

# LEADING TEAMS REMOTELY

Even in the best of times, leading teams is challenging. Leading a team recently (and suddenly) converted to a remote workplace impacts both managers/supervisors and their staff. To aid in this transition, California Correctional Health Care Services/California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Human Resources has compiled a list of helpful tips for managers/supervisors to provide support during this time of new challenges.



## ASSIGN



## COMMUNICATE



## LEAD

Working remotely has inherent challenges, take the time to ensure your staff understand their assignments and on what they should be working:

- Define individual roles and responsibilities – set clear expectations. Define what is considered a timely response, when an assignment will be due, and how to best reach you if there are immediate questions.
- Stay focused on the organizational goals – when you make the assignment link the tasks your staff are performing with progress on larger initiatives and long term goals. This will help you ensure longer term goals are still being met.
- Newly remote workers have lost many of the information sources they formally had immediately available. Provide additional guidance in your emails as to where the information can be obtained – encourage them to work with co-workers to locate needed information.
- Understand that value is driven by quality performance. Place focus on what an employee does and how it connects to your program/unit's initiatives - this will empower your team and enhance accountability.
- Provide clear feedback. If the work product needs editing then indicate in an email, breaking out in bullets what needs to be corrected. If needed, follow up with a time to get on a call to ensure comprehension.
- When sending assignments via emails, over communicate but keep your message succinct. Break out information in bullets points or steps.

Getting together with your team is more important than ever. In most situations, our staff are no longer receiving the face-time from their leaders they used to in their prior workplace interactions. Current communication may be limited by telephonic or video capabilities, making a manager/supervisor's visibility that much more critical.

- Set meetings with your teams to meet remotely once a week, if you can. Ensure you have one-on-ones with your direct reports with times for touch bases in between. Keeping lines of communication open even when you may have nothing to share is important for team cohesiveness. If you don't have new information – ask your team what questions they have or what can you do for them.
- Develop agendas in advance of team meetings, and ensure everyone receives it a minimum of a few hours before the meeting to help ensure your team is prepared to discuss the meeting topics. If the topics are more in-depth, provide the agenda a day in advance. When you ask a question, call out the names of those on the call to engage the team and help minimize people talking over one another or responding all at once.
- Remote communication often requires additional clarifying. Visual cues that employees rely upon in face to face interactions are no longer available. This may result in additional communication that was not needed prior.
- Define a communication ladder for your team to reach you. Standard meetings may be conducted via video or teleconference, while emails may be reserved for assignment communications, and text messages to a state-issued cell phones may be used for immediate needs. Define what works best for your program/unit and helps to best meet organizational goals, and share with your team how it's best to reach you.

This is an uneasy situation for everyone. Our organizational goals are inherently tied to strong leadership and the work of our teams. Lead with confidence and clarity:

- Acknowledge the stress that likely exists within the team, but close with positivity. This situation will eventually end, and a leader's responsibility is to ensure their team makes it to that conclusion intact and confident in the department's ability to support them.
- Working remotely can lead to decreased employee confidence, as the "feedback loop" they typically access is no longer available. With this in mind, it is important to increase positive feedback where there is success. This will help direct employees focus on the program/unit goals and their roles within it.
- Start remote meetings with a check-in of non-work-related items to recreate the social interaction that is now lacking. This helps the team momentum that aids in ensuring team cohesiveness.
- Determine how well employees are adjusting to their new remote working situation. Asking them directly may elicit information that might not have been directly addressed otherwise.