



Virginia Department of Corrections

Administration and Organization

Operating Procedure 010.5

Dialogue

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REVIEW

The Content Owner will review this operating procedure annually and re-write it no later than three years after the effective date.

The content owner reviewed this operating procedure in June 2024 and necessary changes are being drafted.

The content owner reviewed this operating procedure in May 2025 and necessary changes are being drafted.

COMPLIANCE

This operating procedure applies to all units operated by the Virginia Department of Corrections (DOC). Practices and procedures must comply with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations, American Correctional Association (ACA) standards, Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards, and DOC directives and operating procedures.

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DEFINITIONS

Accountability Progression - A model used to proactively hold employees accountable based on progressive measures that include Dialogue, Coaching, Holding to Account, and Disciplining.

Coaching Quad - A four-person pattern where Dialogue Practitioners are able to practice coaching skills with one another to assist with on-going practitioner development.

Dialogic Actions - A set of four skills that are used in Dialogue to give direction (move), completion (follow), correction (oppose), and perspective (bystand).

Dialogic Modes - The seven different ways that people talk and think together i.e., monologue, debate, discussion, conversation, skillful conversation, dialogue, and generative dialogue based on the level of engagement needed.

Dialogic Practices - A set of four skills that are used in Dialogue to raise concerns openly and genuinely (voice), to understand what other people think and feel (listening), appreciate how other's situations are different than own self (respect), and revealing what is seen or heard, what is taken away, and what is needed in the future (suspension).

Dialogue - A mode of talking and thinking together where individuals use the dialogic actions and dialogic practices to help find common understanding and purpose.

Dialogue Coaching Training (DCT) - A mandatory requirement for all supervisors that brings the concepts of Dialogue, accountability, coaching, and leadership skills together based on the premise that proactive support and challenge is more effective in shaping behavior than reactive disciplinary action.

Dialogue Practitioner (DP) - An employee who is actively engaged in the Dialogue Practitioner Development Program (DPDP).

Dialogue Practitioner Coach (DPC) - An employee with specialized training and certification who facilitates Dialogue Coaching training to all supervisors and provides coaching to DOC staff across all levels, as well as fellow Dialogue Practitioners.

Dialogue Practitioner Lead (DPL) - An employee with specialized training and certification who has demonstrated competency and earned certifications in all levels of Dialogue, and provides leadership within the Dialogue Practitioner Development Program.

Dialogue Practitioner Trainer (DPT) - An employee with specialized training and certification who facilitates Dialogue by modeling and leading Dialogue Skills trainings.

Dialogue Skills Training (DST) - A mandatory requirement for all DOC employees that provides an introduction to the basic dialogue skills to include: check-ins, dialogic modes, dialogic actions, and dialogic practices.

Healing Environment - A work environment purposefully created by the way we work together and treat each other, encouraging all to use their initiative to make positive and progressive changes to improve lives. It is safe, respectful, and ethical where people are supported and challenged to be accountable for their actions.

Leading Energies - The way people focus their energy to get the things done that they want and need to do i.e., Visionary, Citizen, Performance, and Wisdom. Leading Energies is an integral piece of the Dialogue Coaching Training.

Resettlement Journey - A visual representation of the progression of an individual from arrest, through Court and sentencing, jail, prison, and to re-entry. It involves an individual who has successfully integrated back to their community, free of any criminal justice involvement, DOC staff, and external stakeholders.

Safe Container - An energetic environment in which staff can openly and freely express their thoughts and feelings in a respectful manner, without fear of reprisal, which supports an atmosphere of accountability and change.

Working Dialogue (WD) - An intervention process where Dialogue is put into action in the workplace, to make it easier to get things done while being more efficient and effective. It can involve a range of different stakeholders, departments, or people who are affected by the situation.

Working Dialogue Practitioner (WDP) - An employee with specialized training and certification who facilitates Working Dialogues within their unit and throughout the Department to promote organizational change.

PURPOSE

This operating procedure provides guidance to all Department of Corrections (DOC) staff on the use of dialogue to create organizational change and establishes the requirements and structure of the Dialogue Practitioner Development Program (DPDP).

PROCEDURE

I. Dialogic Mission and Vision

A. Dialogic Mission

1. Dialogue provides the language, environment, and structure that encourages and supports open two-way communication as people think together in order to develop a shared meaning, create mutual respect, and establish effective and cost-efficient systems and processes.
 - a. It is through dialogue that new ideas are developed, problems are solved, a Healing Environment is created, best practices are implemented, and operating procedures are generated.
 - b. Mutual respect ensure that supervisors and line staff feel supported, encouraged, and motivated in their work towards lasting public safety.

B. Dialogic Vision

1. The Department of Corrections (DOC) strives to be a dialogic organization where all staff, volunteers, interns, and contractors are aligned with the mission, vision, values and goals of the DOC.
2. An organization where the following practices are evident:
 - a. Individuals communicate effectively and work together to create best practices and processes for lasting public safety.
 - b. Individuals understand and actively support the DOC mission, vision, and values.
 - c. Staff, volunteers, contractors commit to their duties and consistently exceed expectations as they perform such duties for the DOC and their individual units because they feel acknowledged, supported, and respected.
 - d. There is engagement and collaboration between supervisors and line staff and across departments and within the DOC as a whole.

C. The benefits of a dialogic organization are:

1. Talking, thinking, learning, and working together
2. Sharing a common language
3. Utilizing dialogic skills to engage with one another for more understanding
4. Making it possible for all voices to be heard
5. Generating new ideas together
6. Supporting the change process by allowing individuals to challenge the process in a safe container

D. Additional information on dialogue can be found at Dialogue Associates <https://www.dialogue-associates.com> and Prison Dialogue <http://www.prisondialogue.org/>

II. Dialogue Practitioner Development Program

A. The Dialogue Practitioner Development Program (DPDP) consists of four developmental parts. At each of the different development levels, the Dialogue Practitioner (DP) is expected to progressively:

1. Understand the skills
2. Be able to convey the skills to others
3. Use the skills

4. Enable others to use the skills
- B. DPs are essential to creating and sustaining a positive organizational culture and the role of a DP is to assist staff in gaining an increased understanding of the larger organizational picture.
- C. DPs will be a resource to their Organizational Unit Head, Organizational Unit, and to the DOC overall by providing the following assistance:
1. Facilitation of Working Dialogues (WD)
 2. Support for large or difficult meetings
 3. Provision of ongoing training for supervisors and other staff in dialogue skills and dialogic coaching
 4. DPs may also be asked to facilitate Offender Resettlement Journey events as well as statewide dialogue projects.
- D. Selection Process for the DPDP
1. The Organizational Unit Head is responsible for the consistent, fair, and transparent selection of DPs within their Organizational Unit.
 2. The selection process for DPs can occur at any time and will be based on Organizational Unit need.
 - a. All facilities, P&P Offices, and administrative units must have a DP on staff.
 - b. A copy of Attachment 1, *Dialogue Practitioner Development Program Flyer*, may be posted in order to generate interest.
 3. A good DP will:
 - a. Be an ambassador of cultural change, leading by example and holding themselves to the foundational tenants of dialogue
 - b. Be instrumental in bringing staff, volunteers, and contractors together in positive ways and encouraging collective thinking when making decisions within the unit
 - c. Demonstrate consistent commitment and willingness to excel in the DP role
 - d. Demonstrate competence by maintaining a consistent level of workplace performance as measured by their annual performance evaluation
 - e. Demonstrate a willingness to challenge themselves by accepting assignments outside of their routine assigned duties and responsibilities
 - f. Demonstrate good work attendance
 4. Interested staff will complete Attachment 2, *Dialogue Practitioner Development Program Application*, and submit the *Development Program Application* to their Organizational Unit Head.
 - a. Applications must be submitted prior to consideration for the program.
 - b. Applications will be reviewed by the Organizational Unit Head and the Unit DP(s).
 - c. Selectees will be interviewed by the Organizational Unit Head and Unit DP(s).
 5. If selected for the DPDP, the new DP will be assigned a Dialogue Practitioner Coach (DPC) and a DP Peer Circle at this time; the DP selectee will also receive their schedule of Peer Circle meetings and appropriate training dates.
- E. Orientation and Training
1. The DPDP provides formal training and professional development to staff selected by their Organizational Unit Head to participate.
 2. At a minimum, all DPs are expected to:
 - a. Attend DP orientation sessions as designated by their DPC/Dialogue Practitioner Lead (DPL)
 - b. Attend the monthly DP Peer Circle meeting; training occurs both within the DP Peer Circle and outside of the circle in practice settings

- c. Successfully complete Dialogue Skill Build Training
 - d. Participate in a coaching quad
 - e. Spend eight hours quarterly training through practice outside of the circle meeting, e.g., training with Dialogue Associates, facilitating dialogue training at work site or at the Academy for Staff Development (ASD), presenting at conferences, attending DPDP Conference, facilitating statewide dialogue projects, etc.
3. Attendance in the DP Peer Circle is mandatory. The circle is the primary vehicle for DP training, development, practice, support, and feedback.
 - a. Absences may be excused for pre-approved leave, other scheduled mandatory training, approved sick leave, or a priority work engagement.
 - b. Absences will be strongly discouraged as they can affect the DP's skill development.
 - c. DPs are expected to notify and be given authorization by their Organizational Unit Head to miss a scheduled Peer Circle meeting. These authorizations will be forwarded to the circle facilitator for record keeping purposes.
 4. All DPs will attend specified Dialogue events, i.e., training with Dialogue Associates, as they occur.

F. Dialogue Practitioner Certifications

1. DPs will have the opportunity to earn their certification as a Dialogue Practitioner Trainer (DPT), DPC, Working Dialogue Practitioner (WDP), and DPL.
2. In order to obtain their certification, DPs will complete the appropriate self-assessment with feedback from a DPC/DPL.
3. All self-assessments must be submitted to the Dialogue and Business Practices Administrator for review and certification approval.
4. Certifications are reviewed, approved, and awarded, annually.

III. Working Dialogue Practitioner/Working Dialogue

- A. The role of the WDP is to use the dialogic skills in a systematic manner to proactively explore and address needs or opportunities using the WD model. The WD model helps to focus the dialogue and increases the engagement of staff by allowing them to have a voice in the decision-making process.
 1. All DPs in the DPDP are expected to obtain their WDP certification.
 2. Each DOC Organizational Unit is expected to incorporate and utilize WD as a business practice.
 3. WDs must be facilitated by a DP, and when possible, will have a second DP in the support role.
 4. The WDP(s) who facilitates the WD will complete the required documentation using the *Working Dialogue Minutes* 010_F19 template and submit it via email to the Organizational Unit Head, WD Sponsor, and Dialogue and Business Practices Administrator.
 5. The Dialogue and Business Practices Administrator will prepare a statewide quarterly report of WDs completed at the end of each quarter for review by Regional and Executive Leadership.
- B. The developmental process and expectations of a WDP include:
 1. Participating in and completing the skill build training sessions
 2. Completing the fieldwork assignments
 3. Observing WDs
 4. Initiating a set-up conversation
 5. Supporting and/or facilitating WDs
 6. Conducting a WD to completion with follow-through
 7. Preparing and submitting required documentation for completed WDs

C. In order to receive a WDP certificate, the WDP candidate must have:

1. Documented a firm understanding of the WD pattern and the use of dialogic skills in the WD as represented in a self-assessment, *Working Dialogue Practitioner Self-Assessment* 010_F18.
2. Demonstrated their use and ability to help others use the WD pattern, as evidenced in feedback from a participant or sponsor of one of the WDs.
3. Completed the WD skill build trainings and fieldwork assignments signed off on by their circle facilitator.
4. Supported six WDs, having led at least one, and demonstrated competency in leading the WD to completion.

IV. Dialogue Skills Training (DST)/Dialogue Practitioner Trainer

A. The role of the DPT is to understand the dialogic skills including the check-in and check-out, dialogic modes, dialogic actions, and dialogic practices. The DPT will be able to introduce the skills in a DST or other set training and facilitate a dialogic circle independent from the DST.

1. All DOC staff are required to complete DST within the first 90 days of employment, and each staff member is provided a copy of the *Dialogue Skills Training Field Guide*.
2. DST is offered on a regular basis at the ASD.

B. The developmental process and expectations of a DPT include:

1. Facilitating DST for new hires in the field and at the ASD
2. Running other DST formats, as developed
3. Attending monthly Peer Circle meetings, and assisting with facilitation and presentation
4. Attending quarterly DPDP trainings at the ASD, as scheduled
5. Facilitating dialogues within the organizational unit
6. Assisting with the facilitation of Dialogue Learning Plans training/questions with Subject Matter Specialists (SMS) and Organizational Unit Executive Team
7. Contacting their Coach monthly
8. Participating in coaching calls/quads, as scheduled

C. In order to receive a DPT certificate; the DPT candidate must have:

1. Documented a firm understanding of dialogue skills and ability to present DST to others as represented in a self-assessment *Dialogue Practitioner Trainer Self-Assessment* 010_F15.
2. Observed at least one DST
3. Supported two DSTs.
4. Led two DSTs to completion
5. Demonstrated competency in leading a DST as evidenced in feedback from a DPC/DPL.

V. Dialogue Coach Training (DCT)/Dialogue Practitioner Coach

A. The role of the DPC is to understand and introduce the Dialogic Coaching Skills in a DCT or other set training.

1. The Dialogic Coaching Skills include Accountability Progression, Leading Energies, four-person coaching pattern and Coaching Trios, coaching through *bystanding*, coaching through *advocacy* and *inquiry*, and the relevance of "*Serving the Commonwealth of Virginia*".
2. The DPC will be able to coach a four-person group with the established coaching pattern, conduct a DCT, and coach an individual e.g., a mentee, a peer, an Organizational Unit Head, etc.

3. All DOC supervisory staff are required to complete DCT.
 4. DCT is provided during Basic Skills for New Supervisors Training.
- B. The developmental process and expectations of a DPC include:
1. Continuing the activities listed for DPT
 2. Facilitating DCTs including, but not limited to, Basic Skills for New Supervisors, Supervisor's In-Service, Middle Manager's In-Service, etc.
 3. Mentoring a DPT
 4. Practicing other coaching opportunities such as SMS coaching, direct reports, peers, etc.
 5. Facilitating Dialogues and Skillful Conversations i.e., for problem resolution within an Organizational Unit
- C. In order to receive the DPC certificate: the DPC candidate must have:
1. Documented a firm understanding of Dialogue Coaching skills and ability to present them to others as represented in a self-assessment, *Dialogue Practitioner Coach Self-Assessment* 010_F16.
 2. Participated in coaching at least two DPs.
 3. Supported and/or lead two DCTs.
 4. Demonstrated competency in leading a DCT as evidenced in feedback from the DPL.

VI. Dialogue Interventions/Dialogue Practitioner Lead

- A. The role of the DPL is to further organizational change by leading the DPDP and making reactive and proactive interventions into the DOC culture through the use of Dialogue skills.
- B. The DPL will understand the Implicate Change Model, be able to conduct interventions e.g., Working Dialogues, Skillful Conversations, Offender Resettlement Journeys, etc. and coach individuals, teams, and Units. DPLs must model the way for the DOC.
- C. The developmental process and expectations of a DPL include:
1. Conducting on-going self-assessments
 2. Continuing the activities listed for WDP, DPT, and DPC
 3. Serving on DP Committees and furthering the DPDP through strategic planning
 4. Mentoring DPs at all levels
 5. Coaching within the DOC outside of the DPs
 6. Engaging, proactively, in facilitating Skillful Conversations, dialogues, WDs and other interventions within an Organizational Unit, Extended Leadership Team, or other available avenues.
- D. In order to receive the DPL certificate, the DPL candidate must complete a self-assessment *Dialogue Practitioner Lead Self-Assessment* 010_F17 with evidence of all of the above to include feedback from another DPL.

VII. Resettlement Journey

- A. The Resettlement Journey is a dialogic intervention that demonstrates how everyone can contribute to more successful resettlement.
1. It tracks the individual's path from arrest, through Court and sentencing, jail, prison in many varied forms, re-entry into the community during P&P supervision, to resettlement.
 2. The individual is the only person to experience every step of the journey, the difficulties, the emotional, social, and physical challenges and changes.

3. The individual's story highlights the impact that every interaction has on their journey, positively or negatively, through a formal intervention or seemingly insignificant conversation, so that agencies and their staff can consider how individually and collectively they can improve the way that they help individuals make positive and progressive changes in their lives.
- B. The aim of the Resettlement Journey is to assist internal and external stakeholders with identifying gaps, service duplications, and opportunities for formal and informal collaboration to improve the resettlement process.

VIII. The Dialogue Practitioner Development Program Structure

- A. The Dialogue and Business Practices Administrator, with consultation from Dialogue Associates and Executive Team members, organizes and administers the DOC Dialogic Practice. Dialogue leadership is appointed to help manage the DPDP. This leadership includes:
1. Local Dialogue Circle Facilitators who will:
 - a. Be ambassadors for DPs, modeling the way
 - b. Be aware of the number of DPs in their circle
 - c. Know when and where new DPs are needed
 - d. Work in collaboration with Organizational Unit Heads to ensure that the unit operates dialogically and meets set expectations/requirements; attend Executive Team Meetings, when appropriate
 - e. Assign new DPs to a DPC and facilitate introductions
 - f. Ensure that new DPs receive all relevant dialogue information
 - g. Track DP activity - DSTs, DCTs, and WDs
 - h. Identify inactive DPs and revise the active practitioner roster as needed
 - i. Observe new DPs through personal observation, receive feedback from other DPs and their coaches, and follow up with the new DP on their progress
 - j. Empower circle members to provide assistance to one another, e.g., take on coaching new DPs, facilitating a circle meeting
 - k. Visit other circle meetings to identify best practices when possible
 - l. Check in on quad meetings for those circles that hold half-day meetings
 - m. Ensure that circle agendas reflect the needs of the circle and are planned in advance
 - n. Be present at their circle meetings
 - o. Communicate with Regional Dialogue Circle Facilitators
 - p. Send out information regarding observation or facilitation opportunities
 - q. Complete circle rosters and forward to the ASD to ensure DPs receive training credit hours
 - r. Maintain the fidelity of DPs by supervising training efforts
 - s. Meet with the Regional Facilitators quarterly, either in person, by conference call, or Polycom
 - t. Receive self-assessments quarterly and forward to the Regional Facilitators prior to the quarterly meeting
 - u. Submit the circle meeting minutes to the Regional Facilitators in a timely manner
 2. Regional Dialogue Circle Facilitators; who will:
 - a. Establish a schedule, within each region, to ensure that a Regional Facilitator attends each circle monthly
 - b. Ensure that all required documentation is submitted on time, is accurate, and when necessary provide coaching to Local Facilitators
 - c. Meet quarterly with other Regional Facilitators, either in person, by conference call, or Polycom
 - d. Meet quarterly with Local Facilitators, either in person, by conference call, or Polycom
 - e. Report out what they observed monthly to other Regional Facilitators within their region and

discuss what went well and where there are areas for improvement. Immediate issues will be addressed as needed

- f. Pass on relevant information to Local Facilitators from the Dialogue and Business Practices Administrator
- g. Coach and provide instruction to assigned Local Facilitators
- h. Receive dates of scheduled circle meetings within their region and forward these dates to other Regional Facilitators
- i. Forward minutes of monthly and quarterly meetings to the Dialogue and Business Practices Administrator
- j. Make sure that at least one experienced DP covers the assigned coaching event to ensure the fidelity of the dialogue process
- k. Ensure that there are two Local Facilitators for full day circles and assist with replacements as needed
- l. Review self-assessments of DPs prior to submission to the Dialogue and Business Practices Administrator for certification consideration

B. The Regional Administrators, along with appointed Executive Team members, support the DPDP through guidance and participation in the circles.

IX. Exit Process for the Dialogue Practitioner Development Program

A. Reasons for a DP's exit or removal from the DPDP include, but are not limited to the following:

1. DPs who are experiencing burnout or cannot currently fulfill the expectations/requirements of being a DP due to external reasons (*Voluntary*)
2. DPs who are no longer interested in being in the DPDP (*Voluntary*)
3. DPs who are not meeting minimum expectations/requirements without valid reasons (*Involuntary*)
4. Organizational Unit Head request (*Involuntary*)

B. For the reasons listed as "*Voluntary*" above, the DP will have the option to be assigned to "*inactive*" status.

1. Inactive status applies to those DPs who need to temporarily leave the DPDP for reasons beyond their control.
2. An estimated return date will be provided when a DP requests and is assigned to "*inactive*" status.
3. While in "*inactive*" status the individual will not be leading any dialogue activities.

C. Prior to a DP exiting or being removed from the DPDP, there will be a coaching session between that DP and their assigned DPC and/or Local Dialogue Circle Facilitator. If necessary, Regional Facilitators will also participate in the coaching session.

D. Final decisions about a DP's exit or removal from the DPDP will be forwarded to the DP's Organizational Unit Head, Regional Facilitators, and Dialogue and Business Practices Administrator.

REFERENCES

Dialogue Skills Training Field Guide

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1, *Dialogue Practitioner Development Program Flyer*

Attachment 2, *Dialogue Practitioner Development Program Application*

FORM CITATIONS

Dialogue Practitioner Trainer Self-Assessment 010_F15



Dialogue Practitioner Coach Self-Assessment 010_F16

Dialogue Practitioner Lead Self-Assessment 010_F17

Working Dialogue Practitioner Self-Assessment 010_F18

Working Dialogue Minutes 010_F19

