# Job Aid 1: Just Culture 4-14

**Building a Just Culture of Continual Improvement for Your Organization**

**Purpose**: Encouraging staff to report incidents, making it safe for them to do so, and providing appropriate follow-up to at least let them know that the

NCE is being addressed are key components of an effective reporting system.

Organizational culture – interactive dynamics between a group of people working towards the same goals; every organization has one, top management must always be mindful of the culture it’s cultivating through its day-to-day actions since it has enormous ramifications with the continual improvement (CI) initiatives.

* Positive cultures facilitate CI and sustain long-term improvements (e.g. Just Culture).
* Negative cultures produce fear, suspicion, sabotage, and unmotivated personnel who couldn’t care less about improvement (e.g. Blame Free Culture or Name & Blame Culture).

1. Design a Just Culture in which the organization can learn from mistakes by making it safe to talk about them
   * Develop a Just Culture Policy
     + Just Culture Policy example

*A fair and just culture means giving constructive feedback and critical analysis in skillful ways, doing assessments that are based on facts, and having respect for the complexity of the situation. It also means providing fair-minded treatments, having productive conversations, and creating effective structures that help people reveal their errors and help the organization learn from them. A fair and just culture does not mean nonaccountability, nor does it mean an avoidance of critique or assessment of competence. Rather, when incompetence or substandard performance is revealed after careful collection of facts, and /or there is reckless or willful violation of policies or negligent behavior, corrective or disciplinary action may be appropriate.*

* + Re-evaluate just how your disciplinary system fits into the occurrence management system.
    - Disciplining employees in response to honest mistakes does little to improve overall system safety.
    - There should be no automatic link between NCE reports and discipline, which only encourages cover-ups and leads to low morale.
  + Working with your HR (human resources) department, where appropriate, define when the event must enter the disciplinary process.
    - Disciplinary guidelines to consider include:
      * Premeditated or intentional acts of violence against people or damage to equipment/property;
      * Actions or decisions involving a reckless disregard toward the safety of customers, fellow employees, or significant economic harm to the company (e.g. falsification of records, repeat errors of same type after retraining and competency assessment).
      * Intentionally unsafe acts related to alcohol or substance abuse by an impaired member
    - Punishment needs to be proportional and just, especially when transgressions occur at different levels of the organizational hierarchy (i.e. an

unfair approach would be that a technologist receives a written warning whereas a receptionist is fired for the same offense)

1. Implement a Just Culture

* Develop an understanding that removing blame does not absolve individual or organizational accountability
* Commit to *respect* as a prevailing value of the organization
* Create principles of a fair and just culture that are experienced from the bottom-up (front-line staff)
* Assume good intentions. With RARE exceptions, lab employees are trained professionals who want to do things correctly;
* Remind staff of how many times they do things right when they experience the occasional slip
* Remember that staff functions within systems designed by management.
* Address the *Impact of NCE Process* category during the performance review by grading the staff member against the criterion*, responds in a positive manner when discussing errors and offers suggestions for error prevention*
* Don’t use employee performance evaluations as an error review session; only discuss error rates if they are very high or very low. If disciplinary action is required, then address it at the time of the incident. Don’t save-up the events for the performance review.
  + Ensure top management and supervisory staff understand and support the principles and demonstrate the behavioral standards of respect
    - * Supervisory staff, who work directly with staff and play a pivotal role in translating the principles of just culture into practice, must be equipped to address errors in a nonpunitive way especially since most had been educated within the model of *Blame and Shame*.
      * Failure to educate supervisory personnel can have a detrimental effect on employees’ acceptance of the principles of Just Culture.
      * Consider performing a small test change (STC) with the supervisory staff before finalizing your documents and implementing the NCE program throughout the entire laboratory.
  + Support staff through encouragement
    - * Show them how you are using the data
      * Make connections with improvements that came out of the data
      * Remember - 2 weeks after a training session, participants may forget 60% of what is taught. This means the likelihood of staff embracing the NCE program using the new skill is low. Management needs to provide on-going coaching, support, and accountability. For example, If the SOP’s last step was, *Document the incident on a NCE Report Form*., and one was not submitted by the staff member, then follow-up is needed.
      * Consider implementing the NCE program in phases such as beginning with a simple record of daily events to improve notification. All staff record undesirable situations of daily operations without having to decide if it is or is not an occurrence. The trained section supervisor reviews these records and determines if the event is or not a NC.
  + Measure effects, such as a staff survey, to better guide your implementation efforts.