Tips for Writing Learning Objectives

A learning objective is a statement that describes the knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes that participants will gain from the educational activity. When developing objectives, ask these questions:

- What should the result of the educational activity be for participants?
- What should the participant be able to do?
- What should the participant know?

How to write a learning objective

For the purpose of NCCHC conference presentations, learning objectives should:

- List each objective in learner-oriented, not faculty-oriented, terms
- List each objective in measurable terms (Use the list of effective verbs for formulating learning objectives provided below.)
- Consist of only one action or outcome
- Identify abbreviations, acronyms or initials, at least once, to facilitate the peer review
- Complete this statement: “Upon completion of this learning activity, participants should be able to....”

Why develop learning objectives?

The National Commission on Correctional Health Care is an approved provider of continuing education by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education, the American Nurses Association and the American Psychological Association. In order to offer valuable CE to conference attendees, each presentation must be accompanied by learning objectives developed to guide the educational activity. Learning objectives:

- Help prospective participants determine whether this educational activity meets their needs or interests.
- Guide learning as participants engage in the educational activity, i.e., attend your presentation.
- Help us gauge the success of the educational activity by asking participants to evaluate how well the learning objectives were met.

Effective verbs for formulating learning objectives

The following verbs have been found to be effective in formulating learning objectives:

1. Those that communicate knowledge:

   **Information**
   - cite
   - define
   - describe
   - draw
   - identify
   - indicate
   - list
   - name
   - recite
   - recognize
   - record
   - state
   - trace
   - write
   - relate

   **Comprehension**
   - associate
   - classify
   - compare
   - compute
   - contrast
   - describe
   - differentiate
   - discuss
   - distinguish
   - explain
   - express
   - interpret
   - predict
   - report
   - restate
   - review
Application
apply          employ          order          restate
calculate     examine         practice        review
complete      illustrate      predict         solve
demonstrate   interpret       relate          translate

Analysis
analyze      criticize       differentiate    inspect
appraise      debate         distinguish     summarize
contract      detect         experiment

Synthesis
arrange      create          integrate       prescribe
assemble     design          manage          produce
collect      detect          organize        propose
compose      formulate       plan            specify
construct    generalize      prepare

Evaluation
appraise      construct      prepare         select
assess        estimate       rank            test
choose        evaluate       recommend
compose       measure        revise

2. Those that convey attitudes:
acquire      exemplify      realize         reflect

Verbs to Avoid
These verbs are used often but are not measurable:
appreciate    conceptualize   know
believe       experience      learn
comprehend    feel           understand

Please follow the NCCHC Position Statement on the Use of Humanizing Language in Correctional Health Care.
In summary:
• Reframe historically stigmatizing language by using person-first language such as person/people/individuals experiencing incarceration, incarcerated person/people/individuals, the incarcerated, person living with HIV, person with substance use disorder.
• Avoid correctional labels such as inmate, offender, prisoner, felon, convict, criminal.
• For the youth population, avoid terms such as juvenile, juvenile offender, and minor. Preferred terms are youth, adolescent, child, and young adult, as appropriate.
• Avoid health-defining labels such as addict, drug user, HIV patient, psychotic, diabetic.