

Case

Following rules or doing the right thing?

PO21 Learning Resources



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Credits

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Case – Following rules or doing the right thing?

This case was developed within the PO21 project¹, based on the critical incidents approach and the experience of the Prison Officers involved in the project. It can be dynamised using several strategies², according to the training and trainers' objectives.

Case Script:

Summary

Main situation

Maria, a PO, has informed Pieter, also a PO, that she has been harassed by her Governor John. She has had enough and will do something about it. She says that she will bring in a cell phone and will record the next assault on her by Governor John as proof. Pieter tells her that she cannot record conversations and cannot bring in a cell phone. The next day she comes into the office with the cell phone and says she will try to get the proof today.

Why is it complicated/difficult/challenging:

- A forbidden object, the cellphone, is in prison
- Pieter has the information that Maria has been assaulted by the Governor and knows about Maria's intentions
- The dilemma between allowing the recording of evidence and the presence of a forbidden object
- Pieter is the lowest in rank and should report that Maria had a cell phone.
- To get proof, Maria will provoke a situation with the Governor
- Which hierarchical channel should the intervenients respond to?

¹For more information: <http://www.prison-officers21.org/>

²Detailed information on cases dynamisation and development can be found in the Guide for developing cases, produced under the PO21 project

Main Characters

Character 1: Maria

Name - Maria

Professional description – PO chief, 10 years in prison.

Personal/psychological description – 33 years, married to a national intelligence officer, 2 children, ages 8 and 6. She had various love affairs on the job while being married. Struggles with the need for attention. She comes to work with tight clothes and lots of makeup.

Main function/hierarchy – PO chief of the women's wing.

Character 2: John

Name - John

Professional description – Governor for 17 years, 25 years in prison, began as an officer.

Personal/psychological description – 46 years, divorced, 1 child (boy) 16 years, behaves inappropriately. He comes to work/meetings smelling of alcohol, makes ethnic, gender, and sexual jokes and puts down people who work for him. He laughs and/or dismisses his behaviour saying, "That's just how I am". He's religious and radical in his opinions.

Main function/hierarchy – Governor of the women's wing.

Character 3: Pieter

Name - Pieter

Professional description – PO 30 years in prison, last 25 years on the women's wing, began on the men's wing in the same prison.

Personal/psychological description – 50 years, unmarried, no kids, is like a father to the inmates and his colleagues.

Main function/hierarchy – PO on the women's wing.

Description of the situation

Time

10 A.M.

Duration

10 minutes

Location

During the coffee break, in the staff lounge

Description of the situation

Maria has informed **Pieter** that she has been harassed by her Governor, **John**.

She has had enough and will do something about it.

She says that she will bring in a cell phone and will record the next assault on her by **John** as proof.

Pieter tells her that she cannot record conversations and cannot bring in a cell phone.

The next day she comes into the office with the cell phone and says she will try to get the proof today.

Maria shows the cell phone and says she will see the Governor after the break.

Reaction of each character

Maria

Maria is very decided to get proof of the harassment.

Pieter

Pieter is confused and doesn't react.

John

John has no idea what is going to happen.

Maria

Maria comes back with the cell phone and has the proof.

Result of each action

Maria got the proof she wanted.

How to apply this case?

This case can be used in several ways, there is no prescriptive, specific strategy, and the trainer shall choose the specific themes to highlight by applying the case. However, making the best of this resource in terms of promoting debate and stimulating reflection among trainees, common strategies can be:

Brainstorming:

Create a question about the case and promote group discussion. Remember that in brainstorming is particularly important to register all contributions and to make a summary of all contributions. It is suited to initiate a new theme.

Role-play:

In the training room, arrange the scenario according to the case description. The trainees should perform the characters as close to the description possible to create a real-life situation. After the presentation, group discussion can be promoted. It is suited to deepen a situation or theme.

Problem-Solving:

Present the case without providing information on how it was handled and ask the trainees, individually or in groups, to describe how the situation should be handled. Then, dynamise a debate around each new ending for the situation. It is suited to applying theory to practice.

Dilemma:

Create a dilemma by designing a new development of the situation. Organise a debate around which was the best solution and why. It is suited to explore complex situations.

Pros and Cons:

A debate can be used in any strategy. If used as the main strategy, one idea may be to organise the group in two sectors: one, arguing in favour of the resolution and the other, arguing against it. This can be improved by providing other learning resources that support the arguments of each sector. It is suited to deepen a situation or theme.

To learn more about the creation and application of Critical Incidents, you can consult the Critical Incidents Technique Application Guide.