

Better communication, conflict solving and stress management among prison officers



Regional Inspectorate of Prison Service in Koszalin, Poland

www.sw.gov.pl/pl/okregowy-inspektorat-sluzby-wiezionej-koszalin

Fewer than
100 workers

The issue

The Inspectorate of Prison Service in Koszalin supervises, controls and coordinates the tasks of penitentiary units. Contact with prisoners is an obvious cause of stress in prison services, but there are other possible sources of stress, including high workloads, time pressure and a lack of support. Moreover, there is great diversity in the situations that employees find stressful.

Action taken

A consequence of long-term exposure to stress is burnout. Therefore, in 2012, the Inspectorate conducted a survey examining burnout in the subordinate units. The results showed that the risk of burnout varied depending on contact with prisoners, shift systems and sex. In direct response to the survey findings, workshops and activities were organised to deal with the stress factors in these diverse situations.

Initial stress prevention workshops were conducted in which employees were presented with a variety of solutions for dealing with stressful situations and relieving tension in their professional and daily lives. Anti-stress skills workshops were then set up to build upon the skills learned and to allow employees to practise the stress prevention techniques.

A psychosocial skills coaching programme was also run to provide participants with principles of efficient communication, assertive strategies for solving interpersonal conflicts, and strategies for combatting unethical behaviour, aggression, discrimination and mobbing, among other skills.

Moreover, balancing the requirements of superiors with those of employees was reported as an intense source of tension among officers at the middle management level. Therefore, stress management workshops were run for managers and heads of divisions to help them achieve this balance and to quell tensions.



To develop and improve the process, all activities and workshops are subject to an evaluation, involving a survey to assess several factors, including accuracy and quality, covered topics and the potential for practical application of the content, as well as to evaluate the teachers/coaches.

A psychosocial skills coaching programme focused on efficient communication and assertive strategies for solving interpersonal conflicts in the workplace.

Results achieved

- Awareness of reducing stress in both professional and personal lives increased among employees.
- The number of employees requesting information about and participating in workshops on preventing and managing stress increased.
- There is a greater openness and willingness to look for help and support in difficult situations.
- Sick leave because of difficult situations decreased.
- Job satisfaction improved.

