Better Medics in Shorter Time: A Specially-Tailored Field Training Officer Program

Joe Holley, MD, FACEP
Medical Director, Memphis Fire Department
347 Square Miles
850,000 Resident Population, Over 1 million during business day
Major Transportation Hub (Fedex, rail, roadway)
Memphis Fire Department

- Approximately 1,900 personnel
  - 300+ Medics
  - 1500+ EMTs
- 59 Stations
- 60 Engines
- 27 Truck Companies
- 33 ALS Ambulances
- 3 Heavy Squads
- Sponsoring Agency for USAR Tennessee Task Force 1 -
Old Method

12 months from hire date to full functionality in field.

New hires had their sanity tested by partnering them with a seasoned veteran-usually burnt as toast.

Lessons were learned by trial and error with no set objectives or goals.

Mis-focused education to re-teaching them how to be a paramedic.
The Results

- Bad Habits were passed on to new recruits
- Bad Attitudes were spread
- Poor Protocol Compliance, Customer Service
The new employee was subject to a sink or swim according to the lot they drew for a partner.

The evaluation completed by that randomly selected partner had little credibility or attention given to its content.

After initial apprenticeship, new employee spent another 6 months on ALS engine companies, with Fire suppression oversight.

The result of this ritual was breeding dysfunction, and adding to the staffing problems the department was facing.
Enter the FTO Program

Hire date to full functionality in field - <6 months

New Potential hires are tested for basic paramedic skills and competency

Field Training Officer Program:

An FTO is a paramedic who has been carefully selected by an interview and education process. Selection and training of paramedics for the FTO program based on Clinical Skills, Customer service, and job knowledge based on peer recommendations, QI review.

A Change was Desperately Needed
We developed a task list manual for acclimation to our EMS System

All the job responsibilities and tasks a paramedic must successfully perform, both written and unwritten, were listed

- Department’s policy manuals were updated and compiled.
- Proper procedure for each task was written into the task/policy book.

Affective domain matching of recruit to FTO based on:
- Experiential educational and job biography
- Strength/weakness analysis
- Personal interview (unstructured) by program manager to match the new employee with a compatible FTO to accentuate both paramedics attributes
The new paramedic recruit is paired with the FTO for 30 shift days (24hr shifts) to complete the EMS component of their training. To this date, 45 Firefighter/Paramedics have been chosen and trained as FTOs for this mentoring program.
The recruit must:

Must complete fire school prior to FTO program.

Complete other reading and studying assignments

Complete active instruction given by their FTO.

A minimum of three hours daily of active instruction takes place during the mentoring process. The manual training that each recruit undergoes is scripted. It matters not whether the recruit is assigned to a FTO on Unit 1, 3, or 5, or whether on A, B, or C shift. Each recruit learns the same material on Day 1, Day 2, and so on.
Each Medic must pass a Final Screen before Released to the Field
Results

- Markedly Improved Job satisfaction
- Fewer Customer Complaints
- Improved Protocol Compliance
- Field-ready paramedic in Half the Time
- Requests from all current medics for their own FTO Manual
FTO Program being studied for implementation by Hamburg, Germany and London Ambulance Service

Adopted for USFA National Fire Academy's course: "R-151 Management of Emergency Medical Services."
Questions?

Joe.Holley@memphistn.gov