



**STATE OF MONTANA  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
POLICY DIRECTIVE**

Policy No. DOC 1.1.12	Subject: <b>DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATION PLAN</b>
Chapter 1: ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT	Page 1 of 3
Section 1: General Administration	Effective Date: Aug. 18, 2009
Signature: /s/ Mike Ferriter, Director	Revised:

## **I. POLICY**

The Department of Corrections is committed to an employee communication plan that considers division and facility culture, environment and needs; the diverse and unique nature of correctional jobs; the broad distribution of corrections employees; and the importance of effective communication in Department and employee success.

## **II. APPLICABILITY**

All Department divisions, facilities and programs.

## **III. DEFINITIONS**

Administrator – The official, regardless of local title (division or facility administrator, bureau chief, warden, superintendent), ultimately responsible for the division, facility or program operation and management.

## **IV. DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVES**

### **A. The Role of a Communication Plan**

1. The Department recognizes that an effective employee communication plan is necessary to organizational success. Elements of a plan, which convey the value of each employee and encourage high employee morale and success, include:
  - a. positive relationships built on personal safety and trust;
  - b. understanding and commitment to Department goals;
  - c. teamwork, innovation and quality decision-making; and
  - d. job satisfaction and reduced attrition.
2. The effectiveness of manager and supervisory communication includes awareness that:
  - a. what is said and how it is said has a profound impact on employee morale, productivity, and success in meeting and exceeding specific goals; and that
  - b. Department activities, actions, and decisions directly or indirectly convey messages that influence employee attitudes and/or behaviors.

### **B. Communication Leadership**

1. Administrators will ensure that division/facility communication methods provide employees with current information on Department activities and allow employees the opportunity to ask questions and provide input.

2. Administrators will develop effective communication plans that consider the cultural and historical issues unique to their divisions/facilities, locations and employee duties. The plans must reflect the importance of employee communication to the Department and provide means for up, down and lateral communications. Plans will address the following:
  - a. a consistent and timely means of updating employees on Department goals, initiatives, decisions, challenges, and financial information;
  - b. methods of communicating essential and necessary information related to program changes, including those related to emergency situations;
  - c. accessible, interactive modes of communication to address employee concerns and answer questions;
  - d. opportunities for informal communication, such as employee celebrations and successes, that contribute to a team culture and promote unity and cohesiveness; and
  - e. communication authority for 1<sup>st</sup> line supervisors who, because of their direct line of responsibility, are key to conveying Department information.

### **C. Communication Considerations**

1. The Department has multiple communication tools and means available, including voice and data devices like “Blackberries” or “Treos;” however, information overload is a common communication problem that must be considered when developing communication plans.
2. Good communication strategies suggest limiting communications to three to five points for any particular issue, and using a variety of communication tools to ensure broad understanding by all employees. Additional examples of communication considerations include:
  - a. recognizing that Intranet, e-mail and newsletters, which may be more efficient for certain messages, may not be as effective as face to face communications;
  - b. understanding that one-on-one, small group, “roundtable” or team meetings; and “corridor or hallway chats,” which include direct dialogue, may be more effective than reports or letters;
  - c. using multiple tools to ensure Department policy and division/facility procedure changes are effectively communicated;
  - d. realizing that most employees, even with the variety of communication tools, prefer getting information face-to-face from their supervisors;
  - e. assuring information is passed on in a timely manner; don’t sit on it, even if it only includes a partial decision; and
  - f. being attentive to staff by listening to their questions, ideas, suggestions and concerns.

### **D. Program Evaluation**

1. The Department will evaluate success in accomplishing an effective communication program through the following actions:

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- a. the Human Resource Division will annually conduct a confidential employee “engagement survey,” a portion of which provides the opportunity for employees to evaluate Department communication;
- b. HRD will forward the survey results to the Department director and management team for review and planning purposes;
- c. the Department director will evaluate the effectiveness of the division administrators’ communication plans including implementation by subordinate staff within the administrators’ direct line of supervision; and
- d. the Department director will include a communication evaluation component in each administrator’s annual performance appraisal.

**E. Resources**

1. All Department employees, because of their contact with and support of Department customers, are valuable resources for communicating internal and external issues and events that are significant to the Department.
2. The Department director’s direct reporting staff, which includes the communications director, will keep the Director informed of events and issues that occur within and external to the Department.
3. The Department’s communications director is the official point of contact for agency employees who may need technical assistance with communication concerns and issues, including media relations, intergovernmental correspondence, newsletter articles, policies, or other formal or informal internal or external correspondence.

**V. CLOSING**

Questions concerning this policy should be directed to individual division administrators or the Department communications director.

**VI. REFERENCES**

- A. *4-4015; ACA Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*
- B. *3-JTS-1A-20; ACA Standards for Juvenile Correctional Facilities, 2003*
- C. *DOC Policies [1.1.1, Purpose, Mission, and Management Philosophy](#); [1.1.8, Media Relations](#)*

**VII. ATTACHMENTS**

None.