

Development opportunities growing for public employees

JACKSON - Administrative support professionals from Mississippi's public sector converged in Jackson July 7-9 for the inaugural session of a recently developed certification course designed to enhance employee skills.

The course was developed by the State Personnel Board Office of Training as part of an ongoing effort and dedication to increasing the competency levels of administrative support professionals in state agencies. It is the third level of the Administrative Support Certification Program (ASCP) which began in 2001.

"Our administrative support personnel are the glue of our agencies, essential to organizational success. Supervisors identified a great need for providing development opportunities for them as well," mentions Lesly Lloyd, Assistant State Personnel Director. "Investing in their development is important because without their invaluable service, it would be a struggle for agencies and organizations to function as well as they do."

The third level of this program was created after the overwhelming positive feedback from supervisors who had sent employees to the first two levels. Ed LeGrand, Deputy Executive Director for the Department of Mental Health, vouches for the positive impact the ASCP training has made.

"What this program has done for our agency overall cannot be measured," notes LeGrand. "It has had a very noticeable effect on the development of the staff members who have gone through the program so far, which in turn has helped our department function effectively and efficiently. You can't put a price on how it has enhanced our organization."

Attendees of the program are equally as satisfied with the training they receive and their supervisors' attention to their professional development. Having attended all three levels of ASCP, the Department of Mental Health's Sandy Stokes attests to the value of the program.

"The Administrative Support Program has been one of the most rewarding experiences ever offered to support (clerical) staff," comments Stokes, Division Director for Public Relations. "While the program is challenging, it allowed me to gain a vast knowledge of how to be a more competent and polished worker. Also, interfacing with other support staff from other state agencies provides a wealth of ideas to be shared and used to help develop my position."

The profound impact that training programs such as the ASCP have had is evident. The State of Mississippi realizes the value and need for such training and development. This is most apparent by the recent Mississippi Management Training Act passed by the state legislature requiring all state employees in supervisory or management roles to

participate in the Basic Supervisory Course (BSC), a certification program also offered by the State Personnel Board Office of Training.

Along with ASCP and BSC, the State Personnel Board provides the Certified Public Manager Program (CPM) as well as a variety of other professional development courses. A nationally recognized and respected training program, the Mississippi CPM Program is part of the National CPM Consortium. The CPM program recognizes the unique quality of public sector management and translates state-of-the-art theory (academic) into practical training (applied) for public managers. It is an intensive program that serves as a system to measure and develop professional competency in the field of public management. By increasing the productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency of state employees, CPM helps enhance the overall quality and image of state government operations.

All of the development opportunities made available by the Office of Training feature top-notch instructors from the public and private sectors that bring decades of experience to the programs. They consist of academic professors, accomplished businesspersons, human resource professionals, and management training and development specialists and consultants.

With the rapidly changing work environment in Mississippi government, employees are constantly finding themselves having to develop new skills, or improve on current skills, knowledge and abilities to perform their jobs effectively. Development opportunities such as those offered by the State Personnel Board Office of Training are vital to the improvement of individual and organizational performance and provide opportunities to develop competencies needed in order to be prepared to adapt to today's work environment.

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