

# Staff Sexual Misconduct Agency or Institutional Culture

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# Introduction

- Sexual misconduct doesn't arise out of nowhere.
- It is embedded in culture.
- Addressing sexual misconduct is about cultural change.

# What is Culture?

- It is an organization's way of life
- It is not inherent
- It is learned
- It is the sum of attitudes, prejudices, history, personalities and ethics of leaders and key staff, past and present.

# Some Components of Culture

- Beliefs: Shared explanations of experience
  - Example: You can't be promoted unless you attend the Warden's Christmas party and tell a dirty limerick.
- Values: What is considered right and good.
  - Example: If it's inmates vs. staff, the decision supports the staff member.

# Some Components of Culture

Continued..

- Norms: Shared rules, “the way things are done”
  - Example: Don’t volunteer for assignments
- So deeply held that they aren’t even noticed unless they are violated.
- Norms are often more powerful than formal sanctions (e.g. sanctions)

# Ideal Vs. Real Culture

- Ideal : The values held in principle
- Real: The way the culture really works

# Some Influences on Culture

- Hiring process: qualities sought, backgrounds considered, questions asked.
- Promotional process
- Role of middle manager
- Tone and style of the leader
- Staff-staff interactions
- Staff-inmate dynamics

# Some Influences on Culture

continued...

- Dress
- Language
- Disciplinary process

# Imbalance of Power

- Hallmark of correctional settings
- Affects those who have it and those who don't
- Distorts communication and interactions
- Those without power will seek to gain control, to equalize the imbalance
- Sexual misconduct shifts the balance of power (Inmate has a secret on staff)

# The Code of Silence

- Another feature of correctional settings
- Involves:
  - Non-cooperation with management in critical events
  - Protection of self and co-workers
- Staff will risk discipline rather than violate this powerful norm.

# Sexualized Work Environment

- Lack of appropriate boundaries
- Examples:
  - E-mail
  - Jokes
  - Favoritism
- Can be identified on walk through
  - Non-verbal interactions (how close people stand, whether they touch etc.)

# Sexualized Work Environment

- Begins with staff-staff interplay
- Inmates learn it by observing and listening to staff.

# How to Address such an Environment: Change the Culture

- Establish a vision: make it a priority
- Redefine the issue:
  - It's not about sex, it's about security.
  - Security is compromised whenever boundaries breakdown and become personal/intimate.
  - Sexual misconduct is the most extreme form of violation of boundaries.

# How to Address such an Environment: Change the Culture

- Educate staff
  - It's a security issue
  - It is part of professionalism.
    - No more acceptable than for dentist/patient, priest/parishioners, law enforcement/motorist

# How to Address such an Environment: Change the Culture

- Make it clear that you take it seriously
  - Zero tolerance must mean zero tolerance
  - Consequence: Something has to happen to someone.
- Model the behavior
  - The culture will not tolerate hypocrisy.