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STRIDE: Seek, Test, Treat, Retain for HIV Positive Opioid Dependents
SOARING 2: eLearning System to Support RNR Principles
YOURS: Demonstration Project of Your Own Reentry System

Advancing Practice

A publication of The Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!)

April 2013

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Email us to suggest a topic for the next publication!
A message from ACE! Director Faye S. Taxman & Deputy Director Danielle S. Rudes

Making it Stick: Sustainability Strategies

In their book, Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die, Chip and Dan Heath (2007) offer six sustainability strategies: simplicity, unexpectedness, concreteness, credibility, emotions, and stories. The authors argue ideas [or innovations] do not “stick” with mere training. Instead, there is a need to “engage” organizations in a change process that ensures organizational actors: 1) learn the “facts” to support an idea/innovation; 2) understand how to apply the new ideas/innovation, and 3) advance the techniques regarding when to apply the new ideas/innovation. Applied to complex justice and treatment organizations implementation with justice-involved individuals requires creating learning environments to share information, review data, adhere to the new ideas/innovation, and advance internal and external coaches to fine-tune organizational efforts. To create sustainable change, these efforts should build capacity (i.e., knowledge, foundation and set expectations) and build resiliency (i.e., align to organization, refine to environment, and renovate to sustain).

This edition of Advancing Practice is devoted to efforts to help ideas and innovations “stick” in organizations. To do this, we draw upon our international colleagues from the Collaboration of Researchers for the Effective Development of Offender Supervision (CREDOS) to describe and discuss global efforts to develop and improve probation and parole services. Originally organized by Drs. Fergus McNeill (University of Glasgow), Peter Raynor (Swansea University), and Chris Trotter (Monash University), CREDOS’ annual open meeting seeks to advance efforts in probation supervision and community corrections. The general goals of CREDOS are to advance research by considering:

- How best to measure effectiveness in offender supervision;
- The nature and features of effective offender supervision;
- The characteristics, styles and practices of effective offender supervisors;
- The qualities and features of effective relationships between offenders and those that work with them, and
- The social, political, cultural, organizational and professional contexts of effective offender supervision and how these contexts impact upon it.

In this issue, we present articles by Chris Trotter (Monash University) on family case management, Lol Burke (Liverpool John Moores University) on new strategies to use “payment by results,” Ioan Durnescus (University of Bucharest) on understanding efforts to advance initial interviews of probationers, Shadd Maruna (Queen’s University of Belfast), Fergus McNeill (University of Glasgow), Stephen Farrall (University of Sheffield) and Claire Lightowler (Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services) on developing the documentary The Road From Crime, and Ryan Labrecque, Myrinda Schweitzer, and Paula Smith (University of Cincinnati) on a strategy to measure offender-officer interactions. Each article provides a different approach for “making it stick” in terms of advancing practice in the field of supervision and corrections.

Our issue also benefits from insights from other colleagues in the field. Laurie Robinson, a new Clarence J. Robinson Professor at George Mason University, provides a perspective on the enlarged role that federal leaders are undertaking in prisoner reentry. This article illustrates the role leaders can play in both the social marketing and developing effective strategies and practices in reentry. Likewise, Paula Dunn, Elisha Rivera, and Jonathan Skedelski (all U.S. Probation Officers from the Administrative Office of the Courts) spent time with us at the ACE! and report on their week in the world of research.
We also have a few updates on our exciting studies. Jennifer Lerch reports on Motivational Assistance Program to Initiate Treatment (MAPIT)—a randomized trial with Dr. Scott Walters (University of North Texas) and his research team. For the last year, we have been building the computerized intervention and now we are fielding the study. Jill Viglione and Victoria Goldberg report on a Bureau of Justice Assistance funded study—YOURs, Your Own Reentry System. In partnership with George Mason University’s Computer Game Design Program (with assistance by Dr. Scott Martin and Dr. Chris Trotten) several teams of students are designing smart phone applications/games to assist offenders with understanding risk and need assessment information. These efforts, as well as the RNR Simulation Tool (www.gmuace.org/tools) and SOARING2 (an eLearning tool) illustrate some of the applications to advance the field of practice.

Also in this issue, we continue our Triple P column. This time doctoral student and researcher Stephanie Maass presents insight from Professor Emeritus Paul Gendreau, Practitioner Rudy Perez, and Participant Rachel Miner. Each tells their own perspective on supervision. We also report on our progress presenting, publishing and preparing students as scholars and professionals. In fact, this month one of our former undergraduate research assistants, David Eber, took a position with Prison Fellowship. Congrats!

The theme “Making it Stick” resonates at ACE! because our work strives to advance policy, practice, and procedures. This issue also allows our international colleagues and local colleagues to share their efforts and experiences at “Making it Stick.” We are happy to share your successes and efforts in future editions. Feel free to email (ace@gmue.edu) material for the next edition by July 2013.

Faye S. Taxman & Danielle S. Rudes
Director & Deputy Director, Center of Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!)

References

Contributions to this issue of Advancing Practice have come from across the globe:
This year, ACE! launched the Risk, Need, Responsivity (RNR) Simulation Tool, developed to help jurisdictions apply the RNR framework into practice. The tool’s main goals include reducing recidivism and improving offender outcomes in user’s jurisdictions. Accompanying the launch of the tool, ACE! developed two publications (pictured below) describing the tool in detail. The Risk-Need-Responsivity Simulation Tool publication (pictured bottom left) is intended for justice professionals, providing general information about each of the three portals (The RNR Program Tool, Assess an Individual, Assess Jurisdiction’s Capacity), the intended uses, answers frequently asked questions, and provides real life examples to guide the user. The goal of The Technical Background of the Risk, Need, Responsivity (RNR) Simulation Tool Issue Brief (pictured bottom right) is to help users understand the components of the RNR model and the theoretical framework behind the RNR Simulation Tool.

The RNR Simulation Tool is available online at: [www.gmuace.org/tools/](http://www.gmuace.org/tools/) and the publications can be found at: [www.gmuace.org/research_rnr.html](http://www.gmuace.org/research_rnr.html). Please email rnrtool@gmu.edu for more specific information or to answer any questions about the tool.
Working with Families in Criminal Justice

By Chris Trotter, Director Monash Criminal Justice Research Consortium

This paper argues there are clear benefits from working with families in both youth and adult corrections. The backgrounds of many criminal offenders are characterized by family conflict and dysfunction, and family issues are one of the most commonly identified criminogenic needs among offenders under community supervision. Research suggests family interventions are one of the most effective methods in reducing offender recidivism (see Lipsey et al., 2010), and there are family intervention models that can be used successfully within criminal justice organizations. This paper outlines one particular model for working with families, Collaborative Family Work, and identifies situations in which the model is being used in justice settings in Australia.

Families and Criminal Behavior

Family relationships are a factor in the development of delinquent and criminal behavior. Longitudinal studies have shown relationships between family dysfunction and criminality (Turner, Hartman & Bishop, 2007). Studies have shown that inadequate family support, family problems and family disruption contribute to pathways into offending for women and male offenders (Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009; Wareham, Dembo & Poythress, 2009). Andrews and Bonta (2003) refer to family factors as a risk factor for delinquency and refer to “emotional neglect – lack of attachment to others and poor monitoring and supervision – learning of aggressive disruptive behavior and failure to acquire anti-criminal verbalizations” as being related to further offending (Andrews & Bonta, 2003, p. 223). Earlier work by Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) pointed to family dysfunction as the strongest predictor of delinquency.

There is evidence that family relationships are a factor in adult, as well as youth, offending. For example, a study by Visher (2013) found that fathers who are more strongly attached to their children after release from prison have lower recidivism including fewer conditions violations. There is evidence that adult prisoners rely on family for support while they are incarcerated and for support following their release and that case managers can help incarcerated people to connect with family (Shanahan & Agudeo, 2012).

Bonta et al. (2008) found family issues to be the most commonly identified criminogenic need emerging from a sample of risk assessments of adult offenders placed on probation in Canada. It was identified more often than drug use for example. It was also identified frequently for young offenders, although not as often as substance abuse. For both young and adult offenders, family issues were discussed in probation supervision (analyzed through tapes of interviews) more than any other issue.

Family Intervention can be Effective in Reducing Recidivism

It is clear, therefore, that family is an important factor in the development and continuation of criminal behavior. A number of meta-analyses have also found that family-based interventions can be effective in reducing recidivism (Farrington & Welsh, 2003; Woolfenden, Williams & Peat, 2002) although Dowden and Andrews (2003) caution that family based interventions, like other criminal justice interventions, are only likely to be effective if they are consistent with effective practice principles.
Models of Intervention

There are a number of models for working with young offenders and their families. Perhaps the most well-known models include Functional Family Therapy and Multisystemic Therapy (Sexton & Alexander, 2002). There are other models, however, including Problem Solving models (Malouff, Thorsteinsson & Shutte, 2007; Vuchinich, 1999). Most have been used with young people (under 18-years-old) rather than adults, although there are examples of family intervention models that have been used with adults. One example is Creating Lasting Family Connections, which has been used with incarcerated offenders in the US (McKiernan et al., 2013).

There are a number of ways in which family work may be implemented in criminal justice settings. By family work, I am referring to a series of structured family work sessions, which identify and work through family issues with young or adult offenders and their families. Three examples of implementation include: children’s courts deferring sentencing in order for a series of family work sessions to be undertaken, successful completion of the family work may then be taken into consideration in sentencing; family work being offered by probation and parole staff in response to risk assessments, which identify family as a criminogenic need; and virtual family work sessions via Skype, which begin in prison and become a condition of parole following release.

The Collaborative Family Work Model in Australia

Collaborative Family Work is a systemic problem solving model based on what works principles which has been used with many hundreds of families in criminal justice settings in Australia and the UK. It is most commonly delivered by probation and parole staff.

Six Steps of the Collaborative Family Work Model:

The workers delivering the model in Australia usually have qualifications in disciplines such as criminology, social work or psychology, however they are not generally trained family therapists. The workers are offered 15 to 20 hours training in the collaborative family work model, and in most cases offer between 6 and 10 family work sessions to offenders and their families. Two workers typically staff work sessions - usually the young person’s case manager plus another staff member who has an interest in family work.

I have undertaken four small-scale, multiphase case study evaluations of the model. The first involved sessions delivered by trained students on placement at a family welfare agency to families predominantly referred by child protection and juvenile justice agencies. The second involved school welfare workers and youth workers trained in the model working with young people and their families. The third involved young people who participated in family work following a court appearance at an Australian Children’s court. The fourth involved students on placement offering family work within a youth justice agency.

From these projects, I have completed 36 formal client evaluations of the interventions (Trotter, 2010). The family members responded to questions by the worker at the conclusion of the 6 to 10 sessions. Ninety-four percent (34/36) of the family members said that they were getting on better or much better now compared to when they first began the family work. Eighty-three percent (30/36) said that the problem they were most concerned about at the beginning of the family work was either much better or no longer present. Workers
surveyed upon completion of the work sessions, provided similar positive responses (Trotter, 2010).

A further project is currently being undertaken in youth justice in New South Wales in Australia whereby young people on justice orders are offered two family work sessions in detention and 4 to 8 sessions following release to the community. This is an on-going project and will provide a more rigorous evaluation of collaborative family work than has occurred to date. It also includes an analysis of recidivism.

Despite the limitations of the evaluations undertaken to date, the data suggest that probation and parole officers and other staff who work with offenders can, with training, successfully offer family work interventions to offenders and can achieve positive responses from family members.

**Conclusion**

It is clear that families play a role in the development of both pro-social and pro-criminal behavior, and that building natural support systems are important in furthering desistance efforts. The on-going and emerging research suggests that interventions with offenders, which target family issues can be successful in improving family relations for offenders and in reducing recidivism. Probation and parole officers and others who work with offenders can, with some training, provide short-term family interventions to incarcerated and community-based offenders. The Collaborative Family Work model is used for this purpose in criminal justice settings in Australia and in the UK, and provides an example of how work with families can be incorporated into the duties of staff and others who work with offenders.

**References**


‘Payment by Results’: Some Preliminary Methodological Issues and Research Challenges from the United Kingdom

By Lol Burke, Liverpool John Moores University

Payment by results (PbR) was first introduced in England and Wales as a means of delivering public services within conditions of economic austerity. Similar approaches are now being explored in the United States. For example, the State of Massachusetts is working with two non-profit groups to finance juvenile justice and homelessness programs with the promise of repayment only if the programs work. Perhaps the most high profile development is in New York City, where Goldman Sachs will invest $9.6 million in a new four-year program - designed and delivered by a social services provider aimed at reducing reoffending amongst those released from Rikers Island prison. If the program is successful in reducing reoffending by more than 10 percent, Goldman Sachs could receive up to $2.1 million profit on its original investment, but could also lose as much as $2.4 million if reoffending is not reduced (Chen, 2012).

There are two types of PbR. The first is based upon the activity undertaken where providers receive payments based on the number of activities they undertake and prices are based on the average cost of the service that the client receives (i.e., the number of hip replacement operations done by a health provider). The second type is based upon the outcomes achieved and providers pay according to the extent to which they achieve agreed outcomes (Roberts, 2011). The latter is envisaged by the Coalition government in England and Wales for the Criminal Justice System. As part of its ‘rehabilitation revolution’ it plans to apply PbR principles to all aspects of offender focused interventions by 2015. It is believed that by focusing on outcomes rather processes, and providing minimal prescription as to how these outcomes should be achieved, PbR models will drive efficiency and allocate resources to achieve the most impact. Moreover, by making some or all of a payment to a service contingent on that service delivering agreed outcomes, PbR potentially transfers risk away from the branch of government commissioning the service and towards the service provider because they will only get paid if outcomes are achieved. The service provider will have to raise some or all of the funds to deliver a service prior to being paid for the results. So, from a government perspective, not only is risk transferred to the provider, but payment is also deferred (which is no doubt an attractive proposition in the current economic climate).

So what can be learned from the UK pilots? The Rikers Island scheme is based upon the project currently being delivered and evaluated at HMP Peterborough, United Kingdom. This six year pilot was launched in September 2010 and is exclusively focused on those prisoners released from that establishment having served a sentence of less than 12 months. The target group is significant because this group is not subject to statutory supervision by the probation service in England and Wales. Investors (from the UK and USA) have put £5 Million in social impact bonds to fund the rehabilitation work and could earn a return of up to £8 Million from the government and the Big Lottery Fund if the rate of reoffending for all 3,000 offenders falls by at least 7.5%. There is some evidence that the Peterborough SIP has introduced some new funding into the system and thus transferred the risk away from government to non-governmental investors although there has also been concerns that the Peterborough scheme has merely siphoned off money from organizations which would previously have been given as grants. An evaluation of the HMP Peterborough scheme (Social Finance, 2012) has found some positive outcomes from its introduction. The researchers concluded that the fact that the project is securely funded for six years means it has time to become fully integrated into local provision. Moreover, because the project is not subject to onerous monitoring of all its inputs and processes (merely focusing on successful resettlement and reduced re-offending) – clients progress at a speed that suits them and to find the support which best meets their needs.

Implementation Issues

Despite these encouraging signals from the UK pilot, PbR remains a largely untested concept and the real test of its effectiveness will be when it is rolled out to scale.
There are a number of potential challenges involved with its implementation, some of which could be summarized as follows:

- The problem of all performance management systems is that they encourage service providers to concentrate on achieving outputs and outcomes that are included in the system. Too narrow a focus on outcome targets could stifle innovation. As such, they might neglect other measures even though they know that these are important.
- Providers might concentrate their efforts on individuals closest to achieving desired outcomes and provide only a bare minimum of support for those who are harder to help (Roberts, 2011). How do you avoid ‘cherry picking’ (i.e., concentrating on those individuals more likely to comply with the requirements of the program/intervention) and thereby creating perverse incentives?
- It requires the money to deliver the service up-front, which may discount smaller voluntary organizations and encourage sub-contracting by private companies. This may result in a disruption to (and even loss of) current providers who may not be equipped to make the transition to PbR.
- The costs of existing services are largely fixed so will need large cohorts to achieve significant savings. Evidence from other sectors suggests that whilst there were potential savings in terms of lower costs in negotiating prices and volumes, these were more than offset by increased expenditure involved in the recruitment of additional staff, higher costs of data collection, higher monitoring costs, and higher enforcement costs.
- An important lesson from desistance literature is that offending could increase or reduce due to factors outside of the proposed intervention. Even well executed programs often achieve only modest change and their impact tends to lessen between pilot projects and wider scale roll outs. If only small changes to outcomes are possible, this potentially creates problems for investors looking for a decent return.
- For many smaller locally based organizations ‘reducing reoffending’ is not their single or even one of their main objectives. Moreover, as Clinks (2010) has pointed out, outcomes such as improved self-esteem and relationships which are integral to the desistance process might be harder to measure and might lead to a greater emphasis on proving ‘soft’ outcomes. This might result in organizations prioritizing the offender management function which is more about signposting and hence more easily measurable (Dominey & Phillips, 2012).
- It will also need to be responsive to issues of diversity to ensure that appropriate services are provided for all offenders and not just those who fall into the most common demographic. In the case of community based services for women, the absence of reliable estimates of impact, the absence of evidence on reconviction and the small numbers involved in local schemes makes proving impact to a statistically significant level much harder (Gelsthorpe & Hedderman, 2012).

In adopting the business orientations and growth strategies of the private sector, some voluntary organizations may lose their claim to be distinctively different. The voluntary sectors increased proximity to government by delivering their contracts has come at the price of greater distance form their beneficiaries. While the role of the private sector has increased (and is likely to continue to do so) it could be argued that a culture of competition has fragmented the charitable sector and the increased mass of the voluntary sector working with offenders has not led to a stronger ‘voice’ for the group itself.

Methodological Challenges

The application of PbR undoubtedly presents significant methodological challenges for researchers seeking to measure its effectiveness. Some potential challenges for potential researchers could be summarized as follows:

- There will need to be a clear understanding of what is being measured and what are suitable outcomes. Many of those subject to community sentences have multiple needs and it is therefore difficult to attribute change(s) achieved to a particular intervention(s). This could result in a situation where several agencies whose intervention overlap claiming to have caused the improved outcomes (Disley et al., 2011). This will require robust measurement and evaluation of who does what and who is making the difference.
Many PbR schemes use reconviction rates as a measure of success but reconviction is of course not a straightforward measure of behavior change. If we take reducing reoffending as an example – the Ministry of Justice in England and Wales has calculated that there are six different measures of reoffending at present. Indeed, it would not appear to matter to the PbR model if offenders cease to offend, or merely become less easy to catch (Fox & Albertson, 2012).

Impact evaluations will need to take into account “distance traveled” as well as the starting points of clients coming into services, at what point the outcome has been achieved and whether results are measured at the individual or the cohort level.

When payments are based on the outcome of individuals it will be a challenge to develop a monitoring and payment system that is not overly complex and bureaucratic. Conversely, when payments are based on group outcomes they will need to be of a sufficient size to allow statistically robust conclusions to be drawn.

Will it Work?

PbR might have potential in some sectors where the client group is fairly large and homogeneous and service provision is highly integrated, measurement of outcomes is straightforward and the financial return on achievement of outcomes is easy to establish. Unfortunately, such conditions are rarely present in criminal justice work. The experience of applying the PbR approach in other areas of social policy - such as the ‘Welfare to work’ program in England and Wales has been somewhat mixed. In some programs it has provided the stimulus to drive up improvements in service delivery whilst in others there have been significant issues both in terms of how it was used during the contract period and in terms of measuring performance. PbR is not a panacea nor a means of delivering services on the cheap. Aligning incentives for providers with the needs of service users and wider policy goals will be challenging to say the least and is bound to fail if there is an absence of robust performance measures and data analysis to ensure a high standard of accountability.

References


Towards a More Comprehensive Understanding of Initial Interviews in Probation Practice

By Ioan Durnescu, University of Bucharest

Probation Service is a relatively new organization in Romania set up in 2001. The main responsibilities are providing evaluation reports to the prosecution and the court, supervising offenders under suspended sentence supervision or on liberty under supervision (for juveniles), and providing assistance and counseling upon request for those under supervision or in prison.

In Romania, Probation Service is organized near each County Court. Each local probation service employs between 5 to 20 probation counselors. In order to become a probation counselor one needs to hold a degree in law, psychology, sociology, social work or pedagogy. In 2012, there were 292 probation counselors, most of them with a degree in law (107), social work (85) or psychology (51). Most of the probation staff were employed after national competitions in 2001, 2004 and 2007.

Newcomers are included in one or two weeks training where they are familiarized with the work routine. After the induction training they are supervised by a more experienced probation counselor for one year.

In 2011, the average time for supervision in the community was 4.6 years per offender. Probation counselors supervised on average 53 cases and wrote 28 evaluation reports for suspects (Ministry of Justice, personal communication).

Most of the offenders sentenced to suspended sentence under supervision are first time offenders who committed minor offenses. Increasingly, the probationer’s crime profile is upgrading to include white color crime and other serious offenses.

The Research

The research took place in six local probation areas – Bucharest, Timisoara, Targoviste, Pitesti, Deva and Slatina. After an open call for volunteers, 20 probation counselors agreed to participate in the research. The sample’s demographic profile does not differ greatly from that of the general probation population: 16 probation counselors are women (out of 246 in the general population) and 4 are men (out of 46 in the general population); most of the subjects are between 31 and 40 years old, as in the general population. According to some probation counselors, the main reason for non-participation was the relatively intrusive nature of the data collection strategy: videotaping.

The participants were asked to submit videotapes with first interviews and supervision meetings with two different probationers. First meetings were recorded as they represent a perfect opportunity for probation counselors to clarify the roles and start working on building an effective relationship with offenders. Staff obtained written consent from all participating probationers and were asked to act as though they were not being observed.

Between January and August 2012, the probation counselors submitted recordings of their first interviews with new probationers. Some were only able to submit one interview. When two interviews were submitted researchers included only the one with the highest general score in the analysis.

Researchers developed a coding manual based on similar past research (Bourgon et al. 2010; Dowden & Andrews, 2004; Raynor et al., 2010; Trotter, 2009). Codes included: interview organization (noise, proximity, psychological atmosphere, space), structuring skills (warm up, the existence of a beginning, middle and end, the existence of a clear direction, summarizing at the end of interview, setting up the next meeting), relation-
ship skills (role clarification, use of authority, empathy, enthusiasm, summarization, paraphrasing, honesty, humor, self-disclosure, open questions), pro-social modeling (rewarding, confronting, showing respect), needs evaluation (explain the procedure and the aim, clear questions, clarification, involving the client, hierarchizing the needs, identify strong points, identify community resources), motivational interviewing (support, avoid confrontation, reflecting, amplifying discrepancies and use of self-motivating statements).

The main difference between our coding manual and manuals used previously is inclusion of skill units that correspond to a practice based on the desistance model: collaborative task setting, use of the strengths, use of the community resources, etc. (Burnett, 1992; Farrall, 2002; McNeill, 2006; Rex, 1999). At the same time, our manual did not include the use of cognitive behavioral techniques and problem solving since they are more intervention skills and not engagement or evaluation skills that are needed in the first meeting. We will evaluate these intervention skills when evaluating follow-up meetings in future work.

Three researchers scored the videotapes independently, and then met to discuss discrepancies in a consensus meeting. Each skill was evaluated between 1 (skill not existing) to 5 (very good command of that skill). After the consensus meeting, all the skills were attributed to a final score. Since the final score was determined in a consensus meeting, the inter-rater reliability test was not considered essential. After the first five sessions, the scores became very close to each other. This was used instead of using statistical techniques of inter-rater reliability.

**The Results**

The mean general score for using the skills and characteristics is 3.5 (standard deviation = .301) out of 5. Overall, probation counselors are generally professional. Differences exist across individual skill sets.

*Figure 1. Scores on Skill Sets*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Sets</th>
<th>Mean Scores (M)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation skills</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship skills</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview organization</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average score is 3.5, that is, some are above average and some beneath it. It seems that probation counselors have good skills for organizing an interview, for pro-social modeling, engagement and structuring the sessions. Use of motivational interviewing and evaluation skills did not receive high scores.

Looking at the relationship skills (Figure 2), skills such as use of self-disclosure, reflecting, and expectation...
clarification ranked well below the average of general scores. Relationship skills range from 1 to 5. This observation is in line with past research. For instance, Trotter and Evans (2010) noted a relatively low use of self-disclosure among their sample. They also observed that when used, self-disclosure triggers positive responses from the clients and therefore this is an important engagement skill.

Although probation counselors give the impression of a good use of empathy, they score quite low on reflecting thoughts and feelings. Empathy is defined as, “mentally entering into the feeling or spirit of the offender and communicating that understanding back to the offender” (Masters, 2004, p. 40). Empathy has two parts: understanding and communicating back that understanding. The probation counselors from our sample display good skills in showing understanding (mainly by non-verbal communication), but are not effective in communicating back this understanding. Scores received for reflecting the feelings (M=1.8) and thoughts (M=2.7) suggest a need for more training in these areas.

Figure 2. Relationship Skills
Probation Staff with Different Educational Backgrounds

As previously noted, probation counselors in Romania have different educational backgrounds. Figure 3 demonstrates small differences that exist across the main educational backgrounds. The small differences illustrate how the organizational norms assist in creating common skill sets, regardless of the differences in training and curricula.

![Figure 3. Scores According to the Educational Background](image)

To understand these similarities, researchers interviewed 16 participants asking: how do you explain the way you work with offenders? In answering this question, probation counselors provided multiple explanations, presented below in no specific order.

![Figure 4. How Do You Explain the Way You Work with Offenders Now?](image)

The numbers presented in Figure 4 reflect the number of times when that particular idea appeared in the subject’s answers. Some of the subjects gave more than one answer to the question. It appears that training in the university and on-the-job are highly appreciated. Apart from this, interaction with colleagues and clients were also mentioned quite often. Almost all interviewees mentioned peer learning as an important part of their process of becoming a probation counselor. This resonates strongly with another study conducted by McNeill (2001), which concluded that social workers consider their peers the main source of learning.
As one of the participants stated:

“There are no differences between social workers, psychologists and us (lawyers) ... it was a time when this difference was obvious ... we, as lawyers, are more direct and maybe you look sometimes more superficial but the social worker analyses more, discusses more, and looks into the beneficiary’s problems. This is what I have learned from my social work colleagues by watching them. I watched them easily because of the rooms we have to share ... “ (Probation counselor Bucharest).

Initial training within the organization, alongside the social learning among colleagues and interactions with offenders, create an institutional behavior that is not necessarily dependent to the initial educational background of the probation staff. Education-based differences between probation counselors still exist, but they are not significant. To a certain extent, these differences can be shaped through professional socialization.

Organizational culture, and the process of professional socialization, plays an important role in the formation of practice skills. No training package should ignore this dimension if long-term effects are desired. Probably new ways of delivering training should be innovated in order to use constructively the natural learning processes that take place in one organization. Techniques like guided observation, modeling, debating and so on could be such tools to enhance a sustainable learning process.

References:

Documenting the Road from Crime

By Shadd Maruna, Queen’s University Belfast, Fergus McNeill, University of Glasgow, Stephen Farrall, University of Sheffield, & Claire Lightowler, Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services

Traditional criminological research asks how and why individuals initially get involved in patterns of criminal behavior. Newer research has asked instead how and why individuals are able to break free of these patterns of offending behavior. Over the past decade, such research on “desistance from crime” has become among the most popular areas of study in criminology. Indeed, two prominent criminologists, in fact, have recently argued that “Theorizing and research about desistance from crime is one of the most exciting, vibrant, and dynamic areas in criminology today” (Paternoster & Bushway, 2010). Such research has obvious implications for applied efforts to rehabilitate prisoners and reduce recidivism rates. Yet, until recently, such research has been little known outside of academia, where even the term “desistance” can be met with puzzled looks of “not another academic jargon word.”

Over the past year, the four of us have sought to change this in a project known as the “Desistance Knowledge Exchange.” This exchange, involving a series of meetings and conferences across every region of the UK, was very much a two-way street. We sought to introduce academic research on desistance to practitioners and service users from probation, parole and prisons, but we also very much sought to learn from such frontline perspectives to improve desistance research and theory in genuine dialogue. The Desistance Knowledge Exchange was generously supported with funding from the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council and the Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!) at George Mason University, but has very much carried on since the exhaustion of these funds with an active weblog and ongoing meetings and talks, now taking on the shape of a grassroots movement.

At the heart of the project has been the production of a 45-minute documentary film called “The Road from Crime” which explores the desistance process. The film (directed by Eamonn Devlin), developed by Lagan Media Productions, is available online free to view or download by all who are interested in learning about desistance (http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/the-road-from-crime).

Former prisoner turned senior probation officer Allan Weaver from Scotland in a still from the documentary “The Road from Crime.”
The documentary takes the form of a journey and centers around the life story of Allan Weaver, a former prisoner turned probation professional in Scotland (see Weaver, 2008). Contributors to the film include some of the most prominent ex-prisoner activists in the UK, such as Bobby Cummines of UNLOCK and Mark Johnson of User Voice, as well as eight other, less prominent former and current prisoners and probationers. Other voices converging in the film include those of probation officers, ex-prisoners’ family members, policy makers and desistance researchers in both the UK and US, including ACE! Director Faye Taxman who tours with Weaver through “Prison Row” in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Knowledge Exchange Project has had an immediate impact in criminal justice discussions around the United Kingdom. The blog has had over 35,000 visits since its launch in August 2011; a “desistance evidence summary” that we produced has been downloaded over 800 times; the film’s webpage has been visited over 6,500 times, and the film has been watched online over 4,800 times.

The Probation Chiefs’ Association in the UK intends to show the film at their 2013 Annual Conference (and have purchased over 200 copies of the DVD). London Probation Trust funded two workshops for staff members and purchased 50 copies of the film for use in staff and service development. The film has also been shown at several Probation Trust and third sector conferences. In Scotland, the film’s premiere included an address by the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and screenings and/or workshops were requested by policy and analytical services colleagues in the Government, by the Parole Board of Scotland, and by the Scottish Prison Service (SPS). The film has also been discussed in recent evidence to the Scottish Parliament’s Audit Committee and a screening has been arranged for the Justice Committee (February 2013). In Northern Ireland, screenings have been provided for the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) and for the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), as well as for the Youth Justice Agency (four showings across the different regions of Northern Ireland) and the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (a leading justice reform organization).

Indications of the impact of this dialogue have also started to emerge. At the practice level, Merseyside Probation Trust funded workshops to assist them in piloting a “desistance-based approach” in one Local Delivery Unit. Avon and Somerset appointed a ‘Desistance Development Worker’ who has been working with local service users to inform service development and re-design and utilizing the film in all of her work. HM Prison High Point recently conducted a ‘desistance audit’ of the prison and has declared itself to be the first ‘desistance-focused’ prison. Similar developments are appearing elsewhere.

References
Federal Leaders: Larger Role on Reentry

By Laurie Robinson, Clarence J. Robinson Professor of Criminology, Law and Society, GMU

Ever since the prisoner reentry movement was launched under Attorney General Janet Reno in the 1990s (Robinson & Travis, 2000), federal leadership in this area has largely focused on funding state and local initiatives and research (Travis, 2007). While those dollars have been significant -- nearly $300 million has been appropriated under the Second Chance Act alone since its passage in 2008 -- a strong federal voice and policy muscle on reentry have been largely missing.

But that is changing. Over the last two years, with the launch of the Federal Interagency Reentry Council chaired by Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr., significant policy strings are being pulled to advance reintegration of the formerly incarcerated into society. That work has implications for both criminal justice practitioners and policymakers across the country.

Launching the Federal Reentry Council

In January, 2011, Attorney General Holder convened the first meeting of a new Federal Reentry Council. It was initially composed of 17 Cabinet departments and agencies (including Justice, Health & Human Services, Housing & Urban Development [HUD], Veterans Affairs, Education, Labor, Agriculture, Office of Personnel Management, Social Security Administration, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC]); later the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Small Business Administration, among others, have come to the table, bringing the total to 20 participants. The Council’s goal, at twice-yearly meetings, has been to coordinate an action and policy agenda across the federal government to help individuals returning from incarceration become productive citizens, while at the same time reducing recidivism and saving collateral costs of incarceration.

A staff-level working group, including representatives from 20 departments and agencies and co-chaired by Justice Department staff Amy Solomon and Marlene Beckman, meets monthly to support the Council’s agenda.

While serving in the U.S. Department of Justice as Assistant Attorney General, the author was privileged to sit at the table with the Reentry Council and participate in its meetings. From the vantage point of long experience in Washington, this work is unprecedented: Attorney General Holder is personally engaged in the Reentry Council meetings and chairs each one in his conference room. Cabinet members generally attend the sessions themselves, rather than sending surrogates. They toss aside talking points (rare for Washington), engage, and problem-solve, enthusiastically sharing agency updates and personal perspectives.

The results of this cross-government collaboration are already promising.

Clarifying Myths: Eligibility of Ex-Offenders for Public Housing and TANF

An early product of the Reentry Council has been a series of 22 “MythBusters” intended to clarify often difficult-to-decipher federal laws and policies affecting the formerly incarcerated. These one-page fact sheets address topics ranging from access to public housing and child support to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). For example:

- **Myth: Individuals who are convicted of a crime are banned from public housing.** In fact, according to HUD, only two narrow categories of offenders are excluded -- individuals who produce methamphetamine on public housing property and sex offenders subject to lifetime registration. And yet there has been real confusion about this not only among former prisoners and their families, but also among public housing officials. As a result of the Council’s work, HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan sent a letter in 2011 to every public housing authority director in the nation and to multi-family housing managers clarifying the policy.

- **Myth: A parent with a felony conviction cannot receive TANF/welfare.** This MythBuster makes clear that
the lifetime ban in the 1996 welfare law for TANF recipients applies only to convicted drug felons, and, even then, only 11 states have retained the ban in its entirety. The remaining states dropped the ban altogether or modified it.

**Looking at Collateral Consequences of Convictions**

The collateral consequences of criminal convictions have long been recognized; these can extend to public benefits, voting, employment and housing, and some have posited that they have greatest impact on individuals of color (Pinard, 2010). Recognizing the importance of this issue, Congress -- with the strong support of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) -- directed the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) in 2007 to catalog the collateral consequences of conviction for each U.S. jurisdiction (Pub.L. 110-177 Sec. 510, 121 Stat. 2534, 2544). NIJ provided funding to the American Bar Association in 2009 to collect and analyze this material and prepare a national inventory of the collateral consequences of conviction. That product -- now available at http://www.abacollateralconsequences.org/ -- catalogs information for 10 states and the federal system (others are being added) and constitutes a valuable resource for individuals, defense counsel, prosecutors, and other justice system stakeholders.

Four months after the Reentry Council was launched, Attorney General Holder addressed the issue of collateral consequences. He wrote to all state attorneys general to ask them to review their state laws and regulations to see whether any create unnecessary barriers that would serve as bars to successful reintegration without posing a risk to public safety.

**Getting Help for Reentering Veterans**

Roughly 10% of prison inmates nationally are veterans (Mumola & Noonan, 2004). Yet the process of ensuring that federal benefits reach these individuals as they return to the community has not, in the past, been a smooth one. At the first meeting of the Federal Reentry Council, Veterans Administration (VA) Secretary Eric Shinseki passionately addressed the need to help this population. Just identifying veterans behind bars has been a challenge; in the past, the VA has had to rely on self-reports. Now -- with the Reentry Council’s support -- the VA is testing an electronic identification system to quickly identify veteran inmates as soon as they arrive at an institution. Through this system, VA field staff can be notified quickly so that engagement with incarcerated veterans -- and notice about available services -- can begin at a much earlier stage (Personal communication with Sean C. Clark, National Coordinator, Veterans Justice Outreach Program, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, February 25, 2013).

**Employment: Breaking New Ground for Ex-Offenders**

The employment challenges facing prisoners returning to the community are enormous (Holzer, Raphael & Stoll, 2003). And yet we know that having a job is critical to successful reentry (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010).

The Federal Reentry Council has tackled employment barriers head-on, with the EEOC, the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Labor in the lead. Last year, the EEOC issued important guidance for employers regarding the use of arrest and conviction records. Citing Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the EEOC (2012) said assessments of job applicants must be made on an individual basis; employers cannot rely on blanket policies to reject everyone with a criminal record. Instead, it encouraged a threefold approach looking at specifics of the job; the nature and seriousness of the crime; and the period of time since the offense occurred. The guidance also requires employers to differentiate between arrests and convictions.

The Labor Department (2010) developed formal guidance based on these EEOC principles, one directed to the public workforce system, the most recent to federal contractors and subcontractors (who employ 22% of the U.S. workforce).

And the FTC (2012) last August -- in a closely watched ruling in U.S. v. HireRight Solutions, Inc. -- levied a heavy fine of $2.6 million on a background screening firm for violation of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA)
relating to criminal records. According to the FTC, the company failed in its accurate reporting of consumers’ criminal records -- (e.g., erroneously reporting criminal histories for consumers who did not have them because of poor record matches, and failing to note where criminal records had been expunged).

Implications of the Federal Reentry Council’s Work

It is too early to tell whether the work of the Federal Reentry Council will make a lasting mark. Only time will tell. But there are several reasons for optimism:

• **The time was right:** Unlike prior eras when one stepped gingerly in advancing any crime initiative that was not labeled “tough,” recent years have seen strong bipartisan support for issues like reentry - witness support on both sides of the aisle for the Second Chance Act. And budget pressures in the states have triggered major political realignments in areas like prison building. The Reentry Council has benefited from this changed environment.

• **Cabinet members’ personal engagement:** The personal and passionate involvement of members of the President’s Cabinet in the Reentry Council has given greater weight to its work. In Washington, this is not insignificant.

• **Career staff in 20 agencies are deeply invested:** Another secret to the Council’s productivity is the staff-level Working Group. These federal civil servants are strongly engaged with the initiative’s goals, and attendance at its regular meetings -- two years later -- has not diminished.

• **Leadership is strong.** Reflecting his personal commitment, Eric Holder has spent enormous time on this initiative, although its political payoff for the Administration is limited. Amy Solomon, who has devoted 20 years of her career to reentry, and longtime career lawyer Marlene Beckman are national experts. All three have brought enthusiasm and personal charisma to this work -- and they are having an impact.

• **The federal cross-agency relationships are likely long-lived.** The career staff on the Working Group will undoubtedly outlast the Obama Administration - and the expiration of the Cabinet-level Council. These working relationships will likely benefit federal-level reentry work for years - or decades - to come.

For more information on the Reentry Council please visit www.reentrypolicy.org.

References


Probation and Parole Officer Adherence to the Core Correctional Practices: An Evaluation of 755 Offender-Officer Interactions

By Ryan Labrecque, M.S., Myrinda Schweitzer, M.A., & Paula Smith, Ph.D.
University of Cincinnati

In response to Martinson’s (1974) review of offender treatment literature and subsequent proclamation that “nothing works,” there has been a growing movement to investigate the effectiveness of correctional interventions (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000). Most notably Canadian psychologists Paul Gendreau, Robert Ross, Don Andrews, and James Bonta challenged the “nothing works” doctrine by leading an effort to delineate the characteristics that distinguish effective from ineffective treatment (Andrews et al., 1990). Their focus on knowledge cumulation and “evidence-based corrections” has facilitated the identification of “what works” within correctional rehabilitation, including the specific criteria for optimizing effectiveness along clinically and psychologically relevant dimensions (Smith, Gendreau, & Swartz, 2009). Below, we summarize these findings, collectively referred to as the “principles of effective intervention” (Andrews, 1995; Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Gendreau, 1996).

Scholars have used these principles to develop a set of core correctional practices (CCPs) that are designed to increase the therapeutic potential of correctional programs (Dowden & Andrews, 2004). Since their inception in the 1980s, these practices have evolved as a result of ongoing empirical evaluation. Andrews and Kiessling (1980) first introduced five CCPs (effective use of authority, anticriminal modeling and reinforcement, problem solving, use of community resources, and interpersonal relationships) that were later expanded into a training curriculum (see Andrews & Carvell, 1998). In 1989, Gendreau and Andrews added to this list of practices with the development of the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI). The CPAI is an instrument designed to evaluate how closely correctional treatment programs adhere to the known principles of effective correctional treatment (Smith & Schweitzer, 2012). The CPAI has gone through several revisions, including the CPAI-2000, and most recently the CPAI-2010 (Gendreau, Andrews, & Theriault, 2010).

The eight service delivery skills identified in the CPAI-2010 are:

• **Anticriminal modeling** – officers model for offenders by engaging in prosocial behaviors and reinforcing them when they do the same.

• **Effective reinforcement** – officers reinforce a specific behavior that includes immediate statements of approval and support and the reasons why this behavior is desirable followed by consideration of the short- and long-term benefits associated with continued use of the behavior.

• **Effective disapproval** – officers communicate disapproval for a specific behavior that includes immediate statements of disapproval and the reasons why this behavior is undesirable followed by consideration of the short- and long-term costs associated with continued use of the behavior and a clear demonstration of an alternate, prosocial behavior.

• **Effective use of authority** – officers guide offenders toward compliance, which includes focusing their message on the behavior exhibited, being direct and specific concerning their demands and specifying the offender’s choices and attendant consequences.

• **Structured learning** – officers use behavioral strategies to assist offenders in developing prosocial skills to avoid or manage high-risk situations. Officers teach skills in a structured manner that involves defining, modeling, and rehearsing the skill followed by the constructive feedback. Likewise, offenders must practice the skill in increasingly difficult situations.
• **Problem solving** – a specific social skill that officers teach offenders to address a variety of high-risk situations.

• **Cognitive restructuring** – occurs when officers help offenders generate descriptions of problematic situations, the related thoughts and feelings, and then help offenders identify risky thinking and practice more prosocial alternatives.

• **Relationship skills** – effective officers possess several critical relationship skills including warm, open, nonjudgmental, empathetic, flexible, engaging, solution-focused, and directive to name a few.

These CCPs have been validated on more than 700 individual adult and juvenile programs by correlating scores with offender recidivism (Lowenkamp, 2004; Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Smith, 2006; Matthews, Hubbard, & Latessa, 2001). For the most part, these CCPs were applied to correctional programs, focusing on the treatment component of the programming. Taxman (2002) outlined how these core correctional practices could be employed by supervision staff as part of their routine interactions with offenders, and demonstrated the effectiveness of reduced offender outcomes through an application focused on relationship skills, problem solving and cognitive restructuring with attention to criminogenic needs (Taxman, 2008). Such research on CCPs has resulted in recent initiatives to train community supervision officers to use these CCPs in their face-to-face interactions with offenders, including Proactive Community Supervision (Taxman, Shepardson, & Byrne, 2004), the Strategic Training Initiative in Community Supervision (STICS) model (Bourgon, Bonta, Rugge, Scott, & Yessine, 2010), the Staff Training Aimed at Reducing Re-Arrest (STARR) model (Robinson, Vanbenschoten, Alexander, & Lowenkamp, 2011), and the Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS) model (Smith, Schweitzer, Labrecque, & Latessa, 2012). Inherent in all of these initiatives is the idea that training on CCPs will influence the skills used by officers during contact sessions with offenders.

**Our Study**

Here, we present the findings of a study examining the effect training on CCPs has on subsequent officer use of skills. Participants in the study include 44 probation and parole officers from four regional juvenile and adult community supervision departments in one large mid-western state. A site coordinator assigned officers to one of two groups - trained in the EPICS model or untrained.

All of the officers assigned to the trained group attended a three-day EPICS training, which included visual presentations, demonstrations of skills, workbook exercises, and several opportunities for officers to practice skills and receive feedback. Following the initial training, officers and supervisors participated in 24 monthly coaching sessions led by University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute (UCCI).

**Use of Core Correctional Practices**

In order to evaluate the impact of the training initiative and coaching process, all officers (including untrained officers) submitted audio-recordings of interactions with offenders. Officers submitted at least one audio monthly and began submission six months after receiving training. Trained UCCI staff listened to each audiotape and measured adherence to the eight service delivery skills identified in the CPAI-2010 (Gendreau et al., 2010). Specifically, items were scored as 0 if the officer had the opportunity to use the skill, but did not, .5 if the officer used the skill, but missed major steps, and 1 if the officer demonstrated proficient use of the skill. Yes or no items were scored as 0 = no and 1 = yes. Only items where the officer had an opportunity to use the skill in the session were included. On each audiotape, the total scores for each skill were divided by the total number of items in each skill that the officer had the opportunity to use in the session. This produced a range of potential scores for each skill from .00 to 1.00. In order to obtain only one score per skill for each officer, all of the scores for each skill were added together for each officer and divided by the total number of audiotapes he or she submitted.

There were 24 trained and 20 untrained officers that submitted a total of 755 recorded offender-officer interactions. The two groups of officers were compared on the variables of gender, race, and years of service. No significant differences were found.
Table 1 shows trained officers were rated significantly higher than untrained officers on their adherence to the six CCPs of anticriminal modeling, effective disapproval, problem solving, structured learning, cognitive restructuring, and relationship skills \((p < .05)\). The effect size, \(d\), of these group differences ranges from .9 to 2.1. Trained officers did not differ from untrained officers on the ratings for adherence to the two skills of effective reinforcement \((p = .614)\) or effective use of authority \((p = .956)\).

Table 1 also shows trained officers were rated satisfactorily 50% of the time or more in four of the eight CCPs: structured learning \((M = .58)\), effective reinforcement \((M = .62)\), relationship skills \((M = .69)\), and effective use of authority \((M = .91)\). In comparison, untrained officers were rated satisfactorily by this same standard in only two areas: effective reinforcement \((M = .64)\) and effective use of authority \((M = .91)\).

**Conclusion**

In this study, both the trained and untrained officers displayed high fidelity \((M > .50)\) in the two CCPs of effective reinforcement and effective use of authority. This finding suggests community supervision agencies may already be effective in training officers in these two skill areas or that the role of the community supervision officer generally supports these skills, regardless of any additional CCP training (i.e., EPICS). Further, the near equivalence of the two groups ratings indicate there may not be any additional benefit in these two areas from the added CCP training beyond what is achieved through the current standard practices.

The trained officers received statistically higher ratings in the CCPs of anticriminal modeling, effective disapproval, problem solving, structured learning, cognitive restructuring, and relationship skills. Future research should examine the extent to which the use of CCPs is directly related to training in the EPICS model or similar community supervision models.

Despite significant improvements in skill usage, the trained group was only rated satisfactorily 50% of the time.
or more on two additional CCPs compared to the untrained group: structured learning and relationship skills. This suggests that training and coaching alone are not enough to improve officer service delivery skills. Future research should examine the importance of additional factors that may influence the likelihood of successful implementation of CCPs within community supervision including organizational harmony, agency response to new initiatives, staff turnover, and managerial support. Finally, future research should continue to evaluate the effectiveness of CCP training on officer use of skills and the ratings of these skills should be correlated with offender recidivism.

References
A Week as a Visitor at ACE!

By Paula Dunn, Elisha Rivera, Jonathan Skedelelski, U.S. Probation Officers

We are all currently participants in a Leadership Development Program (LDP) through the Federal Judicial Center. This program is a three-year program that teaches and develops leadership skills through a combination of formal instruction, project-based learning and one-on-one interaction with, and observation of, community leaders. The final phase of this program involves completing a temporary duty assignment chosen by participants that is a model for leadership—we chose Dr. Faye Taxman. Dr. Taxman has been a research leader in the field of community corrections. Dr. Taxman’s work harmoniously incorporates two seemingly incongruent principles: recidivism reduction through evidence-based practices (EBPs) and policy adherence into an ideology for community corrections. Additionally, she is an academic leader as a producer of practices and tools for front line criminal justice workers. Therefore, we viewed working with ACE! as an excellent opportunity to observe leadership and management practices from a well-respected organization, while simultaneously learning the most recent research that directly impacts our field.

Revisions in policy and practice within the Office of Probation and Pretrial Services (OPPS) system are pushing our organization toward becoming an outcome driven system. To that end, implementing EBPs goes hand-in-hand with meeting this goal. Over the past several years, the OPPS (within the Administrative Office of the United States Courts) has made significant efforts to “change the climate” in Probation and Pretrial Services, by working to raise awareness and implement EBPs. One national initiative is the development and implementation of a fourth generation risk and needs assessment tool for both probation and pretrial services. Every district received training in these assessment tools and most have implemented them in their daily practices. The OPPS then developed and began implementing a skills training curriculum for officers for direct services with offenders called Strategic Techniques Aimed to Reduce Re-arrest (STARR). Rooted in clinical skills, STARR, and EBP, are effective with a criminal justice population (e.g., motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioral techniques and proper use of authority). Finally, there have been major changes in the development and use of OPPS’ data-collection system. Specifically, a data collection system called the Decision Support System (DSS) provides a framework for collecting and analyzing data related to supervision and investigation services. The DSS will enable districts to make more informed policy and supervision decisions based on up to date and relevant information.

Implementing EBPs in the larger field of community corrections has been a monumental task for agencies to achieve. We struggle within the U.S. Probation Office with clearly defining the probation officers’ daily practices so they are consistent with the principles of EBPs. The guide for U.S. Probation Office supervision practices, known as the Monograph 109 underwent major revisions to promote the use of EBPs in the supervision of offenders. This is an important step toward the goal of becoming a results-based organization. The Monograph lays out key concepts that guide probation officers to work with offenders to successfully transition back to the community while on supervision and beyond. However, the Monograph left the specific details for the most of the day-to-day practices up to each local district. For example, the U.S. Probation Office of the Southern District of New York (SD/NY) is implementing the concepts of the revised Monograph by developing policies and practices that are effective in supervision to maximize the measurable reduction in offender recidivism. In these efforts, SD/NY created an Evidence Based Practices Advisory Group. The purpose of the group is to guide the implementation of EBP by reviewing current policies and practices, determining appropriate areas
for training, and making recommendations how to make policies consistent with EBP.

During our week at ACE!, we learned about their current projects. We were impressed with the utility of the many programs and tools that ACE! developed and found each of these programs to have applicability toward our current operations. For example, the MAPIT tool which utilizes a computerized brief therapy (rather than in-person delivery) to deliver motivational interviewing (MI) to a criminal justice population may provide cost and time savings in the application of motivational interviewing. A secondary benefit is that this tool could help teach MI skills to probation officers. Additionally, we found the RNR Simulation Tool exciting. This tool could meet many needs in the supervision process from direct interventions to program evaluation while guiding districts toward efficient allocation of scarce resources to higher-risk offenders by using risk levels and criminogenic needs to better match offenders to the appropriate community resources. Districts can also utilize this program to help assess the strengths of their current contract and non-contract programs. Finally, the RNR Tool provides districts with a database to further guide officers toward appropriate referrals. Moreover, the YOUR project—a program still in development—also guides probation officers to work more closely with offenders through a process that promotes offender engagement in the supervision process. Likewise, SOARING 2 provides online training in the major concepts of EBP in community corrections. The use of coaches, shown as an effective training method, improves retention of these skills.

Another experience we had at ACE! was to accompany the research team to a training session at the State of Maryland Office of Problem Solving Courts. At these meetings, ACE! trained managers and staff on how to use data from their statistical reports (called SMART Performance Reports) in evaluating their programs. This training reinforced the value of not only collecting data, but the importance of collecting the right data. SD/NY’s has a Reentry Court initiative with characteristics similar to Maryland’s Problem Solving Courts. We learned the importance of assessing whether or not the court is addressing the behaviors it targets by looking at the correct variables. As noted during the training, “what gets measured, gets done!”

Throughout our leadership program, we studied management practices and leadership approaches to organizational change. Some issues common during organizational change include difficulty in getting staff buy-in, dealing with resistance, and improving communication and collaboration. We were fortunate to have the opportunity to observe first-hand Dr. Taxman and her team as they assisted the senior management of the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to devise strategies to resolve these very issues. It was exciting to observe how the ACE! staff facilitated the discussion with senior management to develop strategies to address barriers to change.

Our experience with ACE! was invaluable as we continue to support and lead EBP initiatives in our organizations. Having a research perspective is vital to developing policies and practices that improve our outcomes. Essentially, Dr. Taxman’s expertise in community corrections, coupled with her experience with organizational change, provided a wonderful opportunity to see how research translates into practice.
MAPIT: Motivational Assistance Program to Initiate Treatment

By Jennifer Lerch, Research Associate at ACE!

MAPIT (Motivational Assistance Program to Initiate Treatment) is a multi-site, randomized control trial funded by the National Institute of Drug Abuse. Led by Drs. Faye Taxman (George Mason University) and Scott Walters (University of North Texas Health Science Center), this study addresses the question: What is the best way to motivate probationers to initiate and remain in substance abuse treatment and/or HIV testing and care (if necessary)? MAPIT tests the impact of motivational interviewing (MI) delivered via a computerized program versus face-to-face counseling. Both of these delivery modes are two session interventions delivered at the beginning of a client’s probation. This study is the first to compare two different modes of delivering MI to a criminal justice population.

The face-to-face counseling MI session addresses the same information as the MAPIT computerized program in a closely matched structure to the sessions. MAPIT is a fully automated, interactive program that targets an individual’s internal motivations to make changes in substance abuse (alcohol and drugs) and related behavior (HIV risk, offending risks). The program uses text-to-speech technology that allows the narrator to read (almost) anything so that the script is dynamic and customizable. Following the tenets of MI, the program tailors all reflections, information, or suggestions based on the participant’s responses throughout the session and participant information collected before the session. Both MAPIT and the face-to-face MI sessions produce customized feedback reports for the client to take with them after the sessions. MAPIT presents the participant with information regarding their static and dynamic risks of re-offending, the consequences of substance use they experience, their amount of use as compared to others, and HIV testing status. The participant is then able to create a customized plan for succeeding on probation which includes strategies to stop substance use. In the planning process, there are also custom text/email reminders that the participant may opt to receive about the tasks they selected to complete. This study launched in February 2013. In total 600 probationers will be enrolled in the study with 300 recruited from each site.

YOURS: Your Own Reentry System

By Jill Viglione & Victoria Goldberg, Graduate Research Assistants at ACE!

Probation is a process that can seem daunting to both those under supervision for the first time and those previously supervised. Typically, probationers are steered through the process by probation officers (POs), without much control over what they want their experience to be like. While probation is a sanction, it is also a means of helping offenders return to the community and reshape their lives after criminal involvement. The focus of the YOURS project is to design a demonstration of tools probationers can use to monitor their own progress and influence their decisions regarding “people, places, and things” that affect their ability to be crime and drug-free. The goal is to empower the individual with information about their past behaviors and the results of those behaviors to improve future choices. For example, in the probation system, POs use risk assessment tools and supervision plans to direct probationers in accomplishing their goals and succeeding while on probation. These are agency “tools,” but they are not tools for clients. Through our work at ACE!, we recognize that there is both room for improvement in this process and a need to reorient supervision to focus on the actions and decisions made by the probationers. One key target is to increase the role and voice of probationers in laying out their goals and deciding how they can be successful on probation. Through the YOURS project, ACE! is currently collaborating with George Mason University’s Computer Game Design Program to develop an innovative and interactive mobile application for an iPad or a Smartphone that educates and guides probationers to make key decisions about their goals while directing them toward the steps needed to achieve those goals and how to use the “data” to assess their own progress. The goal is to increase individual probationers’ investment in their probation experience and ultimately put them in the “driver seat” of their own destiny.
Hearing from the Experts: A Practitioner, A Participant and a Professor

By Stephanie Maass, Research Associate at ACE!

One way of understanding critical issues in corrections is to ask the “experts” their thoughts. But, experts come in all forms! In this issue, ACE! Research Associate Stephanie Maass asked a practitioner, a participant, and a professor the same questions about principles of effective interventions.

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Three key issues with adherence to the principles of effective intervention:

1. Availability of resources (i.e., funding, training, programming, evaluation)
2. Continuous education of EBPs for key stakeholders (e.g., legislators)
3. Administrative and managerial support of staff

Worst current practice for adherence to the principles:

One thing that is counterproductive and detrimental to adherence to the principles of effective intervention is not providing support and flexibility to staff to do their jobs. Another issue is not understanding or not emphasizing the importance of program evaluation and program implementation.

Best current practice for adherence to the principles:

As an administrator, I believe there are many things that can exemplify adherence to principles of effective intervention, including continued education of staff in evidence-based practices, providing and building a work culture in which leaders of the organization (formal and informal leaders) emulate the mission of the department and are open to feedback, and measurement of professional skills levels of staff and measurement of offender outcomes.

Your ideas on improving adherence:

In my opinion, adherence to these principles starts with the leadership of the agency; the leader must believe in the principles and provide support and understanding to staff when they are asked to carry out their duties. There must be open communication among all stakeholders and willingness to share information among each other.

Researchers and practitioners:

1. Need to know what the principles are
2. Need to respect the evidence in support of the principles
3. Need to have the proper training to know how to use the principles effectively in practice

Unfortunately, there are numerous examples of programs that do not adhere to the principles of effective intervention. In general, these programs are plagued by “correctional quackery,” a lack of knowledge and training about effective methods of behavior change. Programs that are not grounded in theory of behavior change are examples of poor practice.

The best practice I have experienced was an integrated system that offered substance abuse treatment in the same facility as education and counseling services. Everyone was on the same page and made services easy to access.

To improve adherence, agencies can improve on hiring practices. Staff need to be more invested in treatment. If the counselors’ success was more tied to client outcomes, they probably would do a better job.

To improve adherence to the principles of effective intervention, practitioners need to be well versed and properly trained in basic psychology and behavior modification techniques. These techniques include radical behavior programs (e.g., operant conditioning, token economies), social learning programs, and cognitive behavioral programs.
Meet ACE’s New Team Members

Stephanie Maass - Research Associate
Formerly a Graduate Research Assistant at ACE!, Stephanie A. Maass has recently accepted a full-time Research Associate position with ACE!. She has a Bachelor of Science in Administration of Justice and a MA degree in Justice, Law & Crime Policy from George Mason University. In the past, Stephanie has worked on several international projects to understand and respond to crime both in the US and abroad. She has also worked with the Department of Homeland Security and the National Domestic Preparedness Coalition to develop and deliver training curriculums for emergency first responders. Currently, she is working on a project funded by BJA to deliver web-based training in evidence-based practices to community corrections staff. Her research interests include drug and alcohol control policies as they relate to criminal justice and behavioral health outcomes, and technology transfer and sustainability in criminal justice organizations.

Michael Williams- Interviewer on the MAPIT project
Michael Anthony Williams is a professional actor who is excited to join the ACE! team after teaching acting at Virginia Tech for four years. After being in front of the camera for the HBO series “The Wire” and shooting several feature films and television series in Baltimore, Michael is invested in the MAPIT project for the purpose of investing in the residents of Baltimore City. Michael was a Sociology major at Beloit College and is interested in pursuing graduate work in Criminology.

Teneshia Thurman- Graduate Research Assistant
Teneshia Thurman is a doctoral student in the Criminology, Law and Society program at George Mason University. She received her B.A in Sociology and Criminology from The Ohio State University and her M.A. in Criminal Justice from Seattle University. Her research interests include gender and treatment programs, gender and crime, victimization and life course development, and restorative justice.

Marthinus (Martin) Koen- Graduate Research Assistant
Martin received a B.S. in Criminal Justice with a minor in Psychology from Old Dominion University in 2009. He decided to move to Pennsylvania to pursue graduate studies and received a M.A. in Criminology from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. In Indiana, PA, he worked at Indiana County Jail as a volunteer GED tutor. Martin started work on his PhD in Criminology, Law, and Society at George Mason University in August 2011 and if all goes well, should graduate at the end of the Fall 2014 semester. Martin's research interests are prosecutorial discretion in terms of plea bargaining and expanding social control theories. Martin's life goals are to teach at a university, conduct research, and publish at least one textbook.

Sarah M. Soliman - Undergraduate Research Assistant
Why did you join ACE?!: I wanted to get an early start with doing research. I would like to publish my own research one day soon and I thought that ACE! would give me vital experience and knowledge about all things regarding research. Also, law and criminology are interests and passions of mine.
What will you be working on in your research with ACE?!: Mainly, I will be dealing with Qualitative and Quantitative Data Coding, although I will be working on various other projects if needed. One thing you hope to learn at ACE! this semester?: How to conduct proper research and how to publish research.
What are your future plans?: Aside from publishing one day, I plan to graduate a year early (I am currently a freshman), and earn my degree in Information Technology with a concentration in Information Security and a minor in Software Engineering. I also plan to apply to Law School to study either International or Patent law. I would like to work in law or with the government (FBI, CIA, NSA, etc) in the future in regards to a career.
Publications


Awards

**NIDA Award Given to ACE! Team Members**

Postdoctoral Researcher Michael Caudy and Graduate Research Assistant Jill Viglione each received a NIDA (National Institute on Drug Abuse) New Investigator Travel Award for the Addiction Health Services Conference held in New York, NY, October 2012. Caudy and Viglione are pictured to the right with Dr. Redonna Chandler (NIDA) receiving their certificates. Dr. Caudy presented research discussing how ACE!’s RNR Simulation Tool can help translate the principles of Risk, Need, and Responsivity into practice in substance abuse and behavioral health interventions, while Viglione presented research exploring how the implementation of contingency management in problem solving courts shifts the traditional roles and team dynamics of the courtroom workgroup.
Recent Activity

Assistant Director Shannon Portillo Launches The Science of Diversity Project (SOD) at Mason
Fairfax, December 2012

In 2012, ACE! Assistant Director Shannon Portillo helped launch the Science of Diversity Project (SOD) at George Mason. The Science of Diversity Project brings together students, faculty, staff, and administrators to consider how and why diversity works at Mason. George Mason University is one of the most diverse public universities in the United States with a large international student population. The Science of Diversity Project is a multi-year, multi-method and multi-perspectival project that asks: What are we already doing as a university community with regard to diversity?; What are the gaps in our knowledge about diversity at Mason?; What additional data do we need?; What can we do with the data we already have about diversity at Mason?; and What will we do with this information?. The project intentionally engages students, staff and faculty in knowledge production focused on a broad understanding of diversity at Mason. Assistant Director of Law & Social Policy Research at ACE!, Shannon Portillo, leads the project along with GMU faculty: Joya Crear, Jamie Lester and Eden King. They were awarded funds through the Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities and Research (OSCAR). Pictured right, students in the Fall 2012 Science of Diversity course presented about the project and findings from their literature review in December, 2012. For more information about the project contact Dr. Portillo at sportill@gmu.edu or visit the project’s website at drg.gmu.edu/science-of-diversity-project/.

ACE! Presents at American Society of Criminology’s Annual Meeting
Chicago, November 2012

Thirteen members of ACE! presented at the 2012 American Society of Criminology’s Annual Meeting held at the Palmer House Hilton Hotel in Chicago, IL. The theme for the meeting was “Thinking About Context: Challenges for Crime and Justice.” Pictured bottom left, ACE! Director Faye Taxman (center), along with colleagues Shadd Maruna from Queen’s University Belfast (left) and Fergus McNeill from University of Glasgow (right) presented “Discovering desistance: Increasing and using knowledge about desisting from crime.” ACE! Graduate Research Assistant Joseph Durso presented “Do criminogenic needs predict recidivism?” during the Thematic Panel Session, “Translational Tools to Implement Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs)” (pictured center). Research Associate Jennifer Lerch displayed her poster, “The Impact of System Factors on Length of Time in Residential Reentry Centers” during the Poster Session held in the Grand Ballroom (pictured bottom right).
ACE! Presentations

Recent Presentations


Durso, J. (November, 2012). Do criminogenic needs predict recidivism? Presented at American Society of Criminology’s annual meeting, Chicago, IL.


Lerch, J. (2012, November). The impact of system factors on length of time in residential reentry centers. Poster presented at the American Society of Criminology’s annual meeting, Chicago, IL.


Rudes, D.S. (2012, November). *Qualitative fieldwork contributions to experimental design and implementation science in criminal justice settings.* Presented at the American Society of Criminology annual meeting, Chicago, IL.


Taxman, F.S. (2012, October). *Organizational factors to advance RNR implementation.* Presented at the Arizona Department of Corrections, Phoenix, AZ.


Taxman, F.S. (2012, October). *Using recidivism reduction strategies in probation supervision.* Presented at University of Missouri - St. Louis, St. Louis, MO.


Taxman, F.S. (2012, November). *Quality improvement processes.* Presented at Ohio Specialized Docket Practitioner Network Ninth Annual Conference, Columbus, OH.


Graduate Research Assistants Crites, Durso and Ainsworth (left to right) present at the American Society of Criminology’s annual meeting in November 2012.
Wooditch, A., Murphy, A., & Taxman, F.S., (November 2012). Respondent-driven sampling in criminal justice randomized controlled trials. Presented at the American Society of Criminology’s annual meeting, Chicago, IL.

**Upcoming Presentations**

Crites, E. (2013, June). Normative issues to address while implementing evidence-based practice. To be presented at the Law and Society Association Annual Conference, Boston, MA.
Goldberg, V. (2013, June). What about us? The role middle managers play during change in community corrections organizations. To be presented at the Law and Society Association Annual Conference, Boston, MA.
Porter, C. (2013, June). Examining Evidence-Based Policies (EBPs) within a juvenile justice agency. To be presented at the Law and Society Association Annual Conference, Boston, MA.
Taxman, F.S. & Caudy, M. (2013, May). RNR Simulation Tool to understand treatment needs. To be presented at plenary session at TASC 19th Annual Conference on Drugs, Crime and Reentry, Columbus, OH.
Criminology, Law & Society at George Mason University

The Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!) is part of the Department of Criminology, Law, & Society (CLS) in the College of Humanities and Sciences at George Mason University. As a university center, we know that one of our key roles is to develop and encourage the talent of junior researchers. Graduate students in the Department work on ACE! projects as project managers, data collectors, analysts, and writers. They are able to get outside the classroom and hone their skills while contributing to the field. In addition to working with students, we often collaborate with other research centers and faculty both in the CLS department and across other disciplines.

The Department of Criminology, Law and Society is a dynamic, interdisciplinary unit. The faculty includes some of the nation’s top researchers in the field. Graduate and undergraduate students have the opportunity to work closely with these outstanding faculty in courses and on research projects. As they graduate, students go on to work in the area’s top federal agencies, law schools, and doctoral programs.

Students at the graduate and undergraduate level develop strong foundations in research, methods, theories and systems of justice, criminology and crime policy, law and society, and justice. They graduate with the knowledge and skills needed to understand the causes and consequences of crime and injustice, the responses by criminal and civil justice institutions, and what works to improve social conditions among affected individuals, communities, organizations, and countries. For more information, visit: cls.gmu.edu

RNR Simulation Tool Launch

With the start of the new year came the launch of ACE!’s new Risk, Need, Responsivity (RNR) Simulation Tool. This tool is designed to assist justice agencies in determining what forms of programming will be most effective in reducing recidivism and improving offender outcomes within their population. The tool is also designed to guide resource allocation and help criminal justice agencies identify service provision gaps. It is made up of three linkable portals that provide decision-support at the offender, program, and system level: Assess an Individual; The RNR Program Tool; and Assess Jurisdiction’s Capacity. Used together, these tools can have a significant impact on recidivism at a system level.

The RNR Simulation Tool allows jurisdictions to modify the parameters of the model based on the unique features of their jurisdictions. It complements efforts to advance the use of evidence-based practices (EBPs) by helping jurisdictions strategically review their existing correctional and treatment services and then make choices based on maximizing different outcomes (i.e., costs, offender change, and public safety) in their jurisdiction.

The RNR Simulation Tool also assists justice professionals in preparing for and responding to the expected influx in offender populations who will require access to behavioral health treatment services under the Affordable Care Act (2014).

To check out the RNR Simulation Tool’, visit ACE!’s CJ-TRAK Knowledge Translation Tool Suite at www.gmuace.org/tools/. For questions, email the RNR project team at rnrtool@gmu.edu.