

Research in Review

Division of Planning, Research, Statistics and Grants

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Special Focus on *Pennsylvania DOC Evaluation Agenda*

Volume 6, Number 2 of *Research in Review* continues our focus on research and evaluation projects conducted within the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. This issue is the second in a series of RIR issues intended to highlight contributions made by our own department to the national literature on effective correctional programs. As many readers of RIR know, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections maintains an active agenda for evaluating its inmate treatment programs. We have employed an effective evaluation model over the past six years, where we internally determine our needs for evaluation, identify an outside evaluator (typically university-based) to conduct the evaluation on our behalf, and work with that evaluator to leverage third party funding to support the work. Common funders have been the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). With this model, we get the evaluation we need, without having to do it ourselves, and without having to pay for it. This model promotes the creation of high quality, objective information on program performance. Channeling third party funding directly to the evaluator promotes the independence and integrity of the evaluation. Information about the Department's evaluation agenda can be found on the Pennsylvania Department of Correction's website at <http://www.cor.state.pa.us/Evaluating%20Programs%20&%20Issues.pdf>.

The first piece in this issue of RIR is a summary of an impact evaluation of Pennsylvania's Young Adult Offender (YAO) program at SCI Pine Grove. The evaluation was conducted by Professor Ariana Shahinfar of LaSalle University and was funded by PCCD. In Dr. Shahinfar's summary of the evaluation, she reports that the YAO program is demonstrating a positive impact on participant's social thoughts and attitudes, interpersonal functioning and personal growth. Following Dr. Shahinfar's piece is the Department's response about how this evaluation might be used to better understand and make improvements to the YAO program.

The second piece in this issue of RIR is a summary by Dr. Kimberly Skarupski of her process evaluation of the Pennsylvania Department of Correction's Long Distance Dads (LDD) program. Dr Skarupski, a professor at Penn State University-Berhend at the time, received funding from PCCD to conduct this evaluation. Dr. Skarupski's summary provides twenty-three institution-specific and program-specific recommendations for improving the LDD program. Following Dr. Skarupski's summary is the Department's response about how this process evaluation has been used to make improvements to the LDD program.

Upcoming issues of RIR will feature summaries of evaluations of other DOC programs, including the Community Orientation and Reintegration (COR) program, educational/vocational, and other program areas, along with Department responses to each evaluation. We will also continue to feature article/book reviews and special briefing papers. We at RIR hope that you find these reports to be informative, practical and relevant to your work in corrections.

**AN EVALUATION OF PENNSYLVANIA'S YOUNG ADULT OFFENDER (YAO)
PROGRAM AT SCI-PINE GROVE**

by

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Purpose of Project:

Despite challenges to the structure, function, and purview of the juvenile court system over the past several decades, one concept has remained fairly stable – that of the importance of the “therapeutic community” in working with juvenile and young adult offenders within corrections programs (Lipsey, 1999). Interestingly, although the therapeutic community model is nearly universally implemented across juvenile programs in the United States, relatively little attention has been drawn to examining *exactly how* the therapeutic community works toward developing positive attitudes and improved behavior among adolescent offenders.

The literature on social information-processing suggests that the way in which individuals view their social environments, including how they cognitively process and encode social information, largely determines behavioral response in a social situation (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 1980; Dodge, 1986). Specifically, the social information-processing model posits that individuals pass through a series of cognitive steps when they are faced with social interaction. For example, they must attend to relevant social cues, interpret those cues, choose among goals in the social interaction, and develop and choose among behavioral response options (Crick & Dodge, 1994). The literature on the treatment of juvenile offenders has continually supported the importance of working with social information-processing skills through cognitive-behavioral treatment (e.g., Loeber & Farrington, 1998). It is the development of these social information-processing skills that is thought to produce meaningful change in behavior.

The stated goal of the therapeutic community within the Young Adult Offender (YAO) Program is to encourage behavior modification through positive participation in the community (YAO Program Procedures Manual, 2000). It is further stated that “the philosophy of the [therapeutic] community is to build new thought processes, produce norms by participation in positive activities, and [to reward offenders for positive participation]” (YAO Program Procedures Manual, 2000, p. 3). The main purpose of this project was to assess the extent to which participation in the YAO program was linked to change in the cognitions underlying aggressive behavior among a group of incarcerated young adult offenders (n=156) housed at the Pennsylvania Department of Correction's SCI Pine Grove facility. This purpose was supported by three underlying goals: The first goal was to evaluate the feasibility of measuring and tracking social cognitive change among Pennsylvania's YAO population. The second goal was to examine whether differences in social cognitive skills and community thinking were linked to inmate progression through the YAO program's “phases and levels” system of institutional promotion. The third goal was to evaluate individual change in inmate social cognitive skills and community thinking over time.

Project Design

The basic research design utilized was a short-term longitudinal measurement strategy in which offenders' social cognitions were measured at two separate interviews (20 weeks apart), in order to offer analysis of both cross-sectional and longitudinal data points. Trained undergraduate and graduate research assistants interviewed the participants in the Young Adult Offender Program regarding their social cognitive processing, individualistic-collectivistic tendencies, empathic concern, and personal growth/change since their commitment to the YAO program. All data remained confidential and a unique identifying number was associated with each piece of data so that the identity of the offender was available to neither the research assistants nor the principal investigator.

Project Participants

All inmates in the YAO program were eligible for participation in this project. Interviews were not completed with inmates who were in the Restricted Housing Unit (RHU) during the time at which interviewing was conducted, although those inmates who were being "stepped down" from the RHU were offered the opportunity to participate. Overall, 156 young adult offenders (all male) participated in the current project. Inmates ranged in age from 15 to 21, with an average age of 18.2 years. The ethnic makeup of the group was as follows: 18% Caucasian, 66% Black, 10% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 5% Other. At interview time, the inmates' average time served since commitment was 18.1 months, with a range from one to 66 months.

Measures of Social Cognition

The main focus of this project was on assessing the social cognitive skills of the participants in the study. As is standard in the field, this assessment of social cognition was achieved through interview techniques in which the participants were asked to respond to various questions regarding their thought processes utilized in social interaction. The framework highlighted in this project was the social information-processing model developed by Dodge and his colleagues (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994). More specifically, three aspects of the social information-processing model were measured: 1) *interpretation of social cues* – i.e., does the inmate view others' social bids as primarily hostile or non-hostile?, 2) *social goals* – i.e., what are the inmates' social goals (revenge, dominance, avoidance, or affiliation) in most circumstances?, and 3) *outcome expectancies* – i.e., does the inmate have confidence in reaching social goals through aggressive means?

Measures of Community Thinking

In addition to measuring social cognition directly, the following measures of interpersonal functioning were collected for the purposes of examining change in patterns of thinking specific to interaction within the community: 1) *individualism/collectivism* – i.e., how much does the inmate value community vs. individual goals?, 2) *empathic concern* – i.e., the level of empathy expressed for others , and 3) *perspective taking* – i.e., how easily the inmate is able to view things from the perspective of others.

Measure of Personal Growth

A final measure was included in the follow-up interviews as a way of assessing the inmates' impression of their own personal growth and change since commitment. This measure was designed to provide individual impressions of personal growth/change in three broad areas: 1) *academic*, 2) *interpersonal functioning*, and 3) *self*.

Results and Discussion

Goal 1: Evaluation of the feasibility of measuring and tracking social cognitive change among Young Adult Offenders:

Since young adult offenders are a relatively new and distinct group within corrections, two steps were taken in order to validate the use of these instruments for a YAO population. First, each measure was examined for response distribution (i.e., Did inmates utilize all points of the scales? Was there variability in inmate response choice?) and found to be adequate. Second, the various subscales of each measure were evaluated for internal consistency (i.e., alpha scores were calculated) and found to be adequate. These findings suggested that the measures chosen for this study were psychometrically sound for use with the YAO population.

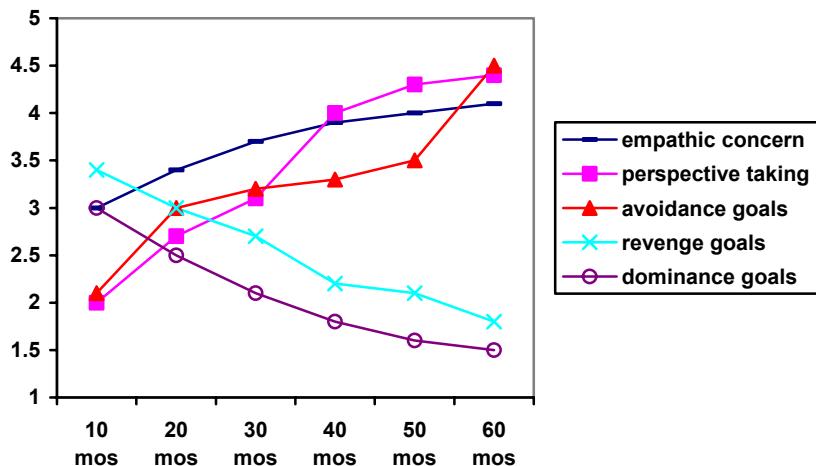
Goal 2: Examination of whether differences in social cognitive skills and community thinking were linked to inmate progression through the YAO program:

In order to address the question of relations between social cognition and phase progression through the program, analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were performed on each of the social cognitive and community thinking scores using inmate phase (entry-level thru Phase 5) as a factor. The intention was to assess whether there were differences in social cognitive skill or community thinking among inmates at different stages of advancement within the YAO program. These findings suggest that advancement in social cognitive functioning is not necessarily tied in a linear fashion to advancement through the YAO program's phase system.

Goal 3: Evaluation of individual change in inmate social cognitive skill, community thinking and self-assessed personal growth:

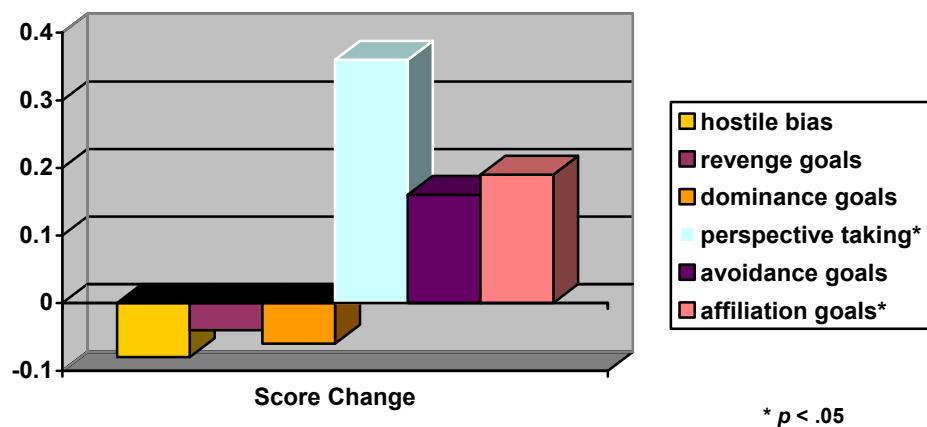
In order to evaluate individual change within inmates across time, three analytical paths were followed. First, we tested whether time since commitment was related to the various measures of interest using correlational analyses. In short, we found that the amount of time which an inmate had spent in the therapeutic community was significantly related to an increase in empathic concern ($r = .28; p < .05$), perspective taking ($r = .39; p < .01$), and avoidant social goals ($r = .26; p < .05$) (see Figure 1). Conversely, time since commitment was significantly related to a decrease in social goals revolving around *revenge* ($r = -.442; p < .01$) and *dominance* ($r = -.432; p < .01$) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Associations between time since commitment and social cognitive skill and community thinking scores



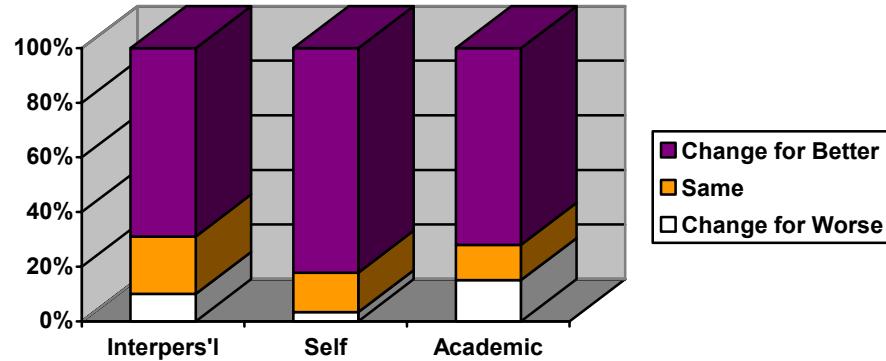
The second analytical approach for exploring individual change was achieved by performing a series of paired sample t-tests on the corresponding scores from the initial and follow-up interviews. Only two measures demonstrated a significant difference between initial and follow-up scores: a significant increase from initial to follow-up interview in inmates' perspective taking ($t = -3.3, p < .05$) and affiliative social goals ($t = -2.3, p < .05$) (see Figure 2). Although not significant changes, the other social cognitive and community thinking variables also demonstrated change in the expected direction during the interval between interviews. More specifically, *hostile bias, revenge goals, and dominance goals* decreased and *avoidance goals* increased between interviews (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Change in social cognitive and community thinking scores from initial interview to follow-up interview



The final analysis of individual change involved examination of the inmates' self-assessed personal growth. As depicted in Figure 3, inmates expressed a near-universal endorsement of positive change in the areas of academics, interpersonal functioning, and self-growth since beginning the YAO program.

Figure 3. Self-assessed personal growth as a function of YAO program participation



Conclusions

It is well understood that social cognitions share an important role in the production of social behavior. Over the past several decades, many researchers have noted the importance of cognitions in both producing and maintaining aggressive behavior patterns (e.g., Bandura, 1973; Bandura, 1986; Crick & Dodge, 1994). While the prison system is well equipped to track aggressive inmate behavior through measures such as the frequency and severity of institutional infractions, the tracking of cognitive changes that are thought to underlie such aggressive behaviors has not been traditionally practiced. The existing evidence suggests that although institutional behavior is a potent indicator of institutional adjustment, it may not be the best predictor of post-incarceration behavior (MacKenzie, 1994). Understanding how an individual thinks, however, can help in both predicting and producing long-term change in behavior patterns.

The main purpose of this project was to track changes in the social cognitive patterns of participants in Pennsylvania's highly specialized Young Adult Offender Program. The findings presented offer support for the idea that the YAO program is demonstrating positive impact in changing inmate social cognitions, community thinking and personal growth. Although the exact mechanism of this change deserves more attention, the message of change is clear. The question remains as to how to utilize this information. Most notably, these findings suggest the utility of establishing an assessment of baseline social cognitive functioning of individual inmates upon entry into the program, with the end goal of tracking the program's full impact on the development of social cognitive skills and other thought patterns supportive of positive community participation. Linking these cognitive reports with the behavioral, academic and work tracking methods already in place within the institution would allow for a fuller picture of the inmate's functioning. This picture could then, in

turn, help us move beyond strict behavioral monitoring toward the goals of understanding and predicting inmate behavior.

A second extension of these findings could be applied to the realm of tracking the effectiveness of therapeutic intervention. As mentioned earlier, the YAO program does not currently target specific aspects of social information-processing in its therapeutic goals. It is, rather, geared toward a more global change in community and social attitudes. This is appropriate considering the wide range of social cognitive skills and deficits each inmate brings with him into the program. By linking assessment of inmate cognitions to inmate behavior, however, clear plans for addressing specific inmate social cognitive deficits could be achieved. Such plans could be tailored to meet the individual needs of inmates and could be linked to treatment planning.

The third and perhaps most important implication of this work revolves around the possibility of better understanding how the development of social cognitive skills will serve the inmate upon release back into the community. For example, the question of whether and how the inmate translates cognitive lessons from the therapeutic community into the community at large is an important one. Furthermore, it could be useful to know whether inmates who have experienced little social cognitive change during incarceration are more likely to revert to old behavior patterns and, thus, recidivate. Such tracking could help us to not only manage post-release behavior, but to better understand and predict how participation in the YAO program impacts post-release outcome.

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THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS RESPONSE: REINFORCING TREATMENT PROGRESS

This evaluation supplies evidence that Pennsylvania's Young Adult Offender (YAO) program is effectively able to construct positive changes in social cognitive patterns, as indicated by enhanced pro-social skills (i.e., empathetic concern, perspective taking, and avoidance of conflict) and reduced anti-social attitudes (i.e., hostility, revenge, and dominance) among participants. This is a particularly affirmative finding given an overwhelming body of research on criminal risk factors indicating that anti-social attitudes, values, and beliefs are among the strongest predictors of future criminal activity. Programming that demonstrates the ability to engender pro-social thinking patterns and reduce anti-social attitudes among offenders can reasonably be expected to have some positive effect on recidivism rates. This study suggests a continued reinforcement and extension of the components of the YAO program that specifically target or facilitate cognitive restructuring and therefore offer greater potential for reducing recidivism rates.

One component that may facilitate cognitive restructuring, as evidenced in this study, is the amount of time in treatment. In general, research on effective correctional programming indicates that the most effective types of treatment are intensive in duration. More specifically, several studies have found that the length of time in treatment is inversely correlated with recidivism rates (i.e., as participants stay in treatment for longer periods of time, their probability of re-offending decreases).

The YAO evaluation concludes that an increase in the amount of time in the program is significantly related to an increase in empathetic concern, perspective taking, and avoidance of conflict and a decrease in revenge and dominance. This adds to the growing body of evidence, both within Pennsylvania and nationally, that completion of the full course of treatment is an important goal for any program. On a related point, the Department is exploring more generally the issue of optimal time in treatment.

Finally, this evaluation highlights the importance of utilizing risk and needs assessment instruments, not only for developing a baseline of participants' treatment needs but also for routinely monitoring individual progress. The Department has recently completed a pilot test of five assessment instruments that are generally intended to measure a broad range of key criminogenic (crime-producing) needs such as anti-social attitudes and criminal thinking. As a result of this pilot test, the Department has now adopted the Level of Service Inventory-Revised, the Criminal Sentiments Scale-Modified and the Hostile Interpretations Questionnaire and has begun administering them to all inmates upon admission to the Department. The Department will also explore options for re-administration of these instruments to track inmate progress. Given the finding that improvements in social cognitive functioning are not tied in a linear fashion to advancement through the program's phase system, this assessment data may contribute to more individualized progression through program phases. In conclusion, this study has not only lent support to the value of the activities conducted within the YAO program, but has also provided the Department with additional insight into program development and directions for future evaluation.

**A PROCESS EVALUATION OF PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTION'S LONG DISTANCE DADS PROGRAM**

by

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The Long Distance Dads (LDD) Program is a character-based educational and support program designed to assist incarcerated men in developing skills to become more involved and supportive fathers. Trained inmate peer leaders facilitate the program in 12 weekly group sessions. The sessions are structured in a small group format (8-10 inmates per group) with at least one peer leader per group.

In the late fall of 1999, Penn State Erie's Center for Organizational Research & Evaluation (CORE) submitted a grant application and was awarded funding by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) to conduct a process evaluation of the Long Distance Dads program at the SCI Albion prison in Erie, Pennsylvania. The 18-month evaluation was conducted from January 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001.

The primary research question was: "How is the Long Distance Dads program being implemented?" (i.e., what is the program actually doing?). Four phases of data collection and methodologies were developed to address this question:

- Phase I: Interviews with prison administrators, unit managers, psychologists, counselors, and corrections officers
- Phase II: Face to face semi-structured interviews with inmates, including peer leaders, graduates, current attendees, waiting list inmates, dropouts, and inmates not interested in the program
- Phase III: Direct observations of group sessions and chart and report reviews
- Phase IV: Inventory of Pennsylvania State Correctional Institution parenting programs to determine what programs are being used at other state institutions, how they are structured, and what they entail as a curriculum

Phase I – Staff Interviews

Seventeen interviews were conducted with institutional staff, including the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, the Program Coordinator, three Unit Managers, five Counselors, and five Correctional Officers.

The results of the interviews indicated that while senior management (Superintendent, Assistant

Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent) and the Program Director all had adequate information regarding programming, line level staff did not. Counselors and Correctional Officers in particular were virtually unaware of the details of the program, and since LDD has been in place for two years, all of the staff had adequate time to be exposed to the program. As a whole, it was evident that the institution is unclear of the LDD implementation process and the implementation process for new programs, in general.

Eighty-two percent of the staff stated that there was no standard procedure for training and educating employees about new programs at SCI Albion. Minimal LDD program training was provided which led to a relatively uninformed staff. Training is an area that needs marked improvement in the opinion of many staff members interviewed.

It is not surprising that most respondents were unaware of the implementation timeframe, as most of the respondents had no input in the actual implementation of the LDD program. The staff had only a vague idea of their roles in the implementation. Recommendations made by the staff included the aforementioned communications and training issues, additional sessions to reduce the backlog of inmates on the waiting list, establishing more actual contact between inmates and their families, and an outcomes survey to determine if the program has actually met its established goals. Additional suggestions included a need for further resources and outside speakers to solidify program concepts. Two respondents felt a need to preclude sex offenders from participating in the program as not to enhance their insights into the minds of children.

Program strengths include the belief that the program will be around the institution for a long time and the high levels of supervisory support for the program. There were very few reservations about the program and virtually no objections to the program. The staff at SCI Albion were also of the opinion that their facility was more treatment oriented than other state institutions, that the LDD program was of sufficiently high quality, and that the outcomes of the program were more successful than other programming at the institution.

Phase II – Inmate Interviews

Forty-seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with inmates at SCI Albion. These included twenty (20) inmates who had graduated from the LDD program, nine (9) inmates currently enrolled in the program, seven (7) inmates who had dropped out of the program, four (4) LDD peer leaders, four (4) inmates not interested in the LDD program, and three (3) inmates on the LDD waiting list.

It was discovered that 17 inmates (out of 41 total) had dropped-out of the program (a 41% drop-out rate). Seven of these inmates who dropped out were interviewed in an effort to explore their reasons for discontinuing the program. In almost all cases, it was prescriptive programming schedule conflicts, receiving parole, or being placed in a restricted housing unit that caused participants to drop out of the program.

Word of mouth, call outs, and board postings were by far the most frequently cited means by which inmates found out about the LDD program. While word of mouth is an especially strong mode of

communication in prison, and it speaks well of the program that inmates are discussing it amongst themselves, it is nonetheless important that the institution effectively convey information to inmates regarding the LDD program and all other available programming. Although staff psychologists and counselors have been successful in referring inmates to the program (24% heard about the program through a referral), the entire institutional staff must demonstrate support for the program.

Responses to the peer leader questions overall were very positive. In the estimation of their group members, the peer leaders are well trained and keep their groups focused and on task. Only two respondents felt that the peer leaders were unable to control dominating group members. When asked how participants felt about their groups, they provided favorable descriptions of the group dynamics. The program appears to be very successful in creating a positive group atmosphere.

With regard to ways that participants felt the program could be improved, they indicated that they would like more direct involvement with their children as part of the program. This is further demonstrated by the fact that inmates requested reduced phone prices and desired to be incarcerated closer to their homes as to increase the likelihood of visitation.

Strengths of the LDD program, as perceived by the inmates, are the staff support for the program, the overall inmate view of the program, and the level of understanding the inmates had regarding what the program was trying to accomplish. Other positive perceptions include the limited amount of scheduling conflicts, the ease of enrollment, and the perceived positive response of the inmates' families. Inmates also indicated a very positive response to the peer leader aspect of the program.

Phase III – Program Observations

Phase III of the LDD Evaluation consisted of group observations and supplemental data collection via counselor reports and chart reviews. From data accumulated from group observations, it is evident that the groups had the proper materials and that the discussions adhered to the topics presented in the materials. However, the groups need to focus more directly on the program materials and to direct the discussion more toward the actual content of the material as opposed to freelance discussion “around and about” the topics.

The observers' consensus on peer leader numbers is that two leaders per group provide the optimal group configuration, as it provides leadership relief and promotes group interaction. Also, training a new peer leader with skilled and experienced peer leaders is an excellent educational tool. However, if there are more than two peer leaders per group, the leaders must be careful not to dominate session dialogue.

From Phase III program observations, it was apparent that the peer leaders were knowledgeable and effective in directing the inmate group sessions. The comfort and respect levels were high, which equated to an environment that was conducive to a positive learning experience. Overall recommendations for the peer leaders include closer adherence to the prescribed materials, a stronger effort to cover all of the materials set forth in the manual, and minimization of conversation

that is not focused on session topics.

In order for the program to run as intended, Program Directors should review the weekly modules with the peer leaders prior to each session, making it clear to the peer leaders what specific materials are vital and must be covered during the session. If some materials are not being used, the LDD manual and subsequent handouts should be updated. These updates should be done periodically to incorporate new materials, update current materials, or remove outdated material as prescribed by program directors.

The strengths of the LDD group sessions, as noted by the researchers, are the consistency of the materials and the relevancy of the group discussion to the topic (although not necessarily relevant to the materials). The researchers also identified the peer leader component as a strength of the group sessions. The researchers noted that in all observations, the peer leaders were adequately knowledgeable regarding the LDD materials, adequately prepared to facilitate their groups, and comfortable in their role as a peer leader.

Recommendations

The culmination of this process evaluation included a list of 23 recommendations by the researchers that are institution-specific and program-specific.

The *institutional* recommendations are as follows:

1. Establish an LDD steering committee at each correctional institution that has an LDD program
2. Create a *New Training Program Policy* that details standard procedures for all new inmate programming statewide
3. Utilize inmate commercials to provide information to inmates regarding the LDD program and other programming at the prison
4. Provide standardized training programs for staff, based on their involvement with programming
5. Promote and increase contact between inmates and their children
6. Increase/improve training for program administrators and peer leaders
7. Improve the environment of group sessions (e.g., adequately sized room, reasonable acoustics, minimal distractions and interruptions, etc.)
8. Improve the environment of the visitation area and the visitation experience (e.g., create a parental visiting room with toys, books, etc.)
9. Stress the importance of the LDD program as a critical factor in the rehabilitation of prisoners
10. Provide programming for children of inmates
11. Standardize programming across the state, utilizing only the most effective programming

Program-specific recommendations include:

1. Enhance the LDD curriculum by incorporating published research, implementing specific goals/objectives, accessing internet resources, utilizing cooperative parenting techniques, supplying methods for contacting estranged families, and updating/upgrading program materials to present a more professional appearance.
2. Implement an evaluation system
3. Provide additional LDD sessions at institutions experiencing substantial backlogs on their waiting lists
4. Do not screen LDD participants to eliminate non-parents
5. Consider screening inmates with crimes against children, reading deficiencies, and behavioral disorders
6. Implement multifaceted programming involving multiple techniques (e.g., role-playing, cognitive therapy, modeling, reinforcement, guest speakers, etc.)
7. Reduce the program drop-out rate
8. Better utilize the peer leader meetings before and after the sessions
9. Continue with the implementation of a second phase of the LDD program and provide post-LDD support groups for reinforcement
10. Link the LDD program with community fathering and support programs
11. Increase data collection and record keeping by program directors
12. Provide LDD program documentation for participants to take away with them for future reference

**THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS RESPONSE:
BUILDING STRONGER PARENTING PROGRAMS**

Like our other evaluation projects, this study utilized an external research partner and third party funding to produce policy-relevant knowledge that informs program planning and development efforts. This evaluation was guided by a committee of senior Department officials, program and research staff and other stakeholders. Oversight by this committee contributed greatly to the production of an objective, credible and high quality report.

One key measure of the success of a study such as this is the extent to which the findings are fed back into the program. The final process evaluation report presented a number of recommendations for programmatic enhancements, which are summarized above. As with most studies of this sort, not all of the recommendations can be acted upon; some may require resources that are not available, others may contradict core agency policies, or may be outside of the control of the agency. For example, one recommendation was to provide programming for the children of inmates. While this could be valuable, it is generally not within the purview of the Department to provide such services to individuals not under our custody, nor would we have the resources to do so. Another recommendation focused upon space issues. While the physical environment of a program is important, programs must often work with what is available within the institution. These limitations notwithstanding, the LDD evaluation advisory committee was able to focus upon several recommendations that seemed to target critical areas of program structure and operation.

These areas also surfaced in our evaluations of other programmatic domains, such as substance abuse treatment, suggesting that we are tapping into some global issues for program development.

First, the LDD process report recommended that the Department expand the use of multi-faceted intervention strategies within LDD, especially those that would give inmates greater opportunity to practice cognitive and behavioral skills learned in the program. This is very much in line with what is known about effective correctional treatment programs – they spend at least as much time practicing and rehearsing skills as they do teaching them. With Level 2 of LDD, inmates will be given more opportunity to practice and role play pro-social parenting behaviors, and will see increased cognitive-behavioral elements. This enhancement will allow them to begin using what they have learned in LDD before leaving the institution.

Second, the report stressed the importance of linking inmates to their children while still incarcerated and to community-based parenting programs after release. There is increasing emphasis in the corrections literature on aftercare for released offenders. Programs that connect to a continuum of care in the community have better outcomes than those that are purely prison-based. The Department's Community Orientation Reintegration (COR) program, which was initiated in 2001 and which includes both prison-based and post-release components, incorporates modules on reuniting with family and utilizing services in the community. The LDD program is working with the Department's Bureau of Community Corrections, and the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, to refer inmates to fathering programs in the community. Inmates are also being given program materials (e.g. workbooks and manuals) to take with them for future reference. On a related point, the Department has worked with the Pennsylvania Prison Society to expand opportunities for incarcerated parents to interact with their children, through programs such as Virtual Visitation (video meetings) and the bus transport program.

Third, the report suggested that the LDD and other parenting programs should be standardized. Standardization promotes a common approach to effective programming across all institutions and facilitates program monitoring and development. Over the past year or two, the Department has developed standard models for many program domains, to be implemented at all institutions under the framework of the Correctional Plan (the Department's master treatment model). Related to this is the issue of staff training. The LDD report suggested that the Department needs to take a closer look at how staff were prepared to deliver a common message about treatment to inmates. In response, the Department has explored options for enhanced training that would ensure that all staff have an understanding of all programs offered, what they do, and how inmates can benefit from them.

Finally, the LDD process evaluation also urged the Department to build an evaluation system into LDD, culminating in a formal study of program outcomes. In the fall of 2001, Dr. Skarupski received another grant from PCCD to conduct an outcome evaluation of LDD. Analysis was completed earlier this year, and a draft report was recently submitted to the Department. The Department has conducted an initial round of review of this report, and anticipate a final draft this summer.