

Great Wardens Project

Navigating Accountability

January 19, 2023

Mission

The Great Wardens Project provides mentorship and training to develop bold prison leaders and build a corrections culture based on safety and dignity.

Core Beliefs

- Wardens and Superintendents have a responsibility to promote safe, secure, and healthy corrections facilities.
- Advocates and prison leaders can work together to reimagine how corrections facilities operate and shape a new generation of committed corrections professionals.

Tech Check

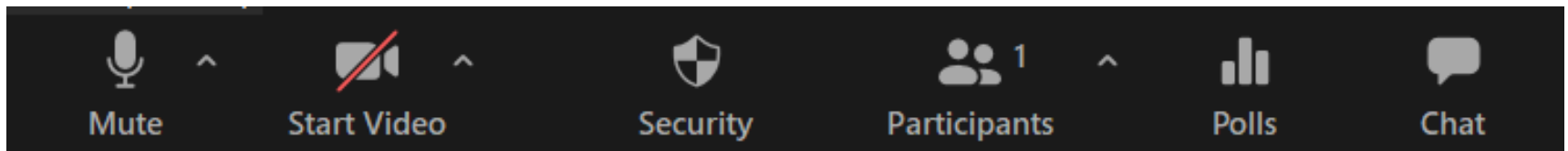
Mute



Video



Chat



Today's Speakers



Art Beeler

Warden (ret)
Bureau of Prisons



Eric Aldridge

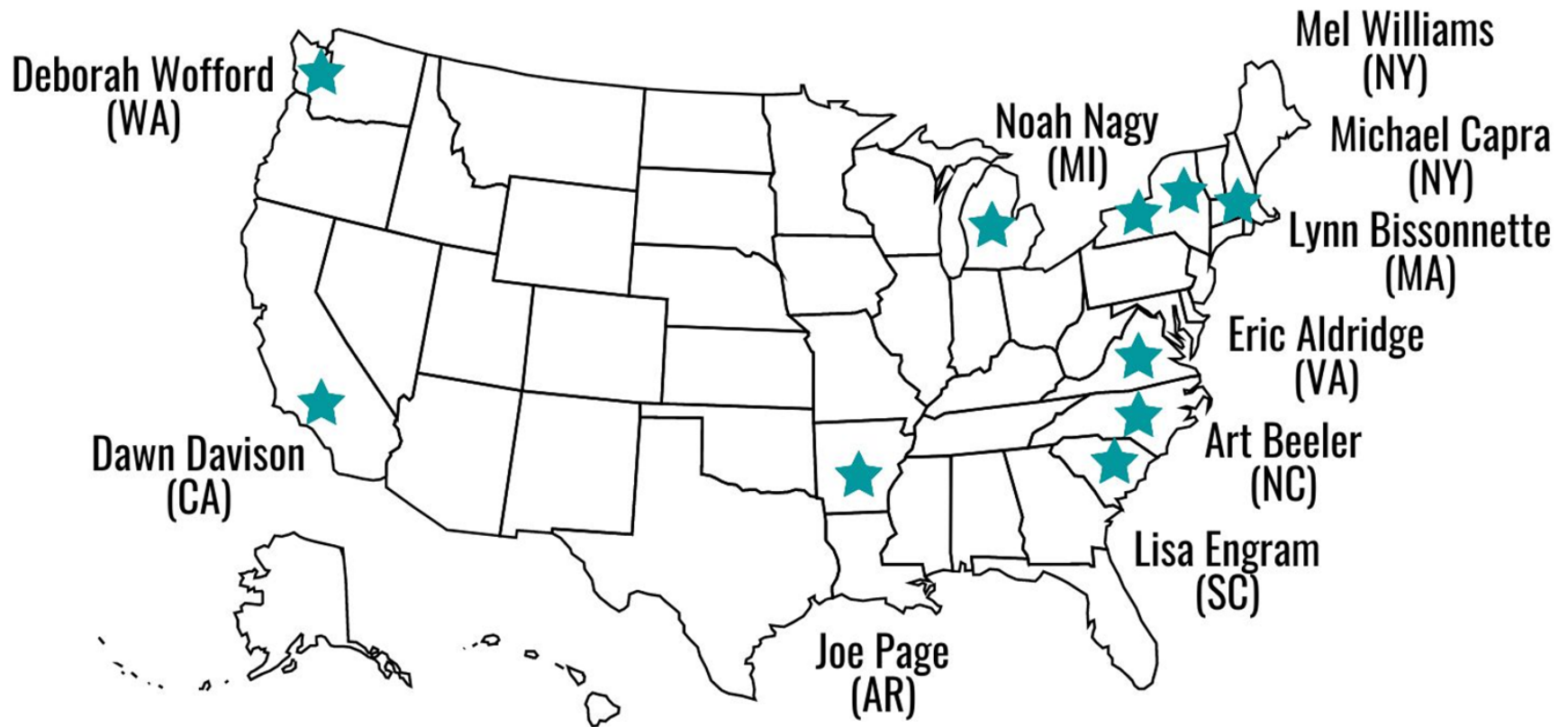
Warden, Beaumont Correctional Center
Virginia Department of Corrections



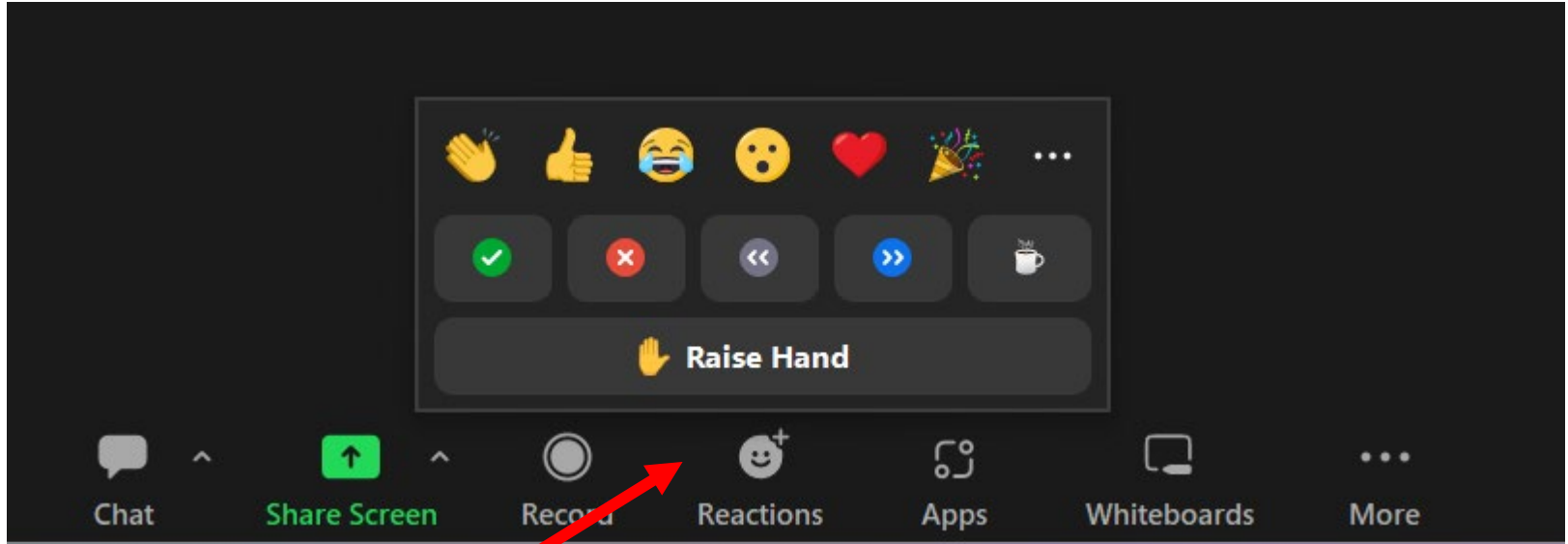
Jessica Serrano Seipel

Senior Program Director
Just Detention International

Meet Our Task Force



Join the Conversation





Reflections

"Accountability is only accomplished through humility - on both ends"
- Eric Aldridge



RESPONSIBILITY VS ACCOUNTABILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

Having an obligation to complete a task or oversee the output of others that you are directly in charge of.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Is the acceptance, good or bad, of your personal actions that contributed to attaining or failing to meet an intended goal.





Thoughts from the Field

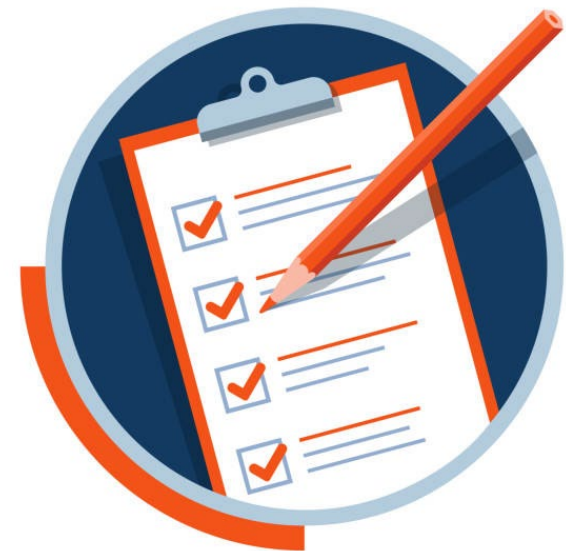


Discussion Question

How can we promote accountability?

“What Makes a ‘Good’ CO”

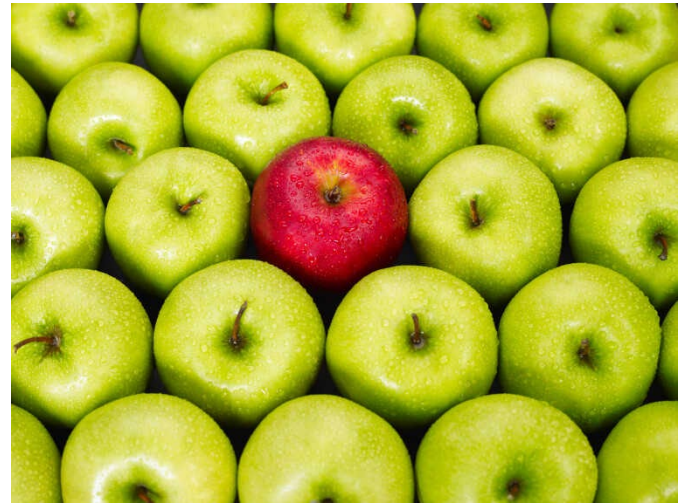
- Performance: “Doing your job”
- Answerability: “Doing the job right”
- Attributability: “Owning your mistakes”
- Reliability: “Having each other’s backs”



- Cassiano, M. S., Bennett, B. A., Andres, E., & Ricciardelli, R. (2022)

Understanding Accountability

- Requires teamwork, while recognizing that success is dependent on every individual's performance
- Taking responsibility for actions *and* outcomes
- Remember: “one bad apple spoils the bunch”

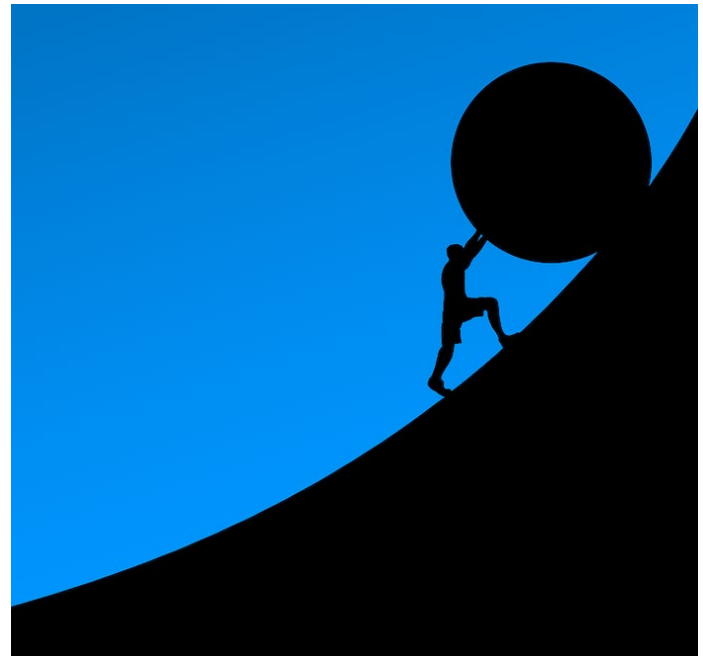


Discussion Questions

What are some of your biggest challenges related to accountability?

Accountability Challenges

- Staff retention and morale
- Complexity of corrections work
- Personal relationships and small communities
- Code of silence
- Poor staff training



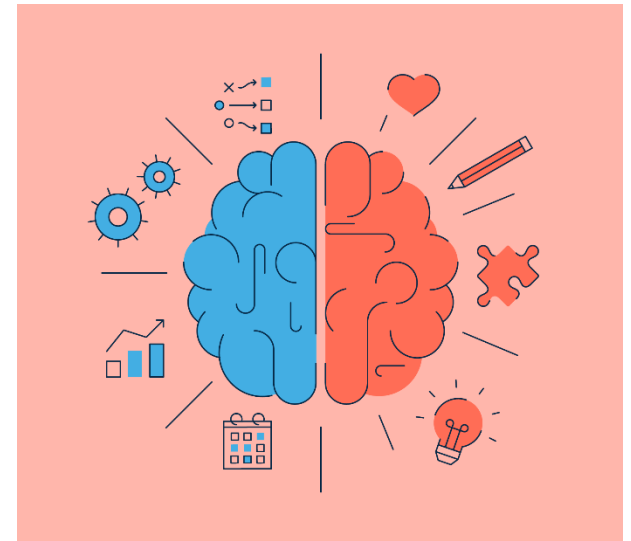


Thoughts from Corrections Leaders - Misconduct

- Insufficient evidence regarding causality behind staff misconduct
- Existing staff accountability systems do not adequately prevent or detect staff misconduct
- Significant variation in policy approaches to ethics training and response to misconduct
- Corrections staff are not sufficient aware of liabilities associated with their actions or inactions

Staff Training

- Divergence between how staff are trained and what actually occurs in the workplace
- Ignores the intellectual and emotional complexity of corrections work
- Emphasizes hard skills vs soft skills



Example: Professional Boundaries

- Training that tends to focus on avoiding inappropriate relationships, but...
- May not prepare staff to navigate complex dynamics, thus...
- Staff are not fully equipped to build positive but professional relationships



Stages of Accountability

The
Accountability
Dial



The Mention

The Invitation

The Conversation

The Boundary

The Limit

Effective Staff Evaluations

- Are a conversation rather than a checklist
- Occur regularly rather than in response to an incident
- Promote goal setting and identifying resources
- Contents should never be a surprise – no “gotchas”



Discussion Question

How do you prepare for the accountability conversation?

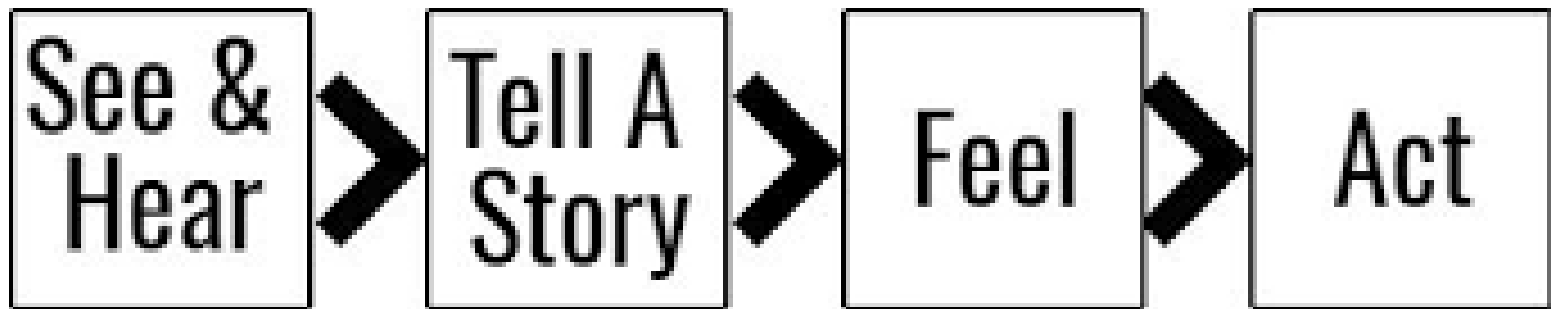


Navigating the Accountability Conversation

- Carefully choose your words and approach
- Ensure your thoughts are in order and that you are focused on the right problem
- Be prepared to ask questions to gain a deeper insight into *why*
- Review relevant documentation and policy, but also focus on the harm done



Path to Action Model



We are cut off on the freeway	We assume the person is “a jerk”	We become angry	We react out of anger
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Telling the Right Story

- Assumptions allow us to avoid being curious
 - “What a jerk” vs “What’s going on for that person that resulted in this behavior?”
- Focus on the performance gap – the difference between expectations and actions
- Allow space for feelings, but ensure space for facts





Dialogue Tool - OARS

- **O**pen ended questions invite dialogue
- **A**ffirmations show empathy
- **R**eflections ensure understanding
- **S**ummarizing highlights key points



Things to Avoid

- Being indirect or unclear – hints and innuendos
- Passing the buck – good cop/bad cop
- Expecting mind reading – “do you know why I asked to talk with you?”
- “Making an example of” – inconsistency





The Action Plan

- List the few key goals for performance improvement over a specified time period, including metrics for measurement
- Name the resources that will enable closing the performance gap
- Include a follow up schedule for monitoring progress
- Define the benefits of achieving goals, as well as what will happen if the agreement is not fulfilled



Accountability - Balance

- Accountability is a balance between being a nurturer and a disciplinarian. For most people you can be a nurturer and employees will appreciate it.
- But sometimes after you have tried the nurturing approach more than once, you may have to get tough.
- You have to be able to read people – who is getting it and who is not.
- If the person is not getting it – you will need to practice tough love or even become more dramatic toward discipline. If your state does not have a set of discipline guidelines, you may want to read the Douglas Factors.

Discussion Question

What successes have you experienced in balancing accountability and staff morale?



Resources

[Core Competencies and Jail Leadership - *American Jails*](#)

[Building a High-Quality Corrections Workforce – *National Institute of Justice*](#)

[Holding “Those” Performance Conversations – *University of Florida*](#)

[Do You Lead with Emotional Intelligence? – *Harvard Business Review*](#)

[The Douglas Factors](#)

Get Involved

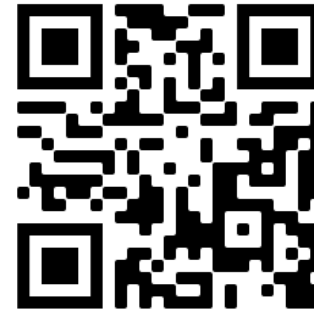
For additional information, please visit our website at:
greatwardens.org

Direct questions to: greatwardens@justdetention.org

Connect with JDI:

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 www.twitter.com/justdetention



Upcoming Topics



Staff Retention – April 20, 2023

Women Leaders in Corrections – July 13, 2023

...and more exciting things to come!



A short evaluation survey will automatically appear after this meeting!