

2024 BJA TRAINING ACADEMY SPOTLIGHT

The Michigan Department of Correction Training and Recruitment Division services all 83 counties in the state of Michigan including 104 field offices and 27 prisons. The MDOC runs three academies at two locations to service our new custody staff, non-custody new employees, and our new parole and probation agents. They also host in-service training at all 27 correctional facilities, 36 field office locations, and their headquarters in Lansing, Michigan.

The MDOC has adopted an outcome-based training format with a priority focus on communications (to include motivational interviewing), de-escalation, employee wellness, leadership, diversity, equity, inclusion, gender responsiveness, and trauma-informed approaches to corrections. Like most, the post-pandemic economy resulted in fewer applicants seeking employment. This created challenges for their department with their experienced workforce and many seeking retirement. To combat this, MDOC has implemented new strategies in advertisement, job fairs, local facility recruitment events, and reaching new audiences to join their MDOC family. In determining the effectiveness of their practices, they stay focused on outcomes.

MDOC focuses on outcomes-based training, which has had a positive impact on its staff. MDOC believes that all staff need three things to be successful: a positive mindset, a powerful skillset, and a diverse toolset. Quality training sets the stage for the MDOC team's success, giving tools for wellness and combating stress. Other skills include de-escalating situations and observing confrontations and everyday challenges through a traumainformed and DEI lens. When staff feel well-equipped, they have a more positive mindset, which rounds out their success.

The development and implementation of these practices are ongoing processes that they have been working on for the past seven or more years. MDOC continues to evaluate the needs each year and implement positive changes to techniques and processes toward their overarching goal, which is to prepare their staff to do their work safely and effectively. Staff and recruits have responded positively despite the challenges. MDOC's leadership team is focused on continued improvement and addressing each need. The department also focuses on leadership skills development to provide support to new and seasoned leaders.

If you want to modify your training practices, Michigan emphasizes that change can be overwhelming! In Michigan's case, there are many programs, and there is ongoing pressure to deliver them while developing new and innovative curricula. However, don't let that discourage you. Every journey begins with a first step. Take the step and put in the work, then change will come! You cannot help others with their struggles if you are inflicted yourself, so stay positive and laser–focused on your mission.

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