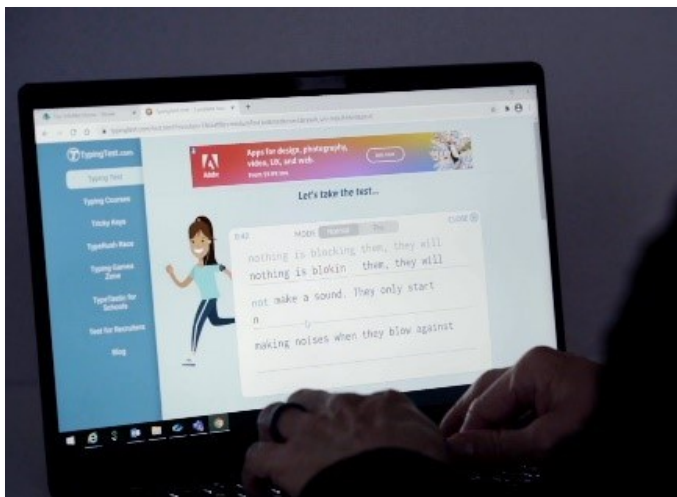


Competency-based Personnel Selection

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

What is competency-based personnel selection and why was this intervention selected?

Competency-based personnel selection refers to a hiring process that is rooted in assessment of the required job-related competencies or knowledge, skills, abilities, or other characteristics (KSAOs). Competencies can be evaluated to make hiring decisions using a variety of different methods, including [interviews](#), paper-and-pencil or computer-administered tests, work samples, or [situational judgment tests](#), to name a few. In Oklahoma, a structured interview, typing test, and writing assessment were implemented and pre-employment tests assessing personality, [cognitive skills](#), and attitudes were administered to staff to inform decisions about future use in the hiring process. During the needs assessment process, concerns about inconsistent, and potentially ineffective, hiring practices across the state continued to arise. Various questions were being asked in interviews, and the questions lacked detailed benchmarks for the rating categories. The hiring process was identified as an area of opportunity for the agency and one that would make a meaningful contribution to the child welfare field at large.



What is the impact of competency-based personnel selection?

When hiring decisions are closely tied to job-relevant characteristics, the quality of personnel selection decisions improves because hires are better suited to meet the job requirements and thus perform the job well. Additionally, structured, systematic processes help to mitigate bias in the decision-making process compared to informal hiring processes that rely on more subjective judgments ([SIOP, 2018](#)). [Oklahoma's hiring intervention](#) contained several components, each with their own body of research evidence.

- Hiring interviews are very strong predictors of job performance when they are designed to assess job-relevant characteristics ([Wiesner & Cronshaw, 1988](#)) and are more structured ([Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994](#); [McDaniel et al., 1994](#)). Further, interview questions are more effective when they are scored with descriptively anchored rating scales ([Taylor & Small, 2002](#)). For more information on evidence-based best practices for hiring interviews, see this [umbrella summary](#).
- Typing and writing assessments are examples of [work sample tests](#), which are moderately strong predictors of job performance ([Roth et al., 2005](#)).
- Measures of [cognitive ability](#) are the strongest predictors of job performance compared to all other hiring measures, across employment settings (e.g., [Hunter & Hunter, 1984](#); [Salgado et al., 2003](#); [Schmidt & Hunter, 1998](#); [Schmidt et al., 2016](#)).
- There are many ways to conceptualize personality characteristics, but generally speaking, personality is a fairly strong predictor of job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors, across employment settings (e.g., [Barrick et al., 2001](#); [Pelt et al., 2017](#)).

- Two attitudinal measures from the academic literature are being tested in an exploratory manner. Neither have previously been used in an employee selection context.
 - ◊ Other-oriented hope is a relatively new construct, conceptualized as an individual difference in one's tendency to hope for the prosperity of others ([Howell & Buro, 2017](#)). Research has yet to be conducted on the relationship of other-oriented hope with important organizational outcomes (e.g., job performance, turnover, job satisfaction). It is a promising measure to test in an exploratory context, due to the helping nature of frontline child welfare work.
 - ◊ [Public service motivation](#) is a person's desire or interest to serve the public, often in the public sector, but also in the private, non-profit sector ([Perry & Wise, 1990](#)). Public service motivation has not been shown to meaningfully predict job performance (Warren & Chen, 2013), but is associated with other organizational outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors ([Harari et al., 2016](#)), making it a promising measure for continued study.

How is a competency-based personnel selection system developed?

Although a personnel selection expert should be consulted in the development or revision of any hiring processes, there are general steps to follow when creating a competency-based, systematic personnel selection system. First, a job analysis or competency modeling process needs to be completed to identify the important job-relevant competencies for the position. This involves observing, interviewing and/or surveying subject matter experts (SMEs) who are intimately familiar with the job (e.g., employees who currently perform the job and their supervisors) to identify the

KSAOs or competencies required to perform the job effectively. Then, taking into account logistic and practical considerations, a test plan is developed, describing how these KSAOs will be assessed during the hiring process. The selection system should be routinely evaluated for predictive validity (i.e., that scores on the hiring process do predict job performance) and for fairness and bias. The [Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures \(EEOC, 1978\)](#) and [Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures \(SIOP, 2018\)](#) provide further detail on these steps and best practices for employee selection. Again, we strongly recommend that an expert be consulted when designing or revising hiring systems or evaluating the effectiveness of hiring processes, tools or assessments.

What research gap does the QIC-WD address?

To date, little is known about the effectiveness of hiring systems and decisions in the child welfare field. Oklahoma's intervention helps to address this knowledge gap by testing the effectiveness of a standardized interview process in a randomized control trial. Further, pre-employment tests (i.e., multiple-choice assessments of personality, cognitive skills, and attitudes) are not widely used for the hiring of frontline child welfare staff. The results from this study inform the field about promising pre-employment measures that could be used to streamline and enhance the effectiveness of the hiring process for frontline child welfare staff. This research also tests the utility of two widely available academic measures for use in an employee hiring context.

References

Warren, D. C., & Chen, L. T. (2013). The relationship between public service motivation and performance. In E. Ringquist (Ed.), *Meta-analysis for public management and policy* (pp. 442–473). John Wiley & Sons.