

Achieving a Just Culture: Our Shared Vision

“The mission of the Los Angeles County Health Agency (DHS, DMH, DPH) is to improve health and wellness across Los Angeles County through effective, integrated, comprehensive, culturally appropriate services, programs, and policies that promote healthy people living in healthy communities.”

What is Just Culture?

Just Culture is a principle and practice of workplace equity: Be kind, be fair. The focus is on identifying and correcting system flaws rather than blaming individuals for actions outside of their control. Just Culture is a framework for shared accountability. It is a guiding principle which recognizes that unintended outcomes, adverse events and errors are an inevitable part of our human and professional experiences. Just Culture helps ensure that everyone is treated kindly and fairly at their worksites.

Where did Just Culture come from?

Just Culture has been used for years in high-risk fields like aviation and nuclear engineering. Many health care organizations now see Just Culture as a key component to ensuring excellence in their work.

The concept of Just Culture was embraced at the LA County Health Agency after the Labor Management Just Culture Committee – represented by SEIU, UAPD, AFSCME, Teamsters, CIR, DHS, DMH and DPH – conducted a survey in the Fall of 2016. The survey results revealed the need for a Just

Culture policy that would address safety concerns and increase morale in the workplace by increasing staff input on operational decisions and by promoting fairness. That’s why Just Culture is our number one Labor-Management Partnership priority.

How does Just Culture work?

We recognize that unintended events and outcomes are not solely because of poor individual choices; rather, they are often the result of multiple errors or individual decisions made within intricate, imperfect systems. To ensure fair treatment, Just Culture requires us to achieve a balance – to respond appropriately to individual behavior while simultaneously determining what system changes are necessary so we can prevent similar issues from occurring. To accomplish these objectives, staff must feel empowered and comfortable recommending policy and procedure changes to supervisors.

When mistakes, near misses and adverse outcomes do occur, the review and solution will be collaborative under a policy of Just Culture. Responsibility for outcomes will be shared. Employees

will not be subject to retaliation for identifying problems or disclosing errors. Individuals who might need coaching, training or other support will receive it.

Why is Just Culture important to our Health Agency?

Just Culture will help us become a “learning organization” that continuously improves. We will build an organization of trust where we can share our fears, frustrations and foibles with one another. Trust and open dialogue will promote relationships which will help prevent missteps from taking place. When mistakes do occur, under Just Culture, the review and solution will be collaborative and less arduous. We will share the responsibility for the outcomes, treating each other kindly and fairly throughout the process.

When and where will Just Culture be implemented?

Just Culture is our shared responsibility – so the principles of Just Culture apply to all staff and managers. We will use a train-the-trainer model of implementation and all staff will participate. By creating a Just Culture in which DHS, DMH and DPH act as Employ-ers of Choice, and treat our staff as Employees of Choice, LA County will succeed as the Health Agency of Choice!



to be used in conjunction with the Health Agency Just Culture Policy.)

START

It is essential to remember the importance of evaluating for System Contributors that allow/encourage unwanted Human Error or Behavioral Choices, and identifying system modifications that can help prevent recurrence or minimize potential harm. When evaluating the system consider:

- Results of Substitution Test (Would other in similar situation do the same thing)
- Do existing policies and procedures promote expected behavior?
- Are appropriate resources available?
- Is suitable education/training available?
- How does the organization balance use of resources with risk related to Human Error and/or Behavioral Choices?
- Work with staff to redesign the system or its components to prevent and/or mitigate unintended risks or harm.

DELIBERATE HARM TEST

Were the actions intended to cause harm?

YES

Malicious Behavior (may warrant legal action)

Assess system for improvements to prevent intentional harm

NO

INCAPACITY TEST

Was there evidence of substance use?

YES

Was the substance use related to the treatment of a known medical condition or illness?

YES

Was use consistent with the provider recommendations?

NO

NO

Did a medical condition/illness impact the individual's ability to perform their job?

YES

Refer to HR or Return to Work for next steps.

NO

BEHAVIOR

RESPONSE³

FORESIGHT TEST

Did the individual knowingly violate safe operating procedures or standard protocols?

NO

HUMAN ERROR

- Console and Coach individual.
- If there is history of similar Human Errors by the same individual, add Counseling and/or Remedial Action.
- Repetitive Human Error may rise to the level of At-Risk Behavior¹

YES

Does the organization believe that the benefits [acceptably] outweighed the risk?

YES

JUSTIFIABLE CHOICE

- Console and Coach individual.
- If there is history of similar Justifiable Choices by the same individual, add Counseling and/or Remedial Action.
- Repetitive Justifiable Choice may rise to the level of At-Risk Behavior¹

NO

Did the employee have a good faith, but mistaken belief that the risk was insignificant or justifiable?

YES

AT-RISK BEHAVIOR

- Counsel and or provide Remedial Action.
- If there is history of similar At-risk Behavioral Choices by the same individual, add additional Remedial Actions and/or Disciplinary Action (as applicable).
- Repetitive At-Risk Behavior may rise to the level of Reckless Behavior²

NO

RECKLESS BEHAVIOR

- Take immediate steps to stop the individual from engaging in further Reckless Behavior.
- Consult with management regarding the need for disciplinary action (as applicable).

To Individual AND To System

Evaluate for System Contributors that allow/encourage unwanted Human Error or Behavioral Choices, and identify system modifications that will prevent recurrence or minimize potential harm. When evaluating the system consider:

- Results of Substitution Test
- Do existing policies and procedures promote expected behavior?
- Are resources appropriate/available?
- Is suitable education/training available?
- Determine the organization's tolerance to risks related to Human Error and/or Behavioral Choices
- Work with staff to redesign the system or its components to prevent and/or mitigate unintended risks or harm.

For At-Risk/Reckless Behavior:

- Assess if there are incentives to engage in such behavior
- Establish clear expectations from individuals who engage in such behavior. This may include placing or changing incentives and consequences to discourage undesirable behavioral choices and encourage desirable behavioral choices.

¹ Follow At-risk Behavior response path

² Follow Reckless Behavior response path

³ Must assess both individuals and systems