

Achieving a Just Culture: Our Shared Vision

"The mission of the Los Angeles County Health Agency (DHS, DMH, DPH) is to improve health and wellness across Los Angeles County through effective, integrated, comprehensive, culturally appropriate services, programs, and policies that promote healthy people living in healthy communities."

What is Just Culture?

Just Culture is a principle and practice toward workplace safety: Be kind, be fair. The focus is on identifying and correcting systems flaws rather than blaming individuals for things outside of their control. Just Culture is a framework for shared accountability. It is a guiding principle which recognizes that unintended outcomes, adverse events and errors are an inevitable part of our human and professional experiences. Just Culture helps ensure that everyone is treated kindly and fairly when mistakes occur.

Where did Just Culture come from?

Just Culture has been used for years in high-risk fields like aviation and nuclear engineering. Many health care organizations now see Just Culture as a key component to ensuring excellence in their work.

The concept of Just Culture was embraced at the LA County Health Agency after the Labor Management Just Culture Committee – represented by SEIU, UAPD, AFSCME, Teamsters, CIR, DHS, DMH and DPH – conducted a survey in the Fall of 2016. The survey results revealed the need for a Just

Culture policy that would address safety concerns and increase morale in the workplace by improving frontline input on operational issues and by promoting fairness. That's why Just Culture is our number one Labor-Management Partnership priority.

How does Just Culture work?

We recognize that unintended events and outcomes are not solely because of poor individual choices; rather, they are often the result of multiple errors or individual decisions made within intricate, imperfect systems. To ensure fair treatment, Just Culture requires us to achieve a balance – to respond appropriately to individual behavior while simultaneously determining what system changes are necessary so we can prevent similar problems from occurring. To accomplish these objectives, staff must feel empowered and comfortable recommending policy and procedure changes to supervisors.

When mistakes, near misses and adverse outcomes do occur, the review and solution will be collaborative under a policy of Just Culture. Responsibility for outcomes will be shared. Employees

will not be subject to retaliation for identifying problems or disclosing errors. Individuals who might need coaching, training or other support will receive it.

Why is Just Culture important to our Health Agency?

Just Culture will help us become a "learning organization" that continuously improves. We will build an organization of trust where we can share our fears, frustrations and foibles with one another. Trust and open dialogue will promote relationships which will help prevent missteps from taking place. When mistakes do occur, under Just Culture, the review and solution will be collaborative and less arduous. We will share the responsibility for the outcomes, treating each other kindly and fairly throughout the process.

When and where will Just Culture be implemented?

Just Culture is our shared responsibility – so the principles of Just Culture will apply to all staff and managers. We will begin a train-the-trainers model of implementation right away. All departments will participate. By creating a Just Culture in which DHS, DMH and DPH act as Employers of Choice, and treat our staff as Employees of Choice, LA County will succeed as the Health Agency of Choice!

