We strongly encourage that trainers review the manual for this module before using the overheads. The manual is available in downloadable PDF (Acrobat Reader) format from www.ibr.tcu.edu
WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

PURPOSE OF SESSION

- Identify norms and responsibilities in workplace communication
- Identify and reduce blocks to effective listening
- Understand role of informal communication (the grapevine) in the work setting

>>> STEP 1 (continued).

Session Purpose -- Show Overhead 2: Introduce the overall topic and purpose. (You may use your own words, but cover the three main ideas in the overhead).

Explain that “norms” means social rules or what is expected to be the “normal” or routine ways that people agree on how to communicate with each other.

Explain that communication norms and responsibilities go together. For example, we may only communicate what we think is normal to communicate because it is what we think is expected. The question is who are we responsible to when we choose to communicate or not communicate? Also, do we withhold information because it may hurt the group? Do we share information because it may help us?
WHY COMMUNICATION?

- We cannot **not** communicate
- Most of us spend about 70% of our time actively communicating
- Effective communication can help reduce safety and behavior risk problems
- Concerns about how to talk to coworkers with problems that need help

>>> STEP 1 (continued).

One of the most important things we do at work is communicate with each other. It's been said that "we cannot **not** communicate." Whether with words, gestures, body language, or even silence – we are always communicating.

At work, **most of us spend about 70% of our time actively communicating.** We communicate face-to-face or on the telephone; we communicate via computers, faxes, or radios; we read and write; we handle requests, we process paperwork, we respond to service calls, we deal with customers. Communication is the essential function of any workplace.

As you might imagine, **communication plays an important role in the issues we are covering in this training.** In particular, effective team-based communication can help buffer many of the safety, productivity, and morale problems caused by co-worker substance use and abuse or other problems.

We've included this section on workplace communication to help address some of the interpersonal (person-to-person) **issues that workers have told us concern them about confronting or reporting an impaired coworker.** These issues include concerns about personal responsibility, personal safety, workplace communication networks, and the most effective communication strategies and techniques to use. These are the topics we will address today.
COMMUNICATION SETTINGS

- "Formal" or "Informal"
- Who is allowed to speak?
- What are "rules" for speaking?
• Are YOU allowed to speak?
• When should you speak?
• What responsibilities?

>>> STEP 1 (continued).

**Make** three columns on a piece of flip chart paper or use Overhead #4. Label one column as A FRIEND’S HOUSE, another as A COURTROOM TRIAL, and the third as A MOVIE THEATRE. Use the columns to list participants' contributions as you lead a discussion on rules in different settings.

**SAY:** Let’s consider some of the rules or guidelines that might apply in each of these different communication settings. I’ll prompt you with a few questions and we’ll answer them for each of the three situations:

**Invite some discussion:** First off, how would you describe each of these settings – as “formal” or “informal”? How would you describe a friend’s house? A courtroom? A movie theatre?

• **Who** is allowed to speak? At a friend’s house? The courtroom? The movie theatre?

• Who or what **governs** who is allowed to speak? At a friend’s house? Courtroom? Theatre?

• **How** are you allowed to speak – what are the rules? At a friend’s? Courtroom? Movie?

• **When** can you speak in each setting?

• What **responsibilities** would you have in each communication setting?

**Review** the lists and compare the differences in communication settings.

**Label** a piece of flip chart paper or an area of an erasable board as JOB/WORKPLACE and use it to list participant’s contributions.
COMMUNICATION RESPONSIBILITY

- Communication is the essential function of any workplace.
- Effective, team-based communication buffers stress and improves productivity.
- Policies often state that workers have communication responsibilities regarding safety, problem-solving, and substance abuse.
- Effective communication strategies can help workers act on their responsibilities.

>>> STEP 1 (continued).

Show Overhead # 5 and Explain: "As mentioned earlier, the workplace is an important communication setting. Like all communication settings it, too, has rules and guidelines. Of special importance in workplace settings are communication responsibilities. Let’s consider some communication guidelines we may find in a workplace setting.”

How would you describe the workplace setting— as “formal” or “informal”?

Who is allowed to speak in the workplace?

Who or what governs who is allowed to speak in the workplace?

How about how you are allowed to speak—what are the rules?

When should you speak up at work?

What responsibilities do you have in a workplace communication setting?

Summarize by asking and discussing the following question. Use flip chart or erasable board to list participants’ points:

Ask: “Based on what you’ve already learned in this training about your workplace substance abuse policy, what communication responsibilities do you have concerning problems in your work team?”
Show Overhead # 6. Remember that the purpose of this training is “to improve communication in order to reduce risks.” As a quick review, this slide shows how communication is central to everything we have been discussing.

Module 1 described how communication is relevant to dealing with stress, providing service, and improving teamwork.

Module 2 described the importance of knowing policy and communicating with others during the Risks and Strengths board game. Communication is involved in getting help as opposed to getting caught.

Module 3 described tolerance for problems as a group process. One way of tolerating a problem is to not communicate about it.

Module 4 – on stress – discussed the importance of social support and group problem solving as a healthy coping style. In addition, if you have difficulty talking about problems, the EAP is there to listen.
Seven Guidelines for Effective Communication

Distribute handout Seven Guidelines for Effective Communication. Review Overhead # 7 and discuss each point below.

1. **Think about what you want to say.** Think about what you know, what you suspect, what you are concerned about.

2. **Make your move.** Request a meeting to discuss the issue.

3. **Get right to the point.** When we are anxious or nervous, we may talk around a subject.

4. **Practice good communication.** Use I-Messages and listening skills.

5. **Make a clear statement** about what you want to see happen.

6. **Roll with resistance.** Supervisors may not want to hear about the problem or may downplay it. Co-workers may become angry or deny the problem.

7. **End on a positive note.** Thank the person for their willingness to listen. State your belief that the supervisor or co-worker can and will handle the problem.
I cannot wait to report this accident to the police. I must get to the hospital as soon as possible. The delivery truck was heading south and turned right at the intersection just when the sports car that was heading north attempted to turn left. When they saw that they were turning into the same lane, they both honked their horns, but continued to turn without slowing down. In fact, I think the sports car actually sped up just before the crash.

>>> STEP 3

1. Ask 5 or 6 volunteers to leave the room. The rest of the participants act as observers.

2. Explain to the volunteers that they will be called back into the room one-at-a-time to receive a message, which they must then pass on to the next person.

3. Call the first volunteer back into the room, and read the message aloud (see Overhead # 8). It is then passed on from memory.

4. Call the second person back into the room to hear the message from the first person. Repeat the process until the last person hears the message.

5. Ask the last person to say the message aloud, as he/she understood it.

6. Show overhead (#10) of original message and read it aloud.

Have participants **discuss these questions**:

Which parts of the message got distorted, omitted, or changed?

1. How did this happen?

2. In what ways does this exercise remind you of the office “grapevine’?

3. What does it say about “grapevine” communication?

4. What does it say about “grapevine” communication?
Let’s not complicate our relationship by trying to communicate with each other.

SHOW and read Overhead # 9 and #10 (“Let’s not complicate...” and “I know you believe that you understand)

SAY: “We are about to do a listening exercise. As we can see from this overhead (#9), listening and hearing are not the same thing. We can listen very well and believe that we understand what was said. Unfortunately, what we listen to, what we hear, and what we understand may have little to do with the message intended for us.”
I know you believe that you understand what you think I said, but I’m not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.

>>> STEP 4 (continued).
## Listening Do’s and Don’ts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DO</strong></th>
<th><strong>DON’T</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Let the speaker have his/her say.</td>
<td>• Tune out or plan what you will say next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Show that you are paying attention and interested.</td>
<td>• Interrupt to object, explain, or correct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use your own words to restate what the speaker said.</td>
<td>• Give off signals that you are bored or in a hurry to say something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ask the speaker to say it again, if needed.</td>
<td>• Add sarcasm or put-downs when you restate the speaker’s ideas.</td>
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### STEP 4 (continued).

**Listening Do’s And Don’ts**

**Option:** Create a handout from Overhead #11

**Really Listening Group Exercise**

**ASK** participants to get into groups of three or four individuals.

**DISTRIBUTE** handout “Really Listening” so that each group has at least one handout.

**REVIEW Handout and Instruct** participants to take about 2 minutes each to express their views. Ask them to monitor themselves so that everyone gets a chance to speak and respond.
Each person can speak only after restating the ideas and opinions of the previous speaker accurately and to that person’s satisfaction.

SHOW and emphasize the rule in Overhead #12 ("Each person can speak only after restating the ideas of the previous speaker accurately...")
Handouts Follow

1. Seven Ideas of Effective Communication
2. Really Listening Group Exercise
Seven Ideas for Effective Communication

Think about what you want to say. Give some thought to what you know, what you suspect, what you are concerned about, and what you’d like to see change. Think about what you want to say and mentally rehearse how you will say it. Give yourself time to become comfortable with your ideas.

Make your move. Request a meeting to discuss the issue with the employee. If you believe an EAP representative should be called in to help you, make the necessary arrangements.

Get right to the point. Once the meeting begins, don’t pad it with small talk. This dilutes our effectiveness. Keep the discussion focused on behavior and performance, not personality.

Practice good communication. Use I-Statements and listening skills. I-statements are non blaming and non aggressive ways of presenting ideas, feelings, and concerns. Listening creates a supportive atmosphere.

Make a clear request. Avoid being vague. Instead make a clear statement about what you want to see changed and your expectations for future performance. This might involve a request for action or a suggestion that help be sought.

Roll with resistance. Denial is a normal response to “bad news.” Most people with problems are aware of the impact of their behavior at some level, but may be ambivalent about change. They may become angry or deny the problem. Listening respectfully and calmly repeating your request for action will help make sure that your message is taken seriously.

End on a positive note. Thank the person for their willingness to hear you out. State your belief that your supervisor or co-worker can and will handle the problem.

>>> USE WITH STEP 2
In a group of three or four, select one of the following issues (or pick your own “controversial” topic). This will be the topic you will talk about with each other during this activity. You will discuss your topic by following the guideline below.

**Possible Topics**
- Capital punishment
- Euthanasia
- Liberal politics
- Conservative politics
- Gun Control
- Censorship
- Frozen human embryos
- Salaries of football players
- Sports team rivals (for example, Cowboys fans vs. Bronco fans, etc.)
- Cloning
- The US Space program
- The United Nations
- Schools/Education

Before beginning, read over the following guideline. Make sure all group members understand.

- **Each person can speak only after restating the ideas and opinions of the previous speaker, accurately and to that speaker’s satisfaction.**
- Someone should volunteer to begin the discussion by talking briefly about his/her thoughts and opinions about the chosen issue.
- When you want to give your ideas on the issue, you must first show the previous speaker that you got his/her meaning. You can say things like “You believe that...” or “You think that...”, or “Your opinion is that...” to get started. Then use your own words to restate what you heard the previous speaker say. If the previous speaker is satisfied that you “got his/her meaning,” then you can give your opinion.
- Give it a try!

>>> USE WITH STEP 4

Be mindful that some of the topics chosen may be considered very controversial. Monitor group interaction and keep participants on task—i.e., **LISTENING**.

You might say “Being able to really listen when you disagree is a good skill to have. Why?”