step 6:				
Step 7:				
Step 8:				
Step 9:				
Step 10:				
Step 11:				

Commitment of Support Team:

I support the action plan described above and will complete the actions assigned to me. If I am unable to complete an activity, I will make arrangements to modify the plan accordingly.

Signature of Learner:		Date:
Signature of Supervisor:		Date:
Signature of Trainer:		Date:
Signature of Co-worker:		Date:
Signature of Co-worker:		Date:

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APPENDIX A-ACTION PLAN

Sample Action Plan				
Learner:		Trainer:		Date:
Training Intervention:				
Support Team:	Supervisor:	Co-Workers:		
Specific Areas to Improve: <i>(Distinct activities and accomplishments to be achieved.)</i>				
Problems to Overcome: <i>(Describe the barriers that must be eliminated or reduced and how this will be done.)</i>				
Detailed Specific Actions in Sequence <i>(Include regular progress reviews with the support team as a part of the specific actions.)</i>	Responsible Person(s)	Resources	Date/Time	Changes to Look For
Step 1:				
Step 2:				
Step 3:				
Step 4:				
Step 5:				

APPENDIX A- ACTION PLAN

Detailed Specific Actions in Sequence <i>(continued...)</i>	Responsible Person(s)	Resources	Date/ Time	Changes to Look For
Step 6:				
Step 7:				
Step 8:				
Step 9:				
Step 10:				
Step 11:				
Commitment of Support Team: I support the action plan described above and will complete the actions assigned to me. If I am unable to complete an activity, I will make arrangements to modify the plan accordingly.				
Signature of Learner:				Date:
Signature of Supervisor:				Date:
Signature of Trainer:				Date:
Signature of Co-worker:				Date:
Signature of Co-worker:				Date: