Most Frequently Asked Questions for Orienting/Re-orienting New Employees

Q. Why is Orienting/Reorienting Employees Important?

A. First let’s consider the effect of a positive orientation on an employee. An effective orientation creates a positive experience that lessens anxiety, encourages enthusiasm, and helps socialization which in turn contributes to higher productivity and staff retention. Orientation provides new employees with the tools they need to effectively do their jobs, giving them more of a chance to be successful in meeting expectations sooner rather than later. The clarification of roles, how a job fits into the department and the district, and explained expectations with encouragement all contribute to a more productive workforce. Research supports that employees who go through an effective orientation reach full productivity 2 months earlier than those who did not experience an effective orientation.

Effective orientations also reduce start-up costs and increase retention through effective and realistic practices. The information presented early in orientation not only helps to bring the employee up to speed at a quicker rate, but also allows for new employees to develop and maintain realistic job expectations.

Finally, your employees are a reflection of you, the department, and the District. It is important to make their experience with LAUSD a positive and informative one – this way, all parties involved can be successful.

Q. Are orientation plans necessary?

A. Yes. By providing employees with a structured introduction and materials/guidance on their first day feel, you create a welcoming environment in which the employee feels more comfortable and perceives that you want them to succeed. Additionally, this lets them know they matter. It helps develop a positive perception of the District and department, and employees who go through an effective planned orientation reach full productivity two months earlier than those who did not.

Q. Why do orientation programs fail?

A. One of the main reasons people change jobs or do not do well after orientation is they never felt welcome or like they were a part of the organization. It is important to make sure the employee not only gets a warm welcome on the first day, but continually is encouraged to join and be a part of the workplace community. This can be done in a variety of ways, including meetings, interactions such as office lunches, or simply by stopping by his/her desk or work area to say “hello.”

Another reason orientation programs fail is because the orientation does not include sufficient communication to the employee about their role or the orientation does not convey to employees...
encouragement to seek information, grow in the role and ask for information or resources that they need to be effective in their role. An important principle to convey during an orientation is commitment to continuous improvement and continual learning. This way, new employees become comfortable in asking questions to get the information and will be able to learn, problem solve, and make decisions on their own.

Q. When do I start orienting my employee?

A. New employee orientation starts before the employee arrives on the job. After you have received confirmation of their fingerprint clearance and confirmation they may start the position, you will contact the new employee via phone call. During this call, you will provide them with any information they may need before arriving such as directions, parking, contact information, important names, dress code, and any additional needed documentation. To review what steps should be taken in the pre-arrival stage of orientation/reorientation, refer to our Supervisors Handbook To Orienting Employees.

Q. How long does it take to reorient an employee?

A. Orientation follow-up and full adjustment of an employee to their new position varies from person to person. Typically, the first few weeks are the most challenging for the new employee and are critical in the onboarding process. Most employees are well-adjusted by 6 months in their position. We recommend a check-in between the supervisor and the new employee as often as necessary to keep communication open, be it a weekly or monthly meeting.

The initial probationary review process meetings are a good opportunity to assess the employee’s adjustment and how much more time it may take them to be fully oriented.

Q. What's the difference between orientation and reorientation?

A. Orientation and reorientation are quite similar. Both require the same steps and considerations, but differ in that reorientation may take less time as the “new” employee may already be familiar with the District and the facts of the job such as policies and procedures, use of email, tools, and where/how to get needed resources. No matter the situation, employees should go through the process of reorientation thoroughly and completely just in case there are points of information that may have changed or be different from their previously held position, and also to create a positive onboarding process for the employee and supervisor alike.
Q. Which employees need to be reoriented?

A. All employees who are moving into a new position or even a previously held position need to be reoriented. If an employee is returning to a position that they have held recently and nothing has changed in regards to policies, procedures, etc., then a supervisor may consider skipping reorientation or portions of the orientation process. Best practices encourage reorienting employees no matter what were their previous circumstances. This not only encourages a smooth transition into their new role, but also lets the new employee know they are welcomed and wanted.

Q. What makes an effective orientation?

A. Before implementing your orientation plans, review the goals for the department, yourself, and the new employee’s position within the LAUSD. Also plan goals for what the ideal result or outcome of your orientation would be. Here is a list of sample goals for orienting new employees to consider including:

- **Provide a Sincere Welcome** -- Make the person feel that your department/District is pleased to have them on board. This helps the employee feel confident and consequently they will be more eager and confident in their ability to contribute. Create a “Great Place to Work” vibe.
- **Develop & Confirm Program/Tool Skills** – Help the new employee and walk through basic tasks as needed beforehand to be sure they are comfortable with and understand the tools or programs they will use every day.
- **Establish Communication** – Discover and clarify preferred methods of communication such as email, phone calls, etc. Make sure the employee understands and agrees that this will be the main platform of communication and assess effectiveness often.
- **Develop Your Employees’ Strengths** – You learned about your new employees’ strengths in the interview most likely, so now you need to work with them to see what they need and want to improve in – i.e., continual learning and improvement. An example of this would be encouraging employees to attend one of the many training classes continually offered by Organizational Excellence.

Q. How do I register my new employee for "new employee orientation?"

A. The New employees must register themselves; a supervisor cannot register a new employee for “New Employee Orientation. They may register themselves by logging onto Learning Zone and clicking on the COURSES tab. From this page, enter “employee orientation” into the COURSE NAME search field. Once you search, select the active course you would like to sign up for and then click “sign up” to officially become enrolled in the course. The course is available based upon instructors and the need for the course; if not available, you may click on the option to SUBMIT REQUEST. By selecting “submit request” you will be notified through email if any future classes become available.
Q. Where do I start?

A. Start by reviewing the Supervisors Handbook To Orienting Employees and the other sources available to you on the Just In Time Training Page – Orienting/Re-orienting Employees. Another start is to recall the interview or interaction you most recently had with the new employee and think about their experience and goals. Here are some points to consider before designing or implementing an Orientation Plan:

• Prepare your list of goals for yourself, the new employee, and the department/District
• Develop a plan for accomplishing O.N.E. goals
• Inform current employees and be consistent
• Standardize and document process so it is accessible for the next time around
• Refer to Orientation checklists and guidelines