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Online Training for Judicial Officers and Court Personnel

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ONLINE TRAINING FOR JUDICIAL OFFICERS AND COURT PERSONNEL

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A Major Project

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to create two online, asynchronous courses: one on domestic violence for judicial officers and one on community supervision of sex offenders for probation and parole officers. These courses will be offered to the court community through the Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial College, which is responsible for providing education to judicial officers, court personnel, and others who serve the judiciary.

These courses were developed in consultation with Supreme Court of Ohio staff, judicial officers, and other subject matter experts. These experts evaluated the courses on at least three occasions and provided substantive feedback. Once launched, the courses will be evaluated by all learners who take the course.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SECTION I: BACKGROUND AND GOALS

Statement of the Project and Background Information

The Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial College provides educational offerings to judges, magistrates, acting judges, probation officers, guardians ad litem, clerks, and other court personnel. It was created in 1976 and is governed by Rule V of the Supreme Court Rules for the Government of the Judiciary of Ohio. While the Judicial College was initially established to provide educational programs and activities for Ohio judges, the mandate has since expanded to include all judicial officers and non-judicial court personnel. In 2011, the Judicial College launched Judicial eCademy and began offering online courses, in addition to its slate of traditional, face-to-face educational offerings.

The Supreme Court of Ohio contracts with Blackboard Learn to provide a learning management system for housing online courses. Blackboard connects to the in-house online registration system, Judicial eCademy. Currently, there are 19 online courses available to learners. Twelve of these online courses are for probation officers, two are for guardians ad litem, two are for adult guardians, and three are for judicial officers. The courses for guardians ad litem and judicial officers carry continuing legal education (CLE) credit. Several courses also carry continuing education units (CEUs) for social workers.

Many judicial officers and court personnel, as well as their courts, have expressed an interest in online learning because of its flexibility. However, at present the Judicial College offers relatively few online courses. This project will include the development of two additional courses: one for judicial officers and one for probation officers.

The first course, designed for probation officers, focuses on supervising those who have committed a sexual offense. The course addresses misconceptions about those with a history of

committing sexual offenses, as well as evidence-based practices that reduce the risk of recidivism.

The second course created addressed domestic violence. This is an introductory course that is designed to instruct in the dynamics of domestic abuse and to allow judicial officers to use this understanding to inform their practice. This training was designed for judicial officers in diverse jurisdictions, including those hearing criminal and domestic relations cases.

Proposed Objectives of the Project

The purpose of this project was to research and develop two online courses for judicial officers and probation officers. The first is be a one-hour course on managing individuals who have committed a sexual offense. The second was a one-hour course on understanding domestic violence. This course is currently provided to probation officers, but will need significant updates to make it relevant to judges, magistrates, and acting judges. These courses will be delivered online through Blackboard Learn, the Supreme Court of Ohio's learning management system.

Identification of Resources

The needed resources include:

- Articulate Storyline 2 software, already licensed

- Blackboard and SCORM Cloud to test and host SCORM files, already obtained

- Voice talent, to be hired

- Video recording services, to be provided by Ohio Government Telecommunications

Literature Review

This literature review will focus on three sub-topics. The courses that were developed are part of meeting mandatory education requirements for judicial officers and court personnel. These requirements will be discussed. There will also be a review of literature pertaining to the needs and recommendations of those in the judicial branch. Finally, the third section will focus on online learning and the judicial branch.

Judicial Branch Education Requirements

In the judicial branch, many court personnel and all judicial officers have continuing education requirements. These may be related to their licensure or to their position and vary depending on the state where they serve. Ericksen (2006) highlighted that these requirements are relatively new. Very limited education requirements existed for judges several decades ago. In fact, the Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial College didn't form until 1976. Continuing education for court personnel is an even more recent development.

In Ohio, training is mandated for both of the groups targeted by these trainings. According to Rule IV of the Supreme Court Rules for the Government of the Judiciary of Ohio, judicial officers in Ohio are required to obtain at least forty hours of continuing legal education every two years. Typically, at least ten of these forty hours must be delivered by the Judicial College and related specifically to their work as a judge. Probation officers are subject to minimum continuing education requirements, as of 2011. In accordance with Ohio Revised Code. 2301.271, all adult probation officers must receive at least 20 hours of continuing education each calendar year. In addition, as of 2014, adult probation officers must complete an introductory training program within one year of their hire date.

This mandatory training presents two challenges. The first is financial. Many of these mandates for education do not have specific funds assigned to them. As a result, judicial branch educators must be prepared to provide trainings in cost-efficient ways. Sawyer (2010) and Cowdry and Meeks (2012) found that many educators have employed blended and online approaches to help limited training dollars go farther.

Mandatory training also presents some challenges because it is mandatory. While there is limited information about mandatory education in the judiciary, some evidence from the medical field suggests that mandatory training may result in participants taking training that is not relevant. In their review comparing nursing education in states with and without mandatory continuing education, Palmer and Glattke (2007) found that nurses in states where training was mandated did not take more hours of continuing education, but they were more likely to take courses that were irrelevant to their work. The researchers hypothesized that learners were taking courses that were not relevant because the needed to meet their training requirements, and a particular course, though irrelevant, was offered when they needed it. Online, asynchronous learning presents one way to ensure relevant education is available, whenever the learner needs to access it.

Judicial Branch Education - Needs and Recommendations

There is relatively little literature related to the continuing education needs of probation officers. This may be a result of several factors, including the fact that the role of the probation officer varies widely. In some courts, probation officers perform primarily social work and case management duties; in other courts, probation officers may serve as bailiffs. Some probation officers are very active in the field; others are only in the office. As a result, the department where an officer is employed has significant bearing on the skills he or she will need.

The educational needs of judicial officers have received somewhat more study. Preliminary data from a survey conducted by the National Judicial College indicates that judges identify training needs in diverse areas (Yetter, 2016). Murrell (2004) identifies four key areas for judicial education: substantive content, skills, personal authenticity, and personal growth. Murrell encourages teaching in a variety of ways, with an emphasis on experiential learning and encouraging reflection.

Beyond the type of training need, the literature indicates two important issues. First, training can have a significant impact on outcomes. Bonta et al. (2011) conducted a study comparing probation officers who received training on evidence-based practice with those who did not. Officers who received the training used evidence-based practice more in their work, as determined by recordings of contacts with offenders. Furthermore, probationers assigned to the trained officers were less likely to recidivate than those assigned to untrained officers. This study highlights the potential value training can have and demonstrates the impact that training can have using objective measures. While many evaluations of professional development focus on the perceptions of participants following the training, these rigorous objective measures show that a well-constructed training can change participant behavior and that participant behavior change can have important consequences for the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

While the training that Bonta et al. conducted was performed in a traditional, face-to-face setting, there is evidence that online training can also be effective for probation officers. In England and Wales, probation officers engage in work-based distance learning at the beginning of their employment in the field (Dominey, 2010). While this has been controversial, primarily because of concerns that the training officers receive is too narrow in scope, the flexibility of the online learning format has been appreciated by probation officers. Dominey (2010) highlights

the importance of having well-developed curriculum and functioning technology to provide the most impactful training.

Online Education and the Judicial Branch - Best Practices

There is a plethora of evidence that demonstrates the efficacy of online learning, especially for professional adults learners, such as court personnel and judicial officers. A meta-analysis by the U.S. Department of Education (2009) found that online learning and blended learning out-performed traditional learning. This holds true even for professionals with diverse educational needs. Donavant (2009) found that police officers who participated in online educational programs performed comparably to those in face-to-face settings. While many preferred the traditional learning environment, respondents reported that the flexibility of online learning was beneficial.

However, there are challenges, including technical challenges. Safford and Stinton (2016) found that non-traditional students struggled with technology in online courses. Students had to learn to post in discussion boards, upload files, and navigate courses. As a result, some students reported that assignments took them longer than expected. While judicial officers and court personnel have more education than participants in this study, they are similarly diverse in terms of age and technical proficiency. Furthermore, while these students had technical assistance through their university, court personnel may have very limited onsite technical support in their courts. As a result, course development must be attuned to the technical skills and knowledge of participants.

Morgan et al. (2011) demonstrates what could happen if ease-of-use is not well-considered. Researchers found that radiologists who had access to an learning system, integrated with their technical system, were significantly more likely to use it compared to a control group

of peers who had to launch a separate application. The groups switched the type of access they had mid-way through the study. Those who previously had integrated access used the system 52% less when they had to find and launch a separate application. This study highlights the importance of a user interface that is easy to navigate and that will be considered accessible to a broad range of users.

SECTION II. METHODOLOGY

Development Procedure

This project was developed using the ADDIE model, which is one of the most widely recognized models for instructional design. ADDIE is an acronym for five stages of the course development process: analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. While the exact origin of ADDIE is unclear, the principles underlying the ADDIE model were developed in the 1970s by Florida State University for military training (Molenda, 2015). There have been a variety of iterations of ADDIE. I will use the model as described by Piskurich in *Rapid Instructional Design* (2015), as he specifically applies the ADDIE model to online, asynchronous learning.

The first phase, analysis, consists of determining the needs of learners, including what they need to learn, how they might learn best, and information gaps or pre-training that might be needed. This stage was largely complete at the project's outset, as the Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial College and its education committees had already identified these two courses as meeting the needs of learners. The committees consist of Chief Probation Officers, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, judicial officers, and others with the experience and knowledge to determine the needs of learners. These committees serve a role similar to the focus groups described by Piskurich (2015).

Once the needs of the learners are well understood, the design phase begins. Design includes determining the delivery method of the training. In this case, it was already decided to deliver this training online and asynchronously through the Supreme Court of Ohio's learning management system. Piskurich (2015) describes this type of training as technology-based training, and the training developed aligns well with his description of when to use this type of

training. For example, tracking is very important, and there are a large number of participants. Also, the program is enhanced with multimedia elements, and program updates will be relatively infrequent. Both are topics where case law is relatively settled and where there is a general consensus around best practices.

The design phase primarily began with establishing course objectives, identifying subject matter experts, and gathering content materials. While the course topic has been set, course objectives had not initially been determined. Also, there had been some discussion of subject matter experts, but these individuals had not been confirmed. These steps were where the project began.

As the design phase progressed, I continued to work with the subject matter experts and other Judicial College staff to outline learning activities, scenarios, and multimedia elements. We established not only what learning outcomes will be, but how they would be achieved. This portion of the design phase was an iterative process, where I proposed exercises and other learning elements, and refined them with the advice and input of subject matter experts.

At this stage, the subject matter experts gave more general feedback about the learning elements they are reviewing. The goal was to determine if these ideas are worth developing in more detail and could be effective at teaching the desired content. This phase did not use a rubric, but rather will be based on more general open communication about the structure of the course and its contents.

Once the design of the course had been outlined the actual course development began. In this case, this phase began with storyboarding and writing narration. The previously outlined exercises and multimedia elements became more finalized. This phase was iterative as well, and each component was reviewed and refined so that the final product is well-structured and meets

the needs of learners, as well as agency expectations. Reviewers, including subject matter experts, used the rubric in Appendix 1 to provide feedback about the course.

Because of the iterative nature of this phase, it included ongoing contact with a variety of partners, including subject matter experts, voice talent, and others. The development phase also included the build in Storyline software, developing multimedia components, and the creation of the course in the Supreme Court of Ohio's learning management system.

After the course development, the implementation phase and the course is rolled out to the intended audiences. Supreme Court of Ohio courses have an initial quality assurance testing by Supreme Court of Ohio staff. Once a course has been demonstrated to be functional, registration is opened in the Supreme Court of Ohio's registration system. Because learners have had access to previous online courses and the Supreme Court of Ohio has experience delivering them, the implementation process is typically smooth.

The course was evaluated throughout its development. Reviewers included Supreme Court of Ohio staff and subject matter experts. The courses are also evaluated, ongoing, by the learners. The evaluation process is described in more detail in the evaluation of project objectives section below.

It should be noted that the ADDIE model has been criticized for its linear approach to course development and proponents of new models have suggested it is out of date (Allen and Sites, 2012). Some instructional designers have begun using different approaches, such as the successive approximation model (SAM) or other iterative course development models. I selected the ADDIE model because it is familiar to Supreme Court of Ohio staff and more closely aligns with current course development processes.

While the ADDIE model does not mandate an iterative process, I was able to work closely with Supreme Court of Ohio staff, subject matter experts, and other stakeholders throughout course development. For example, in developing past courses, staff and subject matter experts reviewed the script and storyboard before recording or building the course. Similar to iterative models, this allows for corrections to the course, either in design or content, to occur early in the process. Ultimately, this helps to ensure the final course meets the needs of learners and the expectations of the Supreme Court of Ohio.

Anticipated Schedule of Activities

Key deadlines for this project are as follows:

- Submit Proposal to Committee: 7/5/16
- Defend Proposal: 7/28/16
- Submit Final Project to Committee: 11/11/16
- Defend Project: 11/18/16
- Submit Final Copy of Project: 12/2/16

Evaluation of Project Objectives

The courses were developed in consultation with subject matter experts, including two judges and the Director of Sex Offender Services at the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. They provided substantive feedback related to course content, as well as general feedback related to design and usability of the course. Supreme Court of Ohio staff initially evaluated the courses and provided feedback about the usability of the courses and their congruence with the Supreme Court of Ohio style. All reviewers used the rubric in Appendix 1. The rubric covers four key areas: grammar and writing style, content, visual appearance and graphics, and course technology. It was previously developed for use in evaluating other Judicial

College courses and was based off of checklists provided by developers with whom the College had contracted.

This process provided immediate feedback about the usability of the course and allowed any content errors to be corrected before the course roll-out to judicial branch staff. The courses will also be reviewed by the bodies that grant continuing education credit, such as the Commission on Legal Education and the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, to allow them to carry the appropriate continuing legal education or changing offender behavior credit.

Once the courses have been approved for credit, they will be opened for the intended audience in Blackboard. Learners will be invited to evaluate the course at its conclusion, using the survey in Appendix 2. The survey includes Likert scales to obtain quantitative feedback, as well as opportunities for them to provide written responses about their experience with the course. All learners are required to complete the evaluation in order to obtain credit for the course. As is typical of Judicial College courses, the evaluation of learners will be used to update or add to future iterations of this course.

While this portion of the evaluation process will take place after the completion of this project, it is an important component of continuing to offer relevant and meaningful education to those working in the judicial branch.

SECTION III. : DESCRIPTION, METHODOLOGY, AND DEVELOPMENT

Restatement of the Project

The objective of this project was to create two online, asynchronous courses for the Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial College. The first addressed issues related to domestic violence and was designed for judicial officers. The three topics covered were dynamics of domestic violence, batterer intervention, and firearms prohibitions tied to domestic violence convictions and the issuance of protection orders. These topics were selected because they present common challenges and because they are relevant to most or all jurisdictions.

The second course focused on supervising sex offenders in the community. This course was for designed to be part of the Probation Officer Training Program, a mandatory training program for recently hired adult probation and parole officers. This course includes issues related to assessment, supervision, and treatment for sex offenders on community supervision.

Planning and Organizing Content

As described in Section II, these courses were developed using an ADDIE-type model, with the analysis phase already largely completed and the delivery method identified. As a result, the first step was identifying subject matter experts. For the sex offender course, David Berenson, the Director of Sex Offender Services at the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction was identified as the primary subject matter expert. For the domestic violence course, Judge Ronald Adrine, Judge John Rohrs, and Diana Ramos-Reardon, policy counsel for the Supreme Court of Ohio Domestic Violence Program were identified.

I began by working with the subject matter experts to create appropriate learning objectives and a course outline. I then developed a storyboard for each course. The storyboard included narration, described learning activities and interactions, and began to outline visual

elements of the course. After another review, the course was developed in Articulate Storyline 2, a type of instructional design software.

Integration into Storyline and Blackboard

After the course was developed in Storyline, the subject matter experts reviewed the course two additional times. These reviews were both for course content and the appearance and function of the course. I recorded temporary scratch narration to ensure that reviewers could view the course in a way that was as realistic as possible. After these reviews were completed, the Supreme Court of Ohio contracted with professional voice talent to provide recorded narration for the course. This professional narration was imported and replaced the initial scratch audio.

Once the course was finalized in Storyline, it was published into a SCORM-compliant package for input into the Learning Management System, Blackboard. Once housed in Blackboard, several additional items were built to provide information to the learners about how to launch the course, what to expect, and how to receive course credit. The course evaluation was also added to ensure learners provided feedback about their experience with the course.

SECTION IV: RESULTS, EVALUATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

This project resulted in the development of two online asynchronous courses for the Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial College. These courses are in the process of receiving their accreditation, after which they will be made available for learners through the Supreme Court of Ohio's learning management system.

Evaluations

As described in the methodology, subject matter experts evaluated the courses throughout the process. A variety of changes were made in response to their feedback, including adjustments to the content and to the design and interactive course elements. For the sex offender course, these changes centered on the following areas:

- Adding an overview of sex offenses and sex offenders: The course was adjusted to include two brief slides related to what sex offenses include and reminding participants that sex offenders are not a homogenous group.

- Clarifying the role of general risk assessments: While general risk assessments are less predictive than sex offense-specific assessments, it was clarified that they are still effective at predicting general criminal behavior.

- Connecting supervision practices to community safety: Portions of the course were reframed to emphasize the connection between using evidence-based supervision practices and community safety.

- Highlighting tier and registration requirements: This section underwent several changes to clarify how the tier system works, depending on with the conviction occurred, and to highlight that tiers are based on conviction only.

- Adjusting content related to victim: One of the components of the comprehensive approach to sex offender management is victim-centeredness. However, probation and parole officers primarily interact with offenders, and this course is meant to be introductory. As a result, the component on working with victims was shortened to ensure adequate time for supervision and treatment of offenders.

For the domestic violence course, the changes centered on the following issues:

- Including information about protection orders: Initially, protection orders were not included because of the possibility of upcoming legislative change. However, after discussion with the subject matter experts, they were included in a brief way to demonstrate how protection orders can be used to interrupt coercive control behaviors. References to code and rule were limited to make adjustments possible, in the event of changes to code or rule.

- Providing instruction in a gender neutral way: While domestic violence is most commonly perpetrated by men against women, there are female perpetrators and male victims in both same-sex and opposite-sex relationships. The law is gender neutral. Course content was reframed to be gender neutral with respect to victims and perpetrators in most cases. For some scenarios where the gender of the involved parties was included, the gender and relationship statuses was varied to reflect the diversity of circumstances that judicial officers are likely to observe in their courts. Similarly, photos were used to reflect the diversity of parties before the court.

- Connecting course content to code: One of the goals of this course was to ensure that all elements of the course were well-connected to the application of law. Even the initial lesson on the dynamics of domestic violence highlights the differences between civil and

criminal law, the relationship between lethality factors and bail setting, and the issuance of protective orders.

- Ensuring the course has an appropriate level of sophistication: Most judicial officers are experienced professionals. Efforts were made to ensure that this course would present content in a manner appropriate to their level of expertise. This included adjusting language to use legal terms, such as plaintiff or defendant, in lieu of offender, in many instances, and referencing code or rule when appropriate.

At the conclusion of the course development process, each of the reviewers agreed that the course they reviewed was accurate, complete, and effective at delivering the content to the proscribed audience.

The courses will continue to be evaluated by all learners who complete the course. The learners' suggestions and input will guide future iterations of each course.

Recommendations

The completion of these courses has demonstrated that online courses can continue to be used by the Judicial College to deliver impactful education on a variety of subjects, and the Court has expressed the desire to continue expanding our use of online education. Over the course of this project, two general areas for improvement became apparent.

One area where the Supreme Court of Ohio could continue to grow is in the development of a consistent style. While the Court uses a general template, more is needed to ensure that learners have an intuitive and consistent learning experience across courses. This could also help to streamline the design process, as navigation features, button types, question layout, and other design components would be standardized. Other staff have recognized the need for this, and

while this will be a significant undertaking, it will ultimately result in a better experience for learners and a more efficient development process for instructional designers.

Another opportunity for the Court is in the area of blended courses. Several of the reviewers for the courses highlighted that it could be useful to pair these courses, which focus on more introductory topics, with more in-depth, face-to-face offerings. This approach would be consistent with research suggesting the advantages of blended courses, vis-à-vis models of instruction that use only a face-to-face or online delivery (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). A blended approach could also be used to limit some of the in-class time associated with certain educational programs, which could in turn lead to a reduced cost.

While these opportunities are more general to the Supreme Court, the courses developed could also be improved in future updates. Possible improvements include dividing content for judicial officers based on jurisdiction. At present, the course includes material related to civil and criminal law; however, most judges and magistrates do not preside over both. Separating the content may allow more time to address other topics and avoid addressing issues that is not relevant to their role. For the course on sex offender management, one possible improvement is providing more opportunities for officer to reflect on the practices of their court or department. It could also be useful to provide further resources or training for those who will be managing this population.

While opportunities for advancement exist, the Supreme Court of Ohio has demonstrated its commitment to using new technologies to deliver efficient and impactful education. This is part of the Judicial College's ongoing dedication to promoting the effective administration of justice throughout Ohio and to ensuring the people of Ohio benefit from a responsive and effective judiciary.

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APPENDIX ONE: EVALUATION RUBRIC

	Satisfactory or Needs Improvement	Comments
Grammar and writing style		
Writing is simple, direct, concise, and easily understood.		
Sentences are short.		
Writing is informal, positive, and inclusive.		
Punctuation and capitalization are used consistently.		
Active voice is typically used.		
Present tense is typically used.		
Second person, singular is typically used.		
Content		
Learning objectives are action-oriented.		
Content provided supports learning objectives.		
Non-essential information is available through links or other methods.		
Navigation/course use instructions are available.		
Each screen begins with key information.		
All content is accurate.		
Information is chunked or segmented into sequential topics.		
Examples or scenarios are included.		
Activities include directions.		
Activities include feedback based on the learner's performance.		

Visual appearance of the course		
Menu, transcript, and other features are placed according to SCO format.		
Words are easy to read (font size 11 or higher and good contrast).		
Descriptive headings and labels are included.		
Visuals contribute to learning and are not just visual representations.		
There are usually not more than 3-5 key visual elements per slide.		
Technology		
Course navigation is intuitive.		
Videos and other multimedia elements load properly and quickly.		
If release of learning element or advance is controlled, release functions properly.		

APPENDIX TWO: LEARNER EVALUATION

Likert Scale: How would you rate the overall quality of the **course**?

1. Poor
2. Fair
3. Average
4. Good
5. Excellent

Likert Scale: How would you rate the overall quality of the **course content**?

1. Poor
2. Fair
3. Average
4. Good
5. Excellent

Likert Scale: Were the **learning objectives** for the course fulfilled?

1. Not at all
2.
3. Somewhat
4.
5. Completely

Likert Scale: How likely are you to **apply what you learned** from this course?

1. Not likely
2.
3. Likely
4.
5. Very likely

Likert Scale: How would you rank the **ease of use** of the online course delivery system?

1. Extremely difficult to use
2.
3. Neither easy nor difficult to use
4.
5. Very easy to use

Written response: What topic or aspect of this course do you think will most directly impact your work with offenders?

Written response: What will you do differently as a result of attending this course?

Written response: What courses or topics would you like the Judicial College to offer in future courses? How would you envision the learning to be delivered (in person, online, etc.)?

Written response: Do you have additional comments about your experience with this course? (Any suggestions for improvement are greatly appreciated.)