

PREPARING FOR CERTIFICATION

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Corrections Professionals who have made, or are considering making, application for certification: beware. You are about to embark upon one of the most challenging - - yet rewarding - - experience in your career.

As one of the first seven applicants to successfully achieve certification through the CCE examination (at the initial test offering in San Antonio, Texas, 8/12/00), I thought I would share with you my preparation efforts. It is my sincere hope that sharing my experience will lay the necessary groundwork for preparing yourself for the certification process.

Preparation efforts should begin by obtaining the necessary reading materials approximately four months in advance of the anticipated examination date. With these materials in hand, you should follow the **RAFF** approach. Details of this strategy are outlined below:

- (1) **READ.** Read each text, highlighting the pertinent information; then record notes from the highlighted material. This initial step is extremely time consuming; however, it is quite necessary to extract the important information and condense it into your own study guide. You should spend approximately one hour each day for about two months completing this task.
- (2) **ANALYZE.** Analyze each concept from the notes you have taken. A sincere effort should be made to compare and contrast concepts, management styles, and strategies until a thorough understanding of each has been realized. At this time, intensification of your study effort may be necessary. Lengthening the number of study hours would probably be beneficial. The timeframe for this phase is approximately two weeks.
- (3) **APPLY.** Apply concepts, management philosophies, and strategies to the day-to-day operations of a correctional facility. Begin with one unit and expand your research to other facilities. You will notice the overlap of management styles within the operation of even a single facility. Continue this task for approximately three weeks.
- (4) **FORMULATE.** Formulate possible test questions while reviewing the suggested study materials that you think could be included on the examination. Attempt to consider various others ways a concept may be viewed and reiterated in an examination question.

When traveling to the testing site arrive at least one day in advance of the examination. Take a couple of hours to review your summarized materials. Once the examination has begun, do not rush through it. Take time to read each question thoroughly - - you have four hours to complete this assessment.

In closing, it is my belief that you will find, as I did, after studying the different philosophies, the different styles and strategies of leadership and management in the corrections profession, that the true value of the entire process is in the preparation. It is my hope that following

certification, each professional will incorporate the learned successful leadership measures into their correctional professional life and into further career development activities for themselves and for their staff.

(The author is Warden at the Allen Correctional Center, Kinder, LA. This article appeared in *On The Line*, May 2001)