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Integrity Tests

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Umbrella Summary

Integrity Tests

A Summary of Workforce Research Evidence Relevant to the Child Welfare Field

What are integrity tests?

Employee integrity tests are attitude self-report hiring tools that measure candidates' disposition to productively perform their work, while refraining from counterproductive actions. Counterproductive actions include behaviors such as theft; safety and procedure violations; revealing confidential information or falsifying records; arguing with customers, clients and staff; and tardiness, absenteeism and job abandonment (Gruys, as cited in Sackett, 2002). There are many commercially available integrity tests, and they are often classified as either overt or personality based (Sackett, Burris, & Callahan, 1989). Overt integrity tests (also known as clear-purpose tests) are designed to directly assess attitudes regarding dishonest and counterproductive behaviors, as well as candidates' own involvement in wrongdoings (Sackett et al., 1989). The response format is typically yes/no or strongly agree to strongly disagree, with some multiple choice items. Example items include, "Everybody cheats and steals a little to get ahead, and I'm no different" and "The value of the supplies I take home from work each month beyond what I need to do my job is \$_____." Personality-based measures (also referred to as disguised-purpose tests) use composite measures of personality dimensions, such as reliability, conscientiousness, adjustment, trustworthiness, and sociability (Murphy, 2000). Example items include, "You are more sensible than adventurous" and "You work hard and steady at whatever you undertake" (Sackett et al., 1989).

Why are integrity tests valuable?

Integrity tests are valuable because they are predictive of a variety of important work outcomes across employment settings. They are relatively strong predictors of training performance (Schmidt, Oh, & Shaffer, 2016), job performance (Ones, Viswesvaran, & Schmidt, 1993), and counterproductive work behaviors, such as rule-breaking incidents, disciplinary actions, supervisory ratings of disruptiveness (Ones et al., 1993), and voluntary absenteeism (Ones, Viswesvaran, & Schmidt, 2003). Combining an integrity test with a cognitive ability test provides the most powerful means of predicting future training and job performance (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998; Schmidt et al., 2016). Though overt and personality-based tests are comparable in their ability to predict job performance, they vary in their ability to predict counterproductive work behaviors, depending on the type of counterproductive behavior (Ones et al., 1993, Ones et al., 2003). The value of integrity tests in predicting performance and counterproductivity extends across job levels, from low to high complexity, which includes professionals and upper management (Ones et al., 1993). Integrity tests are also moderately predictive of involuntary

turnover and modestly predictive of voluntary turnover (Van Iddekinge, Roth, Raymark, & Odle-Dusseau, 2012). Because of the sensitive nature of the questions, job applicants tend to perceive integrity tests with moderate favorability, about the same way that they perceive personality tests (Anderson, Salgado, & Hülshager, 2010; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004).

QIC-WD Takeaways

- ▶ Integrity tests are strong predictors of training performance, job performance, and counterproductive behaviors. Their use can lead to higher worker outcomes and reduced counterproductivity among new hires.
- ▶ Combining an integrity test with a cognitive ability test is more effective than either test alone and provides the most powerful means of predicting future training and job performance.
- ▶ Integrity tests are moderately predictive of involuntary turnover and modestly predictive of voluntary turnover.
- ▶ Job applicants tend to perceive integrity tests with moderate favorability, about the same way that they perceive personality tests.
- ▶ Employers who wish to validate and implement an integrity test should explore the many commercially available tests that have undergone years of rigorous development and testing. Employers are strongly discouraged from developing their own integrity test.
- ▶ Due to the technical and legal requirements involved in validating an integrity test, it is recommended that agencies consult with an expert for assistance.
- ▶ Some states have regulations regarding use of integrity tests (e.g., Massachusetts and Rhode Island), so employers should be aware of potential limitations.

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