



# ONBOARD

A message from DJJ Director Valerie Boykin

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

December, 2021

## Supporting Our Administrative Professionals



Task Force members, top row, from left: Kashara Brown, DJJ Training and Organizational Development; Candise Jones-Burks, Northern Region Program Assistant; Randi Lee Myers, CSU 26–Winchester; Robert Foster, Western Region Program Manager and Task Force chair; Shannon Wilson, CSU 11–Petersburg; Rabiyyah Traynham, Eastern Operations Program Assistant; Frances Walton-Smith, Central Office; Patrick Bridge, director of Training and Organizational Development. Bottom row, from left: Madaline Wells, Western Operations Program Assistant; Martha Smith, Training and Organizational Development; Joyce Davis, Bon Air JCC; Nancy Dillon, CSU 29–Tazewell; Theresa Williams, CSU 8–Hampton; Sam Partridge, Central Office; Lynn Banks, CSU 20–Loudoun.

### Survey Helps Guide Development Of Administrative Professionals Training Curriculum Content

If you ask DJJ unit managers who they think is the single most valuable employee they have to ensure that an office is kept running efficiently, they will answer without hesitation: the administrative support professional. The breadth and scope of their daily responsibilities includes so many things, formal employee work plan descriptions always are left wanting for the right words.

Having worked side by side with these marvelous professionals for my entire career, I know firsthand just how valuable they are to the success of any organization – but especially ours.



### How It Came Together

Kashara Brown admits that she had the best of both worlds when it fell to her to create the training asked for so often in the Administrative Support Professionals survey.

(See “Kashara,” page 3)

It is time for us to return the support they have given us. That is why I asked for a special task force to enhance the development and recognition opportunities for the administrative professionals who are so vital to DJJ's daily operations.

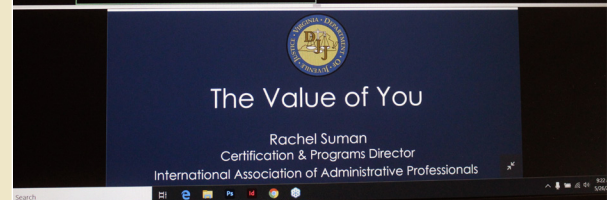
The Administrative Support Professionals Task Force, led by Western Region Program Manager Robert Foster, began meeting late in 2019. They have two main objectives: 1) assess the training and support needs of administrative professionals and 2) develop and implement a format to address these needs. The Task Force consists of selected representatives from each of the five regions, central office, residential programs and other subject matter experts.

The Task Force was well on its way to meeting these objectives when the pandemic hit, putting many of their plans on hold as it did for so many of us. One major thing they were able to achieve was completing a survey, assembled by DJJ Research Manager Dr. Jessica Schneider, who has considerable experience creating and administering surveys. Public Information Officer Greg Davy helped design colorful and eye-catching messages that conveyed the excitement of this new initiative, and urged all admin professionals to complete the survey (see examples at right).

The response among admin support staff who took the survey was nothing short of spectacular: Dr. Schneider reported an 89 percent response rate, the highest she had ever seen by far in her years of administering surveys. This response tells us that our admin staff took the survey seriously ... and expect us to do the same in return. You can read Dr. Schneider's summary of the findings, along with the full report, on page 4.

Putting to work our newly expanded video production capabilities, Dustin Kelley and Mr. Davy worked together to produce short informational video messages – thus the “Administrative Minute” was born. The Task Force plans to record a new series of short videos in the coming weeks to update administrative professionals on its progress.

Training and Development Director Patrick Bridge's team was planning the development of a foundational curriculum for administrative professionals, so the opportunity for them to



From top: Public Information Officer Greg Davy developed colorful, eye-catching messages that encouraged admin support professionals to participate in the survey; Sam Partridge records a video message in the Virginia Public Safety Training Center's television studio; Task Force leader Robert Foster introduces keynote speaker Rachel Suman at the virtual conference held last May.

participate with the task force was perfect timing and has paid big dividends. As a result, I am happy to say that the agency's first-ever training curriculum dedicated solely to meeting the needs of our administrative support professionals launched in October of this year. In a separate article in this issue, Kashara Brown talks about how the training was put together.

To begin the conversation about how we can increase value and inclusion of administrative professionals, a statewide virtual conference was held in May with participation numbers as high as we have ever seen for a virtual event. The conference featured excellent speakers, including

Rachel Suman, certification and programs director for the International Association of Administrative Professionals; Kelsey Harris of CommonHealth, who spoke on ways to get a better night's sleep, and Samantha Higgins, president of the Virginia Juvenile Justice Association (VJJA).

The Task Force also is looking into relevant credentialing within the field of DJJ administrative professionals and the feasibility of a meaningful mentoring process.

Congratulations to the Task Force for a job well done so far. I and all of our administrative support professionals look forward to more great things to come!

## *We Listened: New Trainings Just For You*

### Soft Skills

Leading Impactful Meetings: Meetings 101  
Customer Xperience: Taking on the Total Journey  
Brushing Up on The Essentials:  
Business Etiquette 101  
Managing Work Relationships:  
Are Your Work Relationships Working?  
There is No I in Team:  
Being An Effective Team Member  
The Power of Prioritizing [E-learning]  
Paying Attention to the Details [E-learning]

### Technology

Microsoft Micro Learning Series  
(PowerPoint, Excel, Word basics)  
Google Suite Recorded Webinars  
–Google Suite: Google Meet Features,  
Tips & Tricks  
–Google Suite: Google Drive–  
Your File Cabinet in the Cloud  
–Google Suite: Make Google Forms .  
Work for You  
–Getting Organized with Google  
Calendar

## *Kashara* (Continued from page 1)

“My decisions on webinar content were developed not only on what I saw in the survey results, but also based on my own experience and training that I have had as an administrative professional,” says Kashara, an instructional administrative assistant in DJJ's Training and Organizational Development Unit. “Many times, I just asked myself: If I were an administrative support professional, what kind of training would I like to see?”

The courses are arranged in “tiers,” with “soft skills” courses dealing with skills such as communication, collaboration, customer service, time management and leading effective meetings. The “technology” tier includes trainings on how to use or improve skills on specific software packages such as Microsoft office and Google Suite, which includes Drive,

Forms and Calendar. More agency-specific content is currently in development.

Kashara also brings a knowledge of criminal justice to the work she does, having earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice at Virginia State University. She is an expert at content development for trainings such as these, and says she is especially pleased to be able to help out the Task Force in such a meaningful way.

Kashara is excited to be offering this curriculum to her fellow administrative professionals. “The survey results helped us focus more closely on specific skill building and professional development needs, two areas that our respondents were clear in letting us know they wanted,” says Training and Organizational Development Director Patrick Bridge. “Now they've got it!”

# Survey Results: A Quick Summary

By Dr. JESSICA SCHNEIDER  
Research Manager



*Dr. Schneider*

Of the 209 staff invited to participate, 186 surveys were completed for an usually high participation rate of 89 percent. The efforts by the Task Force members, the public information officer, and the Training Academy's video messaging really helped to make this happen.

To see the full survey, click on the graphic at right. Following is a brief summary of some of the key takeaways:

- ❖ Most of you said you felt highly competent, with more time spent on tasks resulting in higher feelings of competency.

- ❖ Some of you felt you were given tasks you were not adequately trained to do. This helped you recognize your own training needs, which most often included requests for additional training in Excel, BADGE, Human Resources, and eVA.

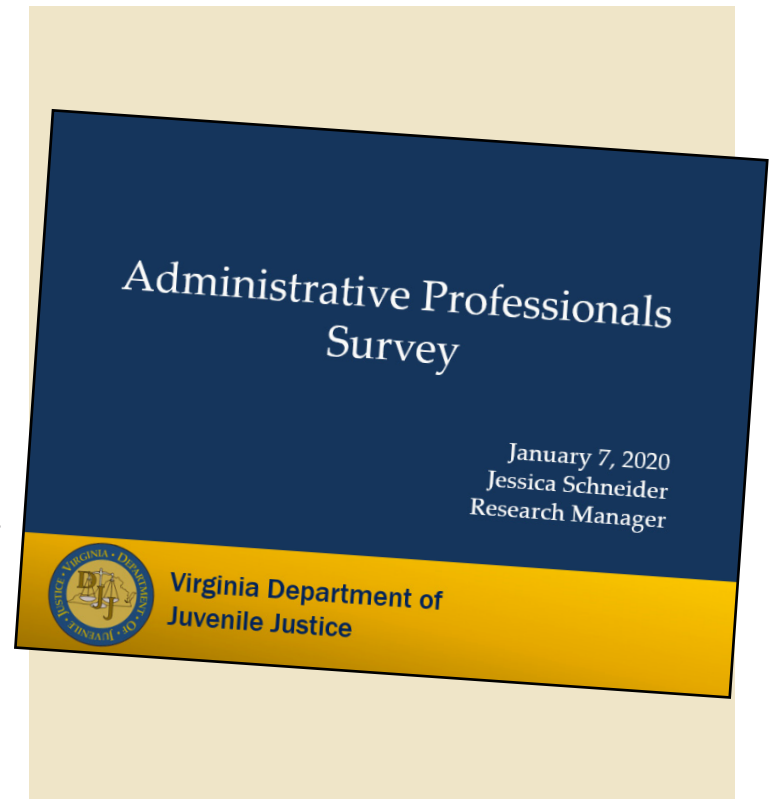
- ❖ You asked for more conflict and communication training than for organizational and time management training.

- ❖ Most of you wanted trainings located locally or in a web-based format. While you valued "in-person" sessions, some of you said you had difficulty getting approval from your supervisors.

- ❖ A minority of you felt that DJJ was very invested in your professional development or advancement, and cited a lack of training opportunities as evidence.

- ❖ Those of you who felt the most valued in your roles provided examples of having purpose in serving clients directly and supporting others' work, being treated fairly and as equals to other staff, and feeling connected to the youth and families you interacted with. You also said you felt appreciated by supervisors and coworkers through verbal thanks, gestures, recognition, respect for opinions, and inclusion.

- ❖ Conversely, those of you who did not feel valued provided examples of being treated as



less than other staff, and viewing your own work as important despite others not recognizing your purpose or contributions.

- ❖ To improve the work culture for administrative support professionals, you suggested that you should be treated as equals, and have more access to training and advancement opportunities.

- ❖ You suggested that there be more recognition awards and events specifically for administrative professionals along with opportunities for networking. Several suggested an advancement structure that relied on performance and years of service for promotion rather than solely on available vacancies.

- ❖ You wanted better communication with upper management and Central Office, and you asked that management let you know about operational changes that would impact your work.

The new training opportunity announced on the front page is an excellent start toward responding to what you told us in this survey, but the Task Force won't stop there. They will continue to work toward identifying and meeting your needs.