

DCA Institute Facilitator Guide

The purpose of the DCA Training Institute breakout sessions is to foster a positive, solution-focused, peer-to-peer environment where participants share what's working, exchange practical strategies, and learn from each other's experiences.



These interactive sessions give DCAs the flexibility to rotate through four focused topics or revisit sessions for a deeper dive into areas they want to explore further. Each session is designed to be engaging, practical, and collaborative, with 40 minutes dedicated to discussion, questions, and shared learning.

Facilitator Tips for Discussion

Start simple

Open with an easy question to get people talking (e.g., "What's working well in your state?").

Summarize as you go

Highlight key themes: "I'm hearing a lot around communication and early coordination..."

Guide, don't lead

You don't need all the answers. Let participants share and learn from each other.

Acknowledge, then pivot

"That's a common challenge, what's helping states work through it?"

Give space

Ask the question, then pause. A few seconds of silence is okay.

Keep it focused

If it drifts or turns into venting, gently redirect to solutions.

Invite participation

If it's quiet, try: "Would anyone like to share?" or "Has anyone seen this differently?"

Balance voices

If a few people dominate, invite others in.

Build on responses

Ask follow-ups like: "What made that work?" or "Could that work elsewhere?"

End with a takeaway

"What's one idea you're taking back with you?"





Absconders in Practice: What's working, What's Not, and What We're Learning

Hear directly from states about what's working, and what's not, when managing absconders. This session dives into practical approaches, shared challenges, and strategies you can use.

Implementation

- Where have you seen the most progress in managing absconder cases (investigations, retaking decisions, etc.)?
- What required the biggest adjustment (internal policies, culture shift with officers/compact staff, etc.) and how did you work through it?

Reporting & Documentation

- What's helping improve absconder reporting and documentation?
- How is your state making the 30-day reporting process more manageable to track?
- How is your state managing the 30-day investigation override process (staffing locally, staffing with compact office staff, etc.)?

After Apprehension

- What's working well within your state to manage the required timelines for retaking decisions?
- How are you coordinating with Compact offices and stakeholders?

30-Day Probable Cause Timeline

- What practices have you adopted to meet the 30-day requirement?

Sharing Best Practices

- What tools, forms, processes or practices have made implementation easier?
- What advice would you give a state struggling to manage absconders?

What's one idea, strategy, or takeaway from today's discussion that you're taking back to your state?



Probable Cause Hearings: What it means for our stakeholders

Navigate real-world challenges with jails and local partners who may not fully understand Compact requirements. This session offers practical approaches to managing timelines, expectations, and communication effectively.

Building Stakeholder Understanding

- Who has been your biggest challenge when coordinating probable cause hearings? (Courts, jails, prosecutors, defense counsel, hearing officers, etc)
- When challenges arise with jails or detention facilities, what steps have been effective in addressing concerns and maintaining compliance?
- What approaches have helped build relationships with local partners?

Preventing Delays

- Where do delays typically occur in the process?
- What has been effective in educating stakeholders about Compact timelines?

When the Individual isn't in Custody

- How are states conducting probable cause hearings when the individual is not in custody?
- What practices have made this process more manageable?

Coordination & Documentation in Practice

- What best practices have you adopted to improve coordination in your state?
- What resources would help you better manage probable cause hearings?

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Chapter 5 Rule Package & Violation Response Framework

Walkthrough the proposed rules and the violation response tool designed to improve how retaking decisions are made. This session explores the approach to addressing violations, the rationale behind the changes, and how states can prepare for successful implementation.

The 'Why'

- How consistent do you think retaking decisions are from state to state?
- How does this approach align responses with risk, stability, and what drives behavior change?
- What problem is the Violation Response Tool trying to solve?

Using the Tool in Practice

- How does the tool support decision-making without removing professional judgment?
- Do the proposed amendments create more opportunities for states to exercise case-specific discretion when determining whether retaking is appropriate?

Implementation

- What questions or considerations should DCAs be thinking about as they prepare to implement the tool?
- Where might states need to adapt processes or provide additional support?

Preparing the Field

- How can DCAs effectively prepare field staff for these changes?
- What messaging will help staff understand not just how to use the tool, but why it matters?
- What concerns should the workgroup continue evaluating?

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DCA Leadership program: Small Tools that Make a Big Difference

Introduces a new DCA Leadership Program built around practical, everyday tools, sharpening communication, navigating difficult conversations, and building the kind of trust that improves decision-making at every level.



Leadership in Practice

- Think back to your first year as a DCA. What do you wish someone had told you?
- What's the hardest part of being a DCA that nobody prepares you for?
- What leadership skills would you most like to strengthen?

Strengthening Communication

- Where do communication breakdowns happen most often; in your agency, with field staff, with other states, etc.?
- What strategies have helped you navigate conflict or disagreement?

Support & Skill Building

- What types of leadership support or training would make your job easier?
- How do you build credibility when delivering difficult messages?

Small Shifts, Big Impact

- What small changes have made a big difference in your effectiveness as a DCA?
- If you were designing a leadership program for future DCAs, what would be a must-have topic?



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