

# Incentivizing Staff to Become Trainers

Internal trainers are integral to the success of a department; however, being a trainer can be challenging, and many departments struggle to recruit staff for this role. Trainers' responsibilities are often in addition to other duties, and training requires time, courage, and specialized knowledge and skills. In recognition of this, many chiefs have explored how they can motivate staff to become and remain trainers.

A survey was conducted of all chiefs and EBP trainers in Pennsylvania county adult probation departments to identify strategies that are being used or that could be used to encourage trainers. The following are examples of financial, professional, and cultural motivators that were mentioned.

## Financial Incentives

- **Stipend.** Offer annual stipends to employees who take on trainer responsibilities.
- **Pay Differential.** Provide a small hourly pay increase while people are performing training duties.
- **Overtime or Comp Time.** Compensate trainers for additional hours with overtime pay or equivalent time off.

Sixty percent of responding counties provide some form of financial incentive. Eighty-two percent of trainers recommended financial incentives.

## Career Growth & Professional Incentives

- **Skills Gained from Training.** Emphasize that serving as a trainer builds valuable leadership, communication, and mentorship skills.
- **Performance Evaluation Credit.** Incorporate trainer participation as a positive factor in annual reviews or performance scoring.
- **Professional Development.** Offer trainers access to trainings, certifications, or conferences.
- **Priority for Special Projects.** Give trainers priority consideration for participation in cross-departmental initiatives where they can provide input and develop skills and experience.
- **Access to Enhanced Tools.** Give trainers advanced access to innovative technology and materials.
- **Office Space.** Offer trainers prime office space or, at a minimum, space in which they can prepare for trainings.

Twenty-two percent of trainers indicated that they were motivated to become trainers because of professional growth benefits.

## Acknowledgment & Cultural Incentives

- **Recognition.** Celebrate trainers in staff meetings, in newsletters, or through other internal communication channels.
- **Trainer Identity.** Create a branded trainer community with unique apparel, badges, or titles.
- **Influence and Prestige.** In internal and external meetings, highlight the status of trainers as department experts and mentors.
- **Feedback Loops.** Share data with trainers showing the positive outcomes of their training (e.g., improved performance metrics or trainee satisfaction).

Only 35% of counties reported providing acknowledgment and cultural incentives. This appears to be a low-cost opportunity to incentivize staff.

## Operational Support

- **Reduced Caseload/Adjusted Workload.** Reduce other duties during training cycles to offset the added workload.
- **Administrative Support.** Provide trainers with clerical or scheduling assistance to help streamline their responsibilities.
- **Dedicated Training Time.** Schedule regular blocks of time when trainers can focus solely on training, without other operational duties.
- **Managerial Endorsement.** Ensure supervisors support trainers to help them avoid burnout.

Only 14% of counties reported offering trainers reduced caseloads, while 38% of trainers identified reduced caseloads as a motivator.

## Summary

Every staff member is motivated by something different. To understand what motivates each person, have one-on-one conversations with them and then tailor incentives based on their individual needs and preferences.

Several trainers reported not feeling supported by management and are considering stepping down as trainers.

The top two motivators for trainers who responded to the survey were intrinsic: a passion for teaching and helping others and a belief in evidence-based practices and the value of the tools that they were introducing to training participants. Identifying staff who share these values and incorporating recognition and feedback loops that reinforce these motivators can be very beneficial in recruiting and retaining trainers.