



The Use of Core Correctional Practices in Offender Reentry and Inmate Preparedness for Release

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Stephen M. Haas, Director
West Virginia Statistical Analysis Center



West Virginia Offender Reentry Initiative

- Established in mid-2004.
- Based on the recognition that more prisoners than ever before are being released from our state prisons.
 - In 2005, more prisoners were released from WV correctional facilities than in any previous year.
 - Between 2000 and 2005, the number of prisoners released from WVDOC custody increased by 68.8% (Lester and Haas, 2006).
- Put into practice a case management system that would ensure the continuity of services and programming.
- A key aspect is its focus on providing transitional services to inmates preparing for release.



Community-Based Transition Phase

- Begins six months prior to release from the institution and continues through the offender's parole supervision.
- Provide pre-release services:
 - Prepare the offender for release
 - Identify available community resources and programs
 - Address the individual offender's needs pre-post release
- The primary purpose of transitional planning and services is to reduce potential barriers to successful reintegration.
- This study centers on the delivery of pre-release services and correctional programming designed to prepare the prisoner for release.



Effective Service Delivery

- A growing body of research indicates that *how* services are provided may be as important as *what* is done.
- *How* interventions are delivered has been shown to impact an offender's engagement in treatment as well as subsequent outcomes.
- Generally, service delivery practices should:
 - Be consistent with the principle of general responsivity (i.e., cognitive-behavioral approach);
 - Incorporate elements of empirically-supported core correctional practices.

Core Correctional Practices

(Adapted from Andrews, 2000; Dowden & Andrews, 2004)

- Andrews and Kiessling (1980) identified five dimensions of effective correctional intervention:
 - Appropriate Use of Authority
 - Appropriate Modeling and Reinforcement
 - Skill-building and Problem Solving Strategies
 - Effective Use of Community Resources
 - Relationship Factors

- Recent meta-analytic research by Dowden and Andrews (2004) found:
 - Programs that contained elements of CCP were associated with greater reductions in recidivism (i.e., substantially higher mean effect sizes) compared to those that did not.

Core Correctional Practices

(Adapted from Andrews, 2000; Dowden & Andrews, 2004)

- ***Appropriate use of authority:***
 - “Firm but fair” approach with offenders.
 - Direct, specific communication of demands and rules.
 - Monitor progress and reward compliance with rules, give encouraging messages, and support words with action.
 - Respectfully guide offenders toward compliance.
 - Refrain from controlling and shaming disciplinary practices.
 - Focus message on the behavior, not the prisoner.

- ***Appropriate modeling and reinforcement:***
 - Staff engages in pro-social modeling and role-playing
 - Use positive reinforcement & effective disapproval techniques
 - Demonstrate and reinforce appropriate alternatives to pro-criminal styles of thinking, feeling and acting.
 - Engage in structured learning procedures (use of role playing/rehearsal, modeling, and providing appropriate feedback on inmate performance).

Core Correctional Practices

(Adapted from Andrews, 2000; Dowden & Andrews, 2004)

- ***Skill-building and problem solving strategies:***
 - Use of structured learning and cognitive-behavioral techniques.
 - Foster skill development and improve the problem-solving ability.
 - Seek to identify inmate problems, help inmates generate alternatives, and develop an implementation plan.

- ***Effective use of community resources:***
 - Advocacy and brokerage
 - Connect to helping agencies that provide support or intervention based services (e.g., substance abuse treatment or employment services).

- ***Relationship factors:***
 - Quality of staff-inmate relationships.
 - Relate in open, respectful, caring, and genuine ways.
 - Empathic, competent and committed to helping the offender.

CCP and Preparedness for Release

- Some preliminary indications that individual attitudes and expectations of life after release may influence future outcomes.

- In a qualitative analysis of the life narratives of ex-prisoners, Maruna (2001) discovered that compared to persisting offenders:
 - Desisting men and women held dramatically more positive expectations about their future and stronger senses of control over their own lives.

- He concluded that prisoners who expressed a more positive outlook about their future may be less likely to recidivate, while prisoners who expressed a less positive outlook should be more likely to recidivate.

Present Study

Data Collection:

- Administered a self-report questionnaire to sample of soon-to-be-released prisoners.
- N = 496; 90-days from expected release
- 11 institutions; including 2 work-release centers
- Sample selection and administration procedures modeled after recent research efforts (e.g., Steurer, Smith, and Tracy, 2001; Visher, La Vigne, and Castro, 2003)
- Response rate = 68.1% (496/728)

Inmate Surveys on Prison Performance and Conditions

- Most studies in CCP have been based on observation of staff skills and/or program components. This study uses inmate survey responses.
- Inmate surveys are commonly used to study a wide range of issues in corrections. Examples include:
 - Criminal history and other characteristics of inmates;
 - Health and medical conditions of inmates;
 - Prison adjustment issues of inmates;
 - Prison victimization; and
 - Prison environment.
- In offender reentry research- Used to examine the experiences of inmates prior to and during incarceration as well as their expectations for release.



Inmate Surveys on Prison Performance and Conditions

- Recent research has centered on reliability and validity issues that surround inmate surveys (Camp, 1999; Camp, Gaes, Klein-Saffran, Daggett, and Saylor, 2002; Logan, 1992).
- These studies provide evidence that inmate survey data can be used to identify reliable measures that differentiate *prison performance and conditions*.



Present Study

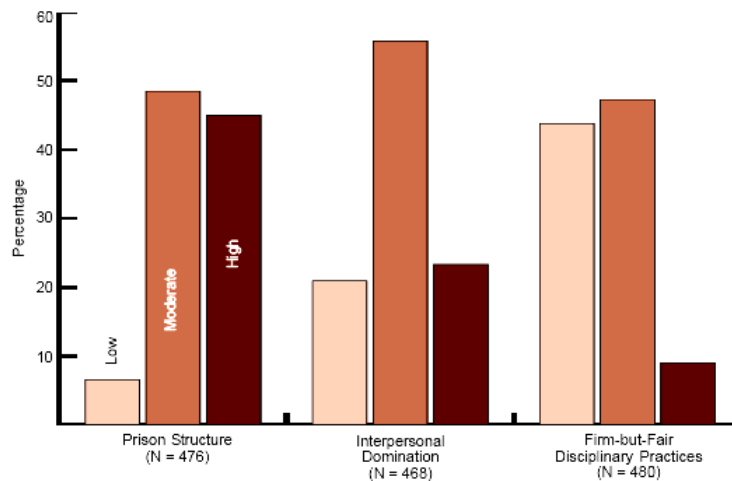
Research Questions:

- Are transitional services being provided to inmates in a manner that is consistent with core correctional practices?
- To what extent do inmates feel prepared for release?
- Are prisoner perceptions of the use of core correctional practices by staff positively associated with inmate preparedness for release?

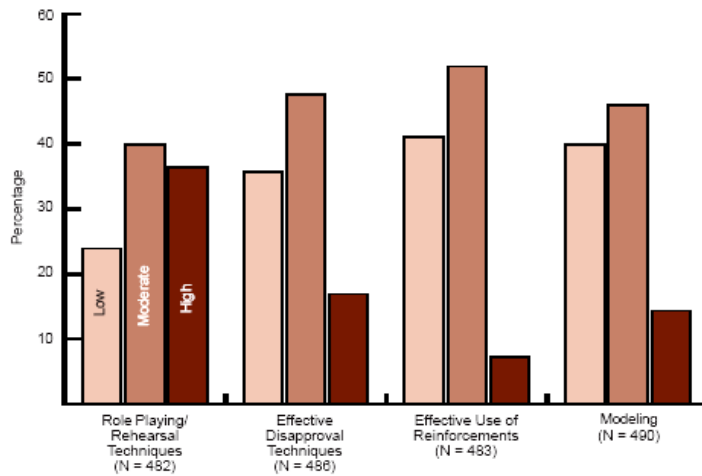
Scale Descriptives

Variables	Mean	Sd	Min	Max	Alpha	N
Effective Use of Authority						
Prison Structure	14.12	3.13	5.00	20.00	.74	476
Interpersonal Domination	17.11	4.64	7.00	28.00	.88	468
Firm-but-Fair Disciplinary Practices	10.14	3.14	5.00	20.00	.79	480
Appropriate Modeling & Reinforcement						
Use of Role Playing/Rehearsal Techniques	4.70	1.73	2.00	8.00	.82	482
Effective Disapproval Techniques	6.28	2.06	3.00	12.00	.69	486
Effective Use of Reinforcements	7.61	2.40	4.00	16.00	.84	483
Modeling	6.10	2.11	3.00	12.00	.78	490
Use of Skill Building and Problem-Solving Strategies						
Use of Cognitive Skill Development Strategies	10.38	4.15	5.00	20.00	.93	478
Use of Problem-Solving Strategies	11.86	3.91	6.00	24.00	.84	471
Effective Use of Community Resources						
Advocacy and/or Brokerage	15.54	5.16	9.00	33.00	.90	471
Quality of Interpersonal Relationships						
Staff Respect Toward Inmates	7.81	2.61	4.00	16.00	.78	488
Staff Cares About Me	11.79	3.82	6.00	24.00	.87	479
Staff Openness	11.36	3.76	6.00	24.00	.86	482
Inmate-Staff Trust	10.84	3.62	6.00	24.00	.83	489
Staff Commitment	10.34	3.03	5.00	20.00	.76	483
Staff Skill Factors	5.78	1.98	3.00	12.00	.79	486

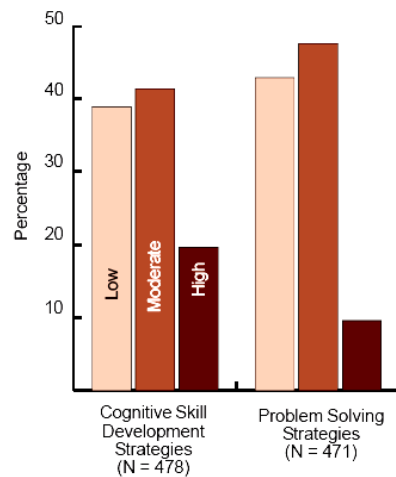
Appropriate Use of Authority by Correctional Staff



Effective Use of Modeling and Reinforcements by Correctional Staff



Cognitive Skill Building/Problem-Solving Strategies in Correctional Programming



Preparedness for Release

Measures: Rooted in common barriers prisoners face during reintegration. High scores = inmates more prepared for a given task.

- Prepared to get a job
- Comfortable returning to family
- Comfortable with housing situation
- Know where they are going to live
- Know what is expected of them
- Will be easy to pay bills
- Easy to find a good place to live
- Have people to depend on (support)
- Preparedness for release scale

Inmate Ratings of Preparedness for Release

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	
Preparedness for release	%	%	%	%	N
I feel prepared to get a job upon release.	5.8	12.4	36.0	45.8	483
I feel comfortable going back to my family.	4.5	9.1	35.3	51.1	485
I am comfortable with my housing situation upon release.	8.3	12.2	35.4	44.1	483
I know where I'm going to live when I leave here.	6.8	12.0	34.0	47.2	483
I know what is expected of me upon release.	5.4	8.5	42.4	43.8	484
It will be easy to pay my bills after release.	18.2	36.2	27.3	18.2	483
It will be easy to find a good place to live when I leave here.	12.7	16.5	37.5	33.3	480
I have people I can depend on when I am released.	7.2	7.5	34.2	51.1	483

Correlations of CCP and Inmate Preparedness for Release

	Preparedness for Release Scale
Effective Use of Authority	.190***
Appropriate Modeling and Reinforcement	.188***
Use of Skill Building and Problem-Solving Strategies	.262***
Effective Use of Community Resources	.166***
Quality of Interpersonal Relationships	.177***

*p < .001

Conclusions

- Generally, the results imply that the WVORI could benefit from greater adherence to CCP.
- Application of CCP is not as widely spread as one might hope, at least from the perspectives of inmates.
- Found high level of prison structure, but the quality of interpersonal relationships between staff and inmates was poor.
 - Many inmates felt staff used control and shaming practices.
 - Staff-inmate relationships were *not* characterized as caring, open, and trusting by many prisoners.

Conclusions

- Many prisoners reported that they were often given the opportunity to practice new behaviors in prison.
 - Over one-third of inmates reported a high level of role-playing and/or rehearsal of new behaviors and skills in their prison programs.
- Inmates did not believe appropriate behaviors were demonstrated for them by correctional staff nor that reinforcements were provided by prison staff.
- Few inmates felt staff engaged in an effective use of community resources
 - Little advocacy or brokerage on their behalf.
- Substantial proportion of inmates felt that staff:
 - Had not adequately helped them to develop a workable plan for release;
 - Did not view their problems realistically; and
 - Were given little assistance in putting their plans for release into action.

Conclusions

- As inmate perception of proper service delivery increased, so did the belief that they were prepared for release.
- This lends support for the notion that adhering to CCPs within the context of offender reentry will better prepare inmates for release.
- Link is important because individual attitudes and expectations of life after release may impact and future outcomes (Maruna, 2001).
 - Desisting ex-prisoners had more positive expectations about their future and stronger senses of control over their own lives.



Implications

- WVDOC administrators should work to find ways to enhance offender expectations and preparedness for release.
- WVDOC should focus more attention on the characteristics of staff and the specific techniques staff members utilize to deliver reentry services.
- Staff characteristics and training in core skills should be addressed to ensure the maximum therapeutic impact of the WVORI.



Publication

Haas, Stephen M. and Cynthia A. Hamilton (2007, May). *The Use of Core Correctional Practices in Offender Reentry: The Delivery of Service Delivery and Prisoner Preparedness for Release*. Charleston, WV: Mountain State Criminal Justice Research Services.

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<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/>



Contact

Stephen M. Haas, Ph.D.

Director, WV Statistical Analysis Center

Phone: 304-558-8814

Email: Stephen.M.Haas@wv.gov

Web Address: www.wvdcjs.com