

New Staff Break Room in Prison

Improving staff morale through interior design

Agency: Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS), Omaha Correctional Center (OCC)

Trial Duration:
03/01/17–11/16/17

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Context

Prisons are typically very austere in appearance. Physical spaces, even for staff, are largely stark and institutional. This can contribute to low morale among staff, exacerbating the stressors inherent to the nature of the job.

Key Finding

Survey data indicated that designating a new space to serve as a staff break room had a small positive effect on staff morale.

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Background

Staff morale is an important consideration for any employer, correlating with staff health, absenteeism, turnover rate, and job performance. Workplace characteristics such as stress can impact morale more than personal characteristics such as gender or job position. Since design features in the environment affect psychological and physiological responses, one promising method for improving morale is to create more comfortable staff spaces. The Omaha Correctional Center (OCC) tested whether renovating a room to serve as a staff break room would increase workplace satisfaction and morale.

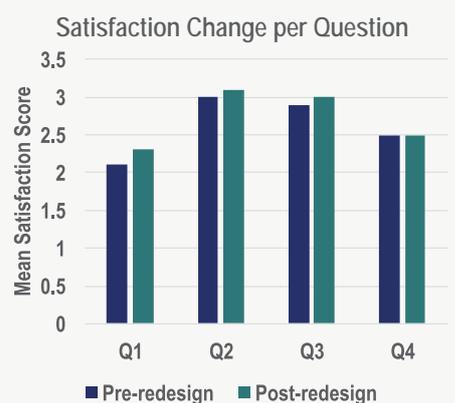
Trial Design

OCC repurposed a room on the secure side of the facility to serve as a staff break room. The renovation included colorful walls, bright decorations, and comfortable furniture. Staff were surveyed before and after the redesign.

Results

Pre- and post-redesign surveys were completed by 98 and 67 staff, respectively. The mean satisfaction ratings were

significantly higher in the post-test (after completion of the staff break room) than the pre-test (2.2 vs 2.6, $p < .05$). The figure below shows results for selected survey items that address staff satisfaction and career perspectives. This proof-of-concept project demonstrates that providing a staff-specific space can improve staff satisfaction.



(Q1) What is your overall satisfaction with the staff amenities provided you at OCC?

(Q2) How would you rate your attitude in coming to work at OCC every day?

(Q3) How well do you know your co-workers?

(Q4) How likely are you to look for a job outside of OCC, either in another facility or outside of NDCS?

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