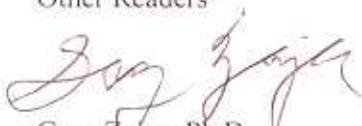


COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
Department of Corrections
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September 30, 2008

SUBJECT: *Research in Review*

TO: Executive Staff
Superintendents
Other Readers



FROM: Gary Zajac, Ph.D.
Chief of Research and Evaluation



Kristofer Bret Bucklen
Chief of Projections and Population Statistics

Enclosed please find Volume 11, Number 3 of *Research in Review* (RIR). This issue presents summaries of internal evaluations that PRSG has done of three inmate cognitive behavioral treatment programs, and a staff training course, that are currently being pilot tested within the PADOC. These summaries were prepared by Jacqueline Young and Lisa Wingeard, who are Research and Evaluation Analysts within PRSG. PRSG's Dr. Michael Antonio is the Principal Investigator on these studies.

Upcoming issues of RIR will continue to present findings from the ongoing study of parole violators and parole successes conducted by Bret Bucklen, as well as summaries of ongoing Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) research being conducted by Jesse Zortman. RIR will also continue with article reviews and briefing papers on topics relevant to corrections, as well as discussing findings from PADOC evaluation studies as they are completed.

As always, we welcome your feedback on RIR. We also welcome your suggestions for specific topical areas for future issues. While we cannot promise that we can produce an issue in response to all suggestions offered, we are very much interested in knowing what questions and topics are most interesting to our readers.

Thank you for your ongoing interest in *Research in Review*.

Research in Review

Bureau of Planning, Research, Statistics and Grants

Editors: Gary Zajac and Kristofer Bret Bucklen (717)214-8959

Special Issue on Evaluation of Pilot Programs

This issue of *Research in Review* presents preliminary findings from a series of internal program evaluations that have been conducted by the Bureau of Planning, Research, Statistics and Grants, under the direction of PRSG's Dr. Michael Antonio. These evaluations focus primarily on pilot tests of new programs that are being tested within the PADO. Consistent with good program development practice, the PADO pilot tests all new interventions before taking them to scale or making them a regular part of the department's program offerings. PRSG evaluates these pilot tests to inform decisions about taking programs to scale.

The current issue of RIR focuses on three such pilot program evaluations, in addition to another program that is already widely used in the department, but that is being evaluated as a competitor to two of the programs being piloted. The first two reports presented below summarize our evaluations of two newer cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) programs being pilot tested – the *Changing Offender Behavior* (COB) program and the *Criminal Attitudes Program* (CAP). The third report summarizes our evaluation of the *Thinking for a Change* (T4C) program. T4C has been the PADO's main CBT program for several years now, and is offered on some level at many of our State Correctional Institutions. The goal of this evaluation series was to cross evaluate COB, CAP and T4C, exploring strengths and weakness of each program. These evaluations are important, in that CBT treatment represents one of the most important of the Principles of Effective Intervention, and is a key component of the PADO's overall treatment approach.

The fourth report focuses on our evaluation of a new training program for staff – *Reinforcing Positive Behavior* (RPB) - which is intended to promote a better understanding of the goals of treatment programs and how all staff can reinforce and promote these goals. Other jurisdictions have experimented with such curricula, but to our knowledge, RPB has been the most systematic approach. This evaluation is important, as research indicates that a consistent understanding of the goals of treatment by all agency staff promotes program success.

The four evaluations reported on here employ a common methodology. Rather than repeat this discussion in each report, a summary is provided in the fifth and final piece in this issue. The primary focus of these reports is on the *content* of the programs, but some attention is also provided to program *delivery*, to the extent that it interacts with our findings about program content.

While the findings reported on here are in a sense preliminary, and may be updated as more outcome data is collected, we have received numerous inquiries about our evaluations of these programs and felt it would be an opportune time to report on some of the findings. As with many topics, more research is needed, but this issue presents some basic insight into the performance of these programs. We hope that our readers, especially in other jurisdictions, find this information useful.

Evaluation of the Pilot Test of the *Changing Offender Behavior* Program

Prepared by Jacqueline Young
Research and Evaluation Analyst
Bureau of Planning, Research, Statistics and Grants

Changing Offender Behavior (COB) is a cognitive behavioral program that targets anti-social thoughts and skill deficits by using modeling, rehearsing, and rewarding techniques. The program teaches inmates to identify situations, thoughts, and feelings that are high-risk for criminal behavior. Through the program, inmates learn problem solving, coping, and social skills, how to replace anti-social responses to situations with pro-social responses and how to reinforce their own pro-social behavior. The curriculum uses role plays, group discussions, and interactive journaling techniques to reinforce these concepts. COB was developed by researchers at the University of Cincinnati. The PA DOC piloted COB at four State Correctional Institutions and one Community Corrections Center. Each site delivered at least one cycle of COB beginning in the fall of 2006 or early 2007, and several sites delivered multiple cycles of the program. The PADOA is one of the first agencies to test COB.

Pre and post CSS-M assessment scores were obtained from 207 inmates. Findings revealed an average decrease of 4.43 points on the post assessment after participating in COB which indicated a reduction in criminal sentiments and thinking; approximately 31.9% (n=66) of program completers scored in the low risk range on their post CSS-M assessment. Of program completers who scored in the medium and high risk ranges on their pre assessment (n=170), 66.5% had a reduction in their post CSS-M assessment; 25 moved from the medium to low range, 14 moved from the high to low range, and 33 moved from the high to medium range for criminal thinking. Nineteen reported a reduction in their post CSS-M scores, but remained in the medium range, while 22 reported a reduced post CSS-M score, but still remained in the high category. Another 17 completers reported an increase on their post CSS-M assessment that was large enough to move them from the medium to high range for criminal thinking, while 10 reported increased post CSS-M scores, but remained in the medium range. Finally, 24 inmates who had pre CSS-M assessment scores in the high range reported an increase on their post CSS-M assessment that indicated greater levels of criminal thinking after completing the T4C program. Thus, there was a moderate overall reduction in CSS-M scores associated with participation in COB. A good majority of inmates saw a reduction in their scores, with over one-third seeing a reduction large enough to put them in a lower category of need.

The second component of the evaluation included a close-ended survey administered to both program facilitators and inmates. Six of the nine facilitators completed a 19 question self-administered survey. All six facilitators believed COB included an appropriate amount of role playing, while five of the six respondents reported that individual exercises and examples demonstrated issues inmates could relate to. Only half of the facilitators believed the COB material was unique and not provided by other DOC programs. Other findings showed that all COB facilitators agreed that inmates enrolled in their groups were at high risk for re-offending, had high

criminal attitudes and thinking and possessed appropriate educational and reading levels. Only four of the six facilitators believed the inmates had the appropriate maturity or temperament for inclusion into the group. In addition, all facilitators indicated that the program appropriately addressed decision-making and problem solving skills, while all but one believed anti-social attitudes were sufficiently addressed.

Inmates also completed a 25 question self-administered survey about their opinions of the program. Most of these respondents reacted favorably toward the COB program. For example, 74.4% of inmates rated the COB program as “satisfactory, good, or excellent” and 74.3% of participant ratings about the usefulness of the COB workbook fell into the same categories. A significant percentage of the respondents said “the subject matter was organized in a way that made sense” (95.6%), the information provided was “easy to follow and understand” (96.8%), and they would “recommend this program to others” (83.4%). A small percentage of inmates expressed concern that others had “language barriers or reading difficulties” during the group (23.0%) and over half said that some inmates “should not have been in the group” (59.1%).

The final component of the evaluation included in-depth interviews with COB facilitators and inmates. Facilitators believed that COB incorporated appropriate exercises, examples, and role playing opportunities, and that the program sufficiently addressed anti-social attitudes, decision-making skills, and problem solving skills. Facilitators generally felt that COB helped inmates gain insight into their thought processes, while providing tools such as thought blockers and effective “anchors” like self-talk and visualization. While they reported that COB helped inmates balance the costs and benefits of their actions, they also felt the program focused too extensively on “irresponsible behaviors” rather than pro-social behaviors. A few facilitators expressed concern related to responsibility factors, mainly that some examples were unrealistic and unrelated to an offender’s lifestyle, the curriculum required an eighth grade reading level and writing skills, and the interactive nature of COB made it more effective for female inmates.

Inmates participating in COB reported favorable feelings toward the program material, workbook, and group facilitators. Inmates frequently commented that the most important “lesson learned” was thinking before acting and making plans to avoid potential downfalls upon release. Inmates felt that examples were realistic and applicable to life, but that the workbook contained repetitive examples and information. Several inmates observed that low-level offenders were out of place in the group, and that some participated solely because it was a requirement for parole. Inmates also provided positive comments about the program facilitators, saying they were “effective” and “helpful” throughout the program.

Evaluation of the Pilot Test of the *Criminal Attitude Program*

Prepared by Lisa Wingeard
Research and Evaluation Analyst
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The Criminal Attitudes Program (CAP), created by David J. Simourd, Ph.D. and Algonquin Correctional Evaluation Services Inc., is a cognitive behavioral treatment program focused on helping offenders become more pro-social by promoting changes in criminal attitudes, values and beliefs (criminal thinking) that support criminal deviance. During their biweekly meetings, offenders participate in discussions on topics ranging from moral reasoning and criminal rationalizations to the cycle of offending and relapse prevention. The program consists of 22 two hour group sessions for a total of 44 hours of facilitation. The program's message is delivered through lecture, discussions, movies, homework, and role playing. CAP was piloted at two State Correctional Institutions and one Community Corrections Center.

Pre and post CSS-M assessment scores for attitudes about criminal thinking were collected from 371 inmates who completed the CAP program. Inmates reported an average decrease of 2.42 points on the post assessment, indicating a reduction in criminal thinking and attitudes. Just under half of the inmates who completed CAP reported post CSS-M scores that were in the low range (46.1%). Of the 200 inmates who reported decreases on the post CSS-M assessment, 98 (49.0%) showed decreases large enough to place them into another range that reflected lower criminal thinking and attitudes. Forty-four completers moved from the medium to low range, 21 moved from the high to low range, and 33 moved from high to medium range for criminal thinking. Seventeen reported a reduction in their post CSS-M score but remained in the medium, while 37 reported a reduced post score, but still remained in the high range. A total of 142 inmates obtained higher post CSS-M scores after completing the CAP program. Twenty-three reported increased scores, however, still remained in the medium range, while 24 inmates moved from the medium to high range for criminal thinking. Nineteen inmates who reported pre scores in the high range, reported an increase in their post scores, indicated greater levels of criminal thinking after completing the CAP program. Thus, inmates participating in CAP showed some reduction in CSS-M scores associated with participation in CAP. Nearly half of inmates who did experience a reduction moved into a lower category of need.

A self-administered survey was delivered to 23 inmates who completed CAP. The respondents felt that CAP helped them better understand their past negative behavior as well as equipped them with the skills and self-knowledge needed to stay out of prison. The success of the program was in many ways attributed as much to the competence of the facilitators as it was to the skills acquired in the program. Inmates, in general, responded favorably about the program material, the group facilitator, and the institutional support for the program.

Three out of four CAP facilitators completed self-administered surveys regarding the program. All three agreed that CAP addressed anti-social attitudes, poor decision-making and problem solving

skills, and did so with the appropriate dosage, intensity and duration. Concerns were raised that CAP included few role-play opportunities and that proper staff-to-inmate ratios were not maintained.

The CAP facilitators also were interviewed to determine their opinions about the effectiveness of the program. In general, facilitators reported that CAP was more therapeutically effective than other programs offered by the PADOA and that it did so in less time and in a more effective, reliable manner. Facilitators believed that the inmates were adequately taught to rethink their lifestyles and the choices they previously made. In terms of potential program weaknesses, the “juvenile” nature of some role-play scenarios proved to be problematic. Concern also was raised as to the cultural disconnect between inmates and some of the terminology and examples used in the curriculum. CAP was developed in Canada, and some language used in the program is specific to a Canadian cultural context, which confused some inmates who participated in the program in Pennsylvania. In-depth interviews revealed that facilitators often did not follow basic principles of the program including enforcing participation in role plays and delivering the lessons at a standard level of intensity/duration. Also, facilitators mentioned that CAP seems to lack adequate AOD and anger-management elements as well as material specifically tailored to Spanish-speaking inmates.

Preliminary Evaluation of the *Thinking For A Change* Program

Prepared by Lisa Wingeard
Research and Evaluation Analyst
Bureau of Planning, Research, Statistics and Grants

Thinking for a Change (T4C) is a 22 week cognitive-behavioral based treatment program that helps participants develop problem solving and social intervention skills while incorporating a systematic approach to identifying cognitive patterns and distortions, beliefs, attitudes and values. The first 11 lessons introduce inmates to cognitive restructuring concepts and critical social skills. The program curriculum also addresses problem solving techniques in lessons 16-21. Lesson 22 consists of a checklist or self-evaluation that rates participants' strengths and areas where improvement is needed. The program curriculum is designed with the option to extend the course beyond lesson 22, which gives participants the opportunity to address lingering problems and develop personalized skills. Each lesson follows a standard format, first explaining the rationale for the lesson, introducing relevant concepts and definitions, outlining lesson objectives, reviewing major lesson activities and providing the actual content. The curriculum used by course facilitators provides trainer scripts and detailed trainer notes. T4C was developed by researchers under the auspices of the National Institute of Corrections, and is widely used throughout the United States. Presently, T4C is the core cognitive behavioral program within the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections.

Pre and post CSS-M assessment scores were obtained from 275 inmates at seven State Correctional Institutions. Findings revealed an average decrease of 5.17 points on the post assessment after

participating in T4C which indicated a reduction in criminal sentiments and thinking; approximately 64 % (n=176) of program completers scored in the low risk range on their post CSS-M assessment. Of program completers who scored in the medium and high risk ranges on their pre assessment (n=158), 53.2% (N=84) had a reduction in their post CSS-M assessment large enough to move to a lower category of need; 38 moved from the medium to low range, 21 moved from the high to low range, and 25 moved from the high to medium range for criminal thinking. Seventeen reported a reduction in their post CSS-M score, but remained in the medium range, while 16 reported a reduced post CSS-M score, but still remained in the high category. Another 8 completers reported an increase on their post CSS-M assessment that was large enough to move them from the medium to high range for criminal thinking, while 15 reported increased post CSS-M scores, but remained in the medium range. Finally, 13 inmates who had pre CSS-M assessments scores in the high range, reported an increase on their post CSS-M assessment that indicated greater levels of criminal thinking after completing the T4C program.

Fifty-four inmates completed self-administered surveys about their opinions of T4C. Findings indicated that inmates thought the material was organized, useful, and many would recommend it to others. Furthermore, they indicated that the material was applicable to life inside and outside of the prison. Inmates found the group facilitators and prison supportive of the program.

Thirty-one T4C facilitators completed self-administered surveys about the program. Most reported that the T4C program included appropriate role playing, exercises, and examples. Only half of the respondents agreed that inmates were at high risk for reoffering and possessed the appropriate reading levels or maturity for inclusion in the group. The majority believed T4C sufficiently addressed decision-making, problem solving skills, and anti-social attitudes; however, most thought more material could be included that addressed alcohol and drug problems. Facilitators believed prison administration was most supportive of T4C, followed by other treatment staff, and then correctional officers.

Fifteen instructors also participated in extensive, in-depth interviews about the T4C program. Comments were mixed about the quality of the program for sufficiently and effectively addressing anti-social attitudes. Specific lessons were praised (“Stop and Think” and “Active Listening Skills”), while other areas were criticized including the quality of the materials related to decision-making and problem solving skills. Also, role playing, skill cards, and hand gesturing were overwhelmingly ignored in all sites and the intensity and duration of the program varied widely. Half the facilitators interviewed believed the program was too elementary for their inmates, and while they indicated the program was not spoken of poorly, many of the facilitators wished for additional support and assistance from prison administration. Also, role playing was enforced by only a few of the facilitators interviewed. Many cited participant embarrassment, lack of gender appropriate characters, and non-relatable scenarios as the main reasons for abandoning the role playing exercises. As a work around, inmates brought up their own experiences for a group discussion.

Overall, findings from the evaluation of the T4C program revealed that inmates’ average level of

criminal thinking showed a moderate decrease after participation in the group. Inmates, in general, responded favorably to the program material, group facilitator, and institutional support for the program. The group facilitators, however, voiced criticism of the program material during in-depth interviews (especially related to anti-social attitudes, decision-making, problem solving, and substance abuse issues) and often did not follow basic principles of the program including role plays, skill cards, hand gestures, and intensity/duration. Many facilitators believed the T4C material was too elementary for the inmates with some indicating the need for more support from the prison administration.

Evaluation of the Pilot Test of the *Reinforcing Positive Behavior* Course

Prepared by Jacqueline Young
Research and Evaluation Analyst
Bureau of Planning, Research, Statistics and Grants

In 2006, the PADOC developed a two hour training session titled *Reinforcing Positive Behavior* (RPB), which introduces new employees to the Department's philosophy on inmate treatment programs and explains the principles on which they are based. The training emphasizes that each PA DOC employee has a role in reinforcing positive behavior. Specifically, employees learn that inmates are always watching and learning from correctional staff and that every interaction is an opportunity for staff to teach and reinforce treatment concepts. The PADOC developed RPB based on proven theories for inmate rehabilitation, namely that professionals who are knowledgeable about inmate treatment and predicting criminal behavior can significantly and positively impact the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs and that successful programs include social learning and cognitive behavioral approaches that target criminogenic needs, utilize positive reinforcers at a greater rate than punishers, and are sensitive to interactions with offenders (Gendreau, 1996). The RPB training was incorporated into the PADOC basic training for all new employees in July 2006.

To evaluate the effectiveness of this training, an attitude survey was developed to gather information about the attitudes and beliefs of new employees who were recently hired by the PADOC. As part of the survey process, new employees rated their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements that expressed their attitudes towards inmate treatment, rehabilitation programs, and their roles and responsibilities inside the prison. Employees were also asked to rate staff employed in certain job categories (i.e. Correctional Officers, Treatment Staff, Prison Administrative/Management, Support Staff, and Clerical Support) as most or least responsible for promoting a good social environment, modeling positive behavior, and correcting inappropriate behavior in a correctional facility. The survey was administered twice, immediately before the RPB training (pre assessment) and immediately following the training (post assessment). The pre and post assessment scores were compared to determine how the RPB training impacted staff attitudes. An analysis of survey results showed that the RPB training successfully changed staff attitudes about inmate treatment, rehabilitation programs, and their roles and responsibilities inside a prison. Post assessment scores for all statements changed in the direction of the expected outcome after the

training, even when responses given by treatment staff and correctional officers (COs) were considered separately. There were only a few exceptions where no significant differences were detected between pre and post scores. Treatment staff were more likely than COs to strongly disagree with statements indicating inmates cannot be treated with respect and that treating inmates with respect will make a prison more dangerous. Treatment staff were also more likely than COs to strongly disagree with statements that indicate the way they act in a prison will not impact treatment programs or inmate behavior.

The average pre and post assessment scores for treatment staff were relatively high overall, which suggests that treatment staff were already aware of the concepts related to inmate treatment and rehabilitation introduced by the RPB training. While attitudes among treatment staff stayed relatively the same between the pre and post assessments, CO responses increased dramatically between the pre and post assessment surveys. The significant change in attitude reported by COs seemed to close the gap between them and treatment staff about beliefs regarding inmate treatment and rehabilitation programs. Analyses revealed few statistical differences between treatment staff and COs. The few differences that were evident revealed that treatment staff believed, more so than COs, that inmates should be treated with respect and that staff actions impact treatment programs and inmate behavior.

Further analysis was conducted using only post assessment scores to determine attitude differences among four occupational groups (clerical, maintenance, treatment, and COs). This analysis revealed several significant attitude differences among these groups. Compared to COs, other groups including clerical and treatment staff more strongly believed that how they treat inmates and how they behave in a prison impacts inmate rehabilitation efforts. Clerical and treatment staff, more so than COs, also more strongly viewed reinforcing positive behavior as a job requirement, believed that staff behavior and support of rehabilitation programs impacts treatment outcomes and felt that staff actions can make a correctional facility a more positive place. Compared to COs, staff comprising the treatment, clerical, and maintenance job categories all believed more strongly that showing support for rehabilitation does not make them appear vulnerable to other staff and inmates.

Survey results also revealed that, following the RPB training, respondents better understood and recognized that all DOC staff, regardless of job category, are responsible for promoting a good social environment, modeling positive behavior, and correcting inappropriate behavior when it occurs in a prison. However, staff assigned the lowest levels of responsibility to clerical staff in these three areas. Compared to COs, the clerical and treatment staff consistently ascribed more responsibility to all staff groups, which suggests that clerical and treatment staff felt more strongly that all staff are collectively responsible for these domains of professional behavior. Also compared to COs, maintenance staff consistently assigned more responsibility to management, support, and clerical staff. Finally, compared to clerical, treatment, and maintenance staff, COs consistently assigned the lowest responsibility levels to all staff groups being rated. This finding suggests that clerical, treatment, and maintenance staff felt more strongly than COs that all correctional staff are responsible for promoting a good social environment, modeling positive behavior, and correcting inappropriate behavior.

The evaluation conducted so far on RPB suggests that it has a positive immediate impact on staff attitudes towards inmate rehabilitation. Future work related to the RPB study includes two additional phases. First, RPB training participants are surveyed one year after completing the training to determine if changes in attitudes toward treatment and rehabilitation persist after one year of employment in the PADOC. Results to date suggest that changes in attitudes produced by RPB tend to wear off after one year of employment for all job categories. This pattern seems especially predominant for COs. For the final phase of the RPB study, data are currently being collected from a sample of experienced staff (i.e. staff employed by the PADOC for longer than one year). The data collected will be used to determine whether new and experienced staff have similar attitudes toward inmate treatment programs and when support for inmate treatment and rehabilitation programs change.

Reference:

Gendreau, Paul. (1996). Offender Rehabilitation: What We Know and What Needs to be Done. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 23(1), 144-161.

Methodological Overview

Prepared by Michael Antonio, Ph.D.

Research and Evaluation Manager

Bureau of Planning, Research, Statistics and Grants

We evaluated the effectiveness of the CAP, COB and T4C programs using multiple sources of information. We gathered data from 1) program facilitator and inmate responses on a self-administered, closed-ended survey concerning their opinions of the program, 2) program facilitator and inmate narrative responses to open-ended questions asked during extensive, in-depth interviews about the quality of the program material, institutional support for the program, etc., and 3) comparisons of inmates' scores on the Criminal Sentiments Scale-Modified (CSS-M) administered before and after the program was delivered (pre/post test analysis). Scores on the CSS-M reveal criminal thinking errors and attitudes. The CSS-M is the PADOC's primary criminal thinking assessment tool, and is administered to all newly committed inmates as well as being re-administered later during the inmates' incarceration. The CSS-M is well validated and widely used in the U.S. and Canada (coincidentally, it was developed by the author of the CAP program, although is applicable to most CBT programs). Local norms were developed for the PADOC inmate population. For purposes of these evaluations, we examined not only changes in raw score, but also changes in assignment to categories corresponding score ranges (e.g. Low-Medium-High). The latter is important, as it reflects a more significant change in thinking than might otherwise be indicated by the change in raw score. Unless otherwise indicated, all score changes reported here are statistically significant.

The methodology used for the evaluation of the *Reinforcing Positive Behavior* (RPB) program was similar to that used for the other three programs. Given that RPB is a staff training course, rather than an inmate treatment program, we did not use the CSS-M, nor did we collect any data from inmates. We did administer to staff a variety of two different surveys that assessed their knowledge of issues related to rehabilitation, and their attitudes towards same. As with the other three evaluations, we utilized pre and post assessments of knowledge and attitudes.