

COACHING PACKET

Shaping Offender Behavior

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One in a series of Coaching Packets designed
to assist jurisdictions in the implementation
of effective practices that will support
successful offender outcomes

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Coaching Packet Series 1: Creating a Blueprint for an Effective Offender Reentry System

- A Framework for Offender Reentry
- Establishing a Rational Planning Process
- Engaging in Collaborative Partnerships to Support Reentry

Coaching Packet Series 2: Delivering Evidence-Based Services

- Implementing Evidence-Based Practices
- Effective Case Management
- Shaping Offender Behavior
- Engaging Offenders' Families in Reentry
- Building Offenders' Community Assets through Mentoring
- Reentry Considerations for Women Offenders

Coaching Packet Series 3: Ensuring Meaningful Outcomes

- Measuring the Impact of Reentry Efforts
- Continuous Quality Improvement



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Introduction to the Coaching Packet Series

The Center for Effective Public Policy (the Center) and its partners, The Urban Institute and The Carey Group, were selected by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance to serve as the training and technical assistance providers to the Fiscal Year 2007 Prisoner Reentry Initiative grantees (hereafter “PRI grantees”). The project team served in this capacity from April 2008 to June 2010.

The Center is a nonprofit criminal justice consulting organization based in Silver Spring, Maryland. Since the early 1980s, the Center has provided training and technical assistance to the criminal justice field on a wide array of topics, including transition and reentry, and has administered a number of national projects of this kind. The Urban Institute was established as a private, nonprofit corporation in Washington, D.C. in 1968 and is a leader in prisoner reentry research, focusing on making best practice information accessible to practitioners and policymakers. The Carey Group is a justice consulting firm with extensive practitioner experience in evidence-based practices, strategic planning, community and restorative justice and corrections.

As a part of its technical assistance delivery to the PRI grantees, the Center developed a series of tools to assist grantees in specific areas of their reentry work. The final products of this work include eleven Coaching Packets in three series. These Coaching Packets offer practical value beyond the jurisdictions involved in this initiative and are available to criminal justice professionals and their partners interested in enhancing their strategies for reducing recidivism and improving offender outcomes.

Each Coaching Packet provides an overview of a specific topic as it relates to successful offender reentry, and offers tools and resources for those interested in exploring the topic in greater depth.

- *Series 1* provides a blueprint for an effective offender reentry system. This series provides a conceptual framework for addressing prisoner reentry at the policy level; outlines a strategic planning process to support implementation efforts; and explores the establishment of successful collaborative partnerships at the policy and case management levels.
- *Series 2* addresses key issues related to the delivery of evidence-based services to offenders. This series summarizes the key literature with regard to implementing evidence-based practices; explores advances in approaches to case management; addresses the important role of staff in changing offender behavior; and summarizes research and practice as it relates to working with women offenders, engaging families, and mentoring.
- *Series 3* provides guidance and tools to ensure that reentry efforts achieve their intended outcomes. This series describes methods to assess the effectiveness of reentry efforts and offers strategies for achieving continuous quality improvement.

FY 2007 Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI) Grantees

The Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI) – intended to support the development and implementation of institutional and community corrections-based reentry programs to help returning offenders find employment and provide other critical services – is a collaborative effort of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Grants were awarded to state and local corrections agencies by DOJ to provide pre-release and transition services to offenders and were “matched” by DOL grants to faith- and community-based organizations (FBCOs) to provide post-release services, focusing on employment assistance and mentoring.

Thirty-five states received grants in three cycles of the Initiative during Fiscal Years 2006, 2007, and 2008.¹ Of these, 23 FY 2007 PRI grantees received assistance under this project. FY 2007 grants were awarded in the fall of 2007 and implemented from 2008 to 2010; however, some grantees will not complete their activities until 2011. The FY 2007 grantees provided technical assistance under this project included:

- ✓ ALASKA, Native Justice Center
- ✓ ARIZONA, Criminal Justice Commission/ Yuma County Sheriff’s Office
- ✓ CALIFORNIA, Department of Community Services and Development
- ✓ COLORADO, Division of Criminal Justice Services/City of Denver
- ✓ DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, Government
- ✓ FLORIDA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ HAWAII, Department of Public Safety
- ✓ INDIANA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ IOWA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ KANSAS, Department of Corrections
- ✓ MAINE, Department of Corrections
- ✓ MICHIGAN, Department of Corrections
- ✓ MINNESOTA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ NEVADA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ NEW JERSEY, Department of Corrections
- ✓ NORTH CAROLINA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ OHIO, Department of Rehabilitation and Correction
- ✓ PENNSYLVANIA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ RHODE ISLAND, Department of Corrections
- ✓ TENNESSEE, Department of Corrections
- ✓ VIRGINIA, Department of Criminal Justice Services
- ✓ WISCONSIN, Department of Corrections
- ✓ WYOMING, Department of Corrections

¹ The PRI program will end when the FY 2008 grantees complete their activities.

Acknowledgments

Becki Ney, Principal, Center for Effective Public Policy, served as the PRI Training and Technical Assistance Program Project Director. Ms. Ney conceptualized and oversaw the development of the Coaching Packet series.

Madeline M. Carter, Principal, and Rachelle Giguere, Program Associate, Center for Effective Public Policy, served as the key editors for the Coaching Packet series. Ms. Giguere also provided extensive research support to the development of the series.

Introduction to the Shaping Offender Behavior Coaching Packet

The Contents of this Packet

This Coaching Packet provides:

- Support for the assertion that every interaction with an offender is an opportunity to positively shape behavior;
- A review of some of the key literature regarding shaping offender behavior;
- A discussion about the skills staff should possess to maximize their influence over offenders;
- Brief case studies regarding efforts underway in two jurisdictions to put these ideas into practice;
- A tool to determine your jurisdiction's strengths and gaps in the area of shaping offender behavior;
- An aide to developing plans to address identified gap areas; and
- References to additional resources on this topic.

The Intended Audience for this Packet

This Coaching Packet was originally developed to assist grant teams that were established to manage local PRI initiatives. The teams were composed of representatives from institutional and community corrections and faith-based or community organizations involved in the delivery of pre- and post-release services to offenders transitioning from prison to the community. The content of these Coaching Packets has much broader application, however; the information and tools contained within this Coaching Packet can also be used by teams of criminal justice professionals and their partners to assess the status of their efforts in implementing evidence-based practices and effective reentry services to offenders.

This Coaching Packet may also serve as a resource for professionals at all levels who are interested in learning more about this topic.

How to Use this Packet

SECTION I: READ THE OVERVIEW ON SHAPING OFFENDER BEHAVIOR.

This section of the Coaching Packet provides an overview on shaping offender behavior. Review its content and, if the information it contains is applicable to your work and addresses an area in which you feel you need to focus your efforts, use the tool in Section II to assess your jurisdiction's strengths and gaps with regard to building staff skills to positively influence offender behavior.

SECTION II: COMPLETE THE SHAPING OFFENDER BEHAVIOR COACHING PACKET CHECKLIST.

As a team, complete the Shaping Offender Behavior Coaching Packet Checklist. (Based upon the information you read in Section I, consider who may need to be involved so that you are

able to answer the questions thoroughly.) Complete the checklist as a group and discuss your responses along the way.

- Begin by identifying at least five categories of staff whose skills you will assess using this checklist. Note each group of staff at the top of each column (for example, Staff Group A may be Correctional Officers, Staff Group B may be First Lieutenants, Staff Group C may be Institutional Case Managers or Reentry Specialists, Staff Group D may be Correctional Counselors, Staff Group E may be Parole Officers, Staff Group F may be faith-based community organization staff, or some other groupings as appropriate for your jurisdiction).
- Develop a consensus-based response for each item on the checklist (use the key in the upper left hand corner of the checklist to record your responses). Add additional items that may relate to your offender behavior management efforts that are not already included on the checklist.
- Make note of issues that require further inquiry.
- Once the checklist is completed, consider your jurisdictions' strengths in the area of shaping offender behavior. Make note of these.
- Next, consider your most significant gaps. Make note of these as well.

SECTION III: DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN.

If, after completing the checklist in Section II, your team determines that further work on this topic is necessary or would be helpful, follow the steps below to identify your goals, objectives, and action items, and identify any additional assistance or expertise needed.

Working as a team, review your findings from the Shaping Offender Behavior Coaching Packet Checklist. Specifically:

1. Determine whether, based upon what you have read and discussed, you desire to improve your jurisdiction's approach to the management of offender behavior.
2. If you determine you have a need to improve in the area of managing offender behavior, write a goal statement that reflects where you want to be with regard to shaping offender behavior. Your goal might be to "Develop a formalized system of offender rewards and incentives," "Provide skill-based training to first line supervisors to support the professional development of line level staff," or another goal. Using the Action Planning Worksheet in Section III, note your goal in the area of shaping offender behavior.
3. Identify your three most significant strengths in this area and discuss how you might build on those to overcome some of your gaps.
4. Identify your three most significant gaps. For each gap, write an objective. Your objectives might be, "To establish a sub-committee to develop a list of agency-sanctioned incentives for offenders," or "To develop a method to monitor the frequency with which offenders' positive attitudes and behaviors are formally acknowledged and reinforced by staff," or "To convene a subcommittee of institutional and community staff providing pre- and post-incarceration services to offenders to ensure a consistent approach to shaping offender behavior," or "To convene the Training Academy curriculum development committee to

develop a first line supervisor training curriculum,” or something else. Note your three objectives on the Action Planning Worksheet.

5. Add the following on the Action Planning Worksheet for each objective:
 - a. The specific sequential steps that must be taken to meet the objective.
 - b. The individual who will assume lead responsibility for this action item.
 - c. The completion date for this action item.
6. Discuss whether additional assistance or outside expertise is needed to successfully achieve any of your action items. For instance, explore whether additional literature, guidance from another practitioner over the telephone, examples of work products from other jurisdictions, or on-site technical assistance would be helpful options.
 - a. For each action item, identify those for which assistance/expertise is needed.
 - b. Identify the type of assistance/expertise needed.
 - c. Prioritize each of these need areas. If assistance/expertise will be limited, for which action items is assistance most needed?
 - d. Begin exploring ways to secure the needed assistance/expertise.

How to Seek Additional Information

To download copies of the Coaching Packets, please visit the Center’s website at <http://www.cepp.com/coaching.htm>. To obtain further information on the use or content of this or any of the Coaching Packets, or on the 2007 PRI Training and Technical Assistance Program, please contact:

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Section I: The Importance of Corrections Professionals' Approach to Shaping Offender Behavior

Successful offender reentry relies upon the effective implementation of evidence-based principles and practices (i.e., assessment, treatment, supervision, etc.). Although these approaches are necessary, alone they are insufficient. The best possible programs and most effective tools will be rendered useless if the professional does not have the knowledge, attitude, and skills to use them effectively. Furthermore, where resources or other constraints limit the extent to which offenders can participate in risk-reducing programs and services, there is still opportunity for corrections professionals to influence offender behavior. To be sure, each and every interaction staff have with offenders – whether correctional officers in housing units, shop foremen in industry programs, parole officers in the field, or receptionists in the probation office – is an opportunity to shape offenders' behavior.

An auto mechanic can have the best possible tools and parts but if s/he fails to diagnose the problem correctly or installs a part improperly the quality of the tools and product are rendered meaningless. A surgeon can have absolute command of the science and the best equipment available but if s/he has poor bedside manner or cannot effectively communicate with his/her patient, cooperation will be jeopardized, putting the medical intervention at risk.

There are three important strategies agencies can employ to positively shape offender behavior. They are:

- ✓ Focusing on the right issues with the right offenders;
- ✓ Using behavioral interventions to coach and redirect offenders; and
- ✓ Ensuring practitioners' skills are in alignment with the research.

Focusing on the Right Issues with the Right Offenders

Agencies interested in reducing the likelihood that offenders will commit future crime must be mindful of the research on the principles of correctional interventions. Most notable among these are risk to reoffend (the risk principle) and matching interventions to individual offenders (the need principle).²

The risk principle suggests that:

- ✓ Medium and high risk offenders are the most likely to positively respond to correctional interventions.
- ✓ In their aggregate, low risk offenders do not respond favorably to correctional interventions. Not only are they unlikely to benefit from interventions aimed at risk

² See Andrews, 2007; Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Andrews et al., 1990.

reduction, in some instances these offenders can become more crime prone as a result of their involvement in correctional programming.

- ✓ Extremely high risk offenders might respond favorably to appropriate correctional interventions, but only when the intensity and dosage of these interventions is sufficiently high.³

Just as important as targeting the “who” (i.e., medium and high risk) is the targeting of the “what.” That is, offenders have criminogenic (crime influencing) traits which make them more likely to commit crime than those who do not possess these traits. These traits are dynamic, meaning they can be changed when the appropriate programs, services and conditions are applied. Targeting criminogenic needs is extremely important in our efforts to reduce recidivism; it is the greatest promise in reducing future crime. Interventions that effectively target criminogenic needs have been demonstrated to reduce recidivism whereas interventions that address non-criminogenic needs do not have positive recidivism outcomes.

Not all criminogenic needs are of equal importance. Some are more influential than others. The research on criminogenic needs identifies eight dynamic traits⁴ that are associated with criminal behavior. All eight are linked to criminal behavior but the top four are more influential and therefore should generally be prioritized and addressed sooner than the next four needs. Furthermore, research helps us to understand the appropriate tools (i.e., programs, services, and techniques) to apply to these conditions in an effort to reduce offenders’ risk levels.

³ Most jurisdictions do not have the necessary interventions to adequately address the treatment needs of the extremely high risk offender.

⁴ While different studies and researchers identify slightly different criminogenic needs and characterize these traits slightly differently, there is more similarity than difference among them. For the purposes of this document, one approach to describing these crime producing traits is described (see Andrews, 2007; Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006).

Exhibit 1: Criminogenic Needs ⁵			
Top Four Criminogenic Needs		Next Four Criminogenic Needs	
Need	Response	Need	Response
History of anti-social behavior	Build non-criminal alternative behavior in risky situations	Family and/or marital stressors	Reduce conflict, build positive relationships and communications
Anti-social personality or temperament	Build problem solving and self management skills, develop anger management and coping skills	Lack of employment/education	Provide job readiness, pre-employment and job retention skills; Enhance academic performance
Anti-social cognition, attitudes	Reduce anti-social cognition, recognize high risk thinking patterns and feelings, adopt alternative identity	Lack of pro-social leisure or recreation	Enhance involvement and level of satisfaction with pro-social activities
Anti-social companions	Reduce association with anti-social peers, enhance contact with pro-social individuals	Substance abuse	Reduce use and the supports for substance abusing behavior, enhance alternatives to substance abuse

Using Behavioral Interventions to Redirect Offenders

The most effective interventions are behavioral (as opposed to other therapeutic approaches such as talk therapy). These other didactic, insight oriented approaches do not produce the long lasting changes in criminal behavior that behavioral approaches are so successful in achieving. Behavioral treatment has as its root social learning theory. Social learning theory asserts that people learn and adopt new behaviors through positive and negative reinforcement, observation, and skill practice.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT.

Rewards and sanctions shape human behavior. Although historically sanctions have been used as the primary method to respond to or control offenders' behavior, research indicates that positive reinforcement should be applied more frequently than negative reinforcement when trying to change behavior. A ratio of four positive reinforcements for every negative reinforcement should be the general approach.⁶ Part of the reason for this is that many offenders – particularly those at higher risk – have long histories of negative reinforcements and as such they have learned to adapt to and dismiss the “pain” that accompanies these

⁵ Andrews, 2007; Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006, p. 11.

⁶ See Gendreau & Goggin, 1996; Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996; Andrews & Bonta, 2006.

responses. In contrast, research has shown that anti-social individuals (just like the general population) are more likely to repeat behaviors and adopt attitudes that are recognized, acknowledged, and affirmed.

Positive reinforcements do not have to be costly or difficult to administer. Often, just a word of praise or encouragement can provoke a sense of pride and goodwill; these experiences then increase the likelihood that the pro-social behavior is repeated. Only a lack of creativity limits our ability to reward and affirm. Depending upon the circumstances and the extent to which the offenders' positive behaviors are new or repeated over time, these might include:

- ✓ Words of praise;
- ✓ The assignment of a task that demonstrates confidence in the individual's abilities and level of responsibility;
- ✓ A token of appreciation (e.g., a written note of acknowledgement or a certificate);
- ✓ Acknowledgement of accomplishment in front of others (e.g., praise in public, acknowledgement by a person in an authority position);
- ✓ A more desirable housing or work assignment;
- ✓ A "pass" on a scheduled office visit;
- ✓ A bus voucher;
- ✓ A gift certificate (donated by a local merchant);
- ✓ Reduced drug testing; or
- ✓ Early discharge from supervision.

For purposes of this discussion, positive reinforcements are defined as rewards that reinforce positive behavior; negative reinforcements are responses or sanctions that express disapproval for anti-social attitudes and behaviors.

Positive reinforcement should be provided at a rate of four reinforcers for every expression of dissatisfaction (or sanction). Research demonstrates that this formula enhances offenders' motivation to continue exhibiting pro-social behaviors. Because pro-social behavior is key to reduced criminal activity, this is an important ingredient in our efforts to prevent future crime.

Just as rewards play an important role in shaping offender behavior, so too do sanctions. The failure to express disapproval when anti-social behaviors or attitudes are exhibited conveys a neutral – or worse – implicit approval of these behaviors/attitudes.

There are several important elements to success in the use of sanctions that have implications for how and when corrections professionals – whether correctional officers in housing units or probation/parole officers in the community – respond to offenders' non-compliant behavior:⁷

- ✓ Offenders should know what behaviors are desired and not desired;
- ✓ The consequences of negative behaviors should be clear;

⁷ These are derived from the procedural justice literature and have traditionally been used to craft responses to probation/parole violations. See Exhibit 2, Research Summary on Responding to the Violation Behavior of Offenders Under Community Supervision.

- ✓ Responses should be as timely as possible in order to directly link the behavior to the response;
- ✓ Responses should not be harsh or more punitive than necessary;
- ✓ Responses should be fair and equitable; and
- ✓ Where possible, sanctions should be linked to the behavior.

Exhibit 2:⁸			
Research Summary on Responding to the Violation Behavior of Offenders Under Community Supervision			
Principle	Rationale	Research	Therefore,...
Celerity	Reduce time delay between behavior and response = reduced violations	Rhine, 1993	<i>...respond to violations as quickly as possible</i>
Certainty	Increased certainty of response = reductions in future deviance	Grasmack & Bryjak, 1980; Nichols & Ross, 1990; Paternoster, 1989	<i>...respond (in some way) to every violation</i>
Consistency	Similar decisions in similar circumstances = increased compliance	Paternoster, Brame, Bachman, & Sherman, 1997	<i>...use decisionmaking instruments that produce consistent results</i>
Neutrality	Processes are impartial, logical and fair = increased adherence to rules	Tyler, 1990	<i>...inform offenders how responses are determined</i>
Parsimony	Punishment should not be more intrusive or restrictive than necessary	Tonry, 1996	<i>...use severity of the violation as a factor in determining the appropriate level of response</i>
Proportionality	Level of punishment should be commensurate with the severity of the behavior	Von Hirsch, 1993	<i>...match sanction severity to the severity of the violation</i>
Risk and Need Principle	The higher the risk to reoffend, the more intensive the intervention; tailor responses to criminogenic needs	Andrews & Bonta, 1998	<i>...use risk to reoffend as a key factor in determining the appropriate level of response; ...tailor responses to address the individual's unique criminogenic needs</i>

⁸ Source: Taxman, 1999 with adaptations by Madeline Carter.

Exhibit 3: Considerations in Applying Rewards and Sanctions			
Rewards		Sanctions	
<i>Do...</i>	<i>Don't...</i>	<i>Do...</i>	<i>Don't...</i>
...ensure that conditions allow offenders to exhibit the desired behaviors	...promise incentives that can't be administered due to cost or policy	...make clear what behaviors are expected	...“keep offenders guessing” in an attempt to control their behavior
...provide more reinforcers than negative responses (the ratio should be 4:1 or higher)	...be silent or use negative feedback more frequently than positive	...let offenders know what the consequences of non-compliance are	...threaten consequences that are not enforceable
...tailor rewards to the individual to ensure that the reinforcements are meaningful	...apply a “one size fits all” approach to rewarding behavior	...understand that relapse is a normal part of the change process	...overreact to relapses
...“stack” rewards so that offender receive consistent positive feedback	...withhold praise to establish authority	...respond quickly and with certainty	...react harshly; the severity of the sanction is less important than the immediacy and certainty of the sanction
...apply reinforcers frequently for optimal learning	... stop reinforcing positive behavior (but recognize that over time, reinforcers can be delivered sporadically)	...be realistic about how much change offenders can make in a certain amount of time	...overload offenders with expectations (or sanctions) that they can't possibly meet successfully

ROLE MODELING.

One way humans learn is through observation of the behaviors of others. The power of these observations – that is, the influence they have over our own behavior – is related to the extent to which we respect and admire those we are observing. Role modeling is therefore a very important tool in shaping offenders' behavior. Offenders are constantly observing and assessing others, including corrections professionals. Professionals therefore are afforded virtually unlimited opportunity to role model for offenders the attitudes and behaviors we want them to emulate. Because people are most likely to relate to those who possess similar qualities to their own, cultural and gender differences are important factors. That is, agencies should seek to employ a staff that is as diverse as the offender population, and provide opportunities for those with similar cultural and gender characteristics to exercise this important role modeling function.

SKILL PRACTICE.

Insight alone is not enough to change behavior. If that were the case, most people would not have difficulty losing weight or quitting smoking. Changing behavior is more complicated than wanting to change or even knowing that change is important.

We learn new ways to behave through skill practice. It is also the way we learn new ways to think. As we practice new ways of responding to situations, we also integrate new ways of thinking about, or processing, those events. Skill practice involves specific steps of observing others, practicing new behavior, receiving feedback on the practiced behavior, and continual improvement. What separates chefs from those of us who are good in the kitchen, or athletes from amateurs, is that they spend hundreds if not thousands of hours over many years practicing their skill. They develop constructive and helpful ways of thinking about their skill and perfect, through repeated practice, the techniques essential to performing it well.

Many offenders, particularly those in the higher risk categories, are woefully under skilled in common pro-social skills such as conflict resolution, anger management, problem solving, and emotional regulation. Attending a class and listening to a counselor talk about anger management, for example, is unlikely to help an offender build new skills in managing their responses to difficult situations any more than listening to music will help a person become a musician. But listening to a counselor describe anger management techniques, observing them in others and practicing and perfecting them over time will help offenders develop more productive response to volatile situations. Research tells us that the amount of skill practice offenders need depends upon their level of risk.⁹ The higher the risk of the offender to reoffend, the higher the need for intervention. As a general rule, approximately 100 hours of programming time for medium risk offenders and 200-300 hours of programming time for high risk offenders should be targeted for maximum effect.¹⁰

Dr. James Bonta notes, "There are virtually no serious competitors for the following when it comes to changing criminal behavior:"¹¹

- ✓ Modeling: Demonstrating those behaviors we want to see in others;
- ✓ Reinforcement: Rewarding those behaviors we want to see repeated;
- ✓ Role-Playing: Creating opportunities for practice and providing corrective feedback;
- ✓ Graduated Practice: Unbundling complex behavior sets into their smaller components and practicing these smaller steps individually, building towards the complex behavior set; and
- ✓ Extinction: Assuring that antisocial styles of thinking, feeling, and acting are not inadvertently rewarded.

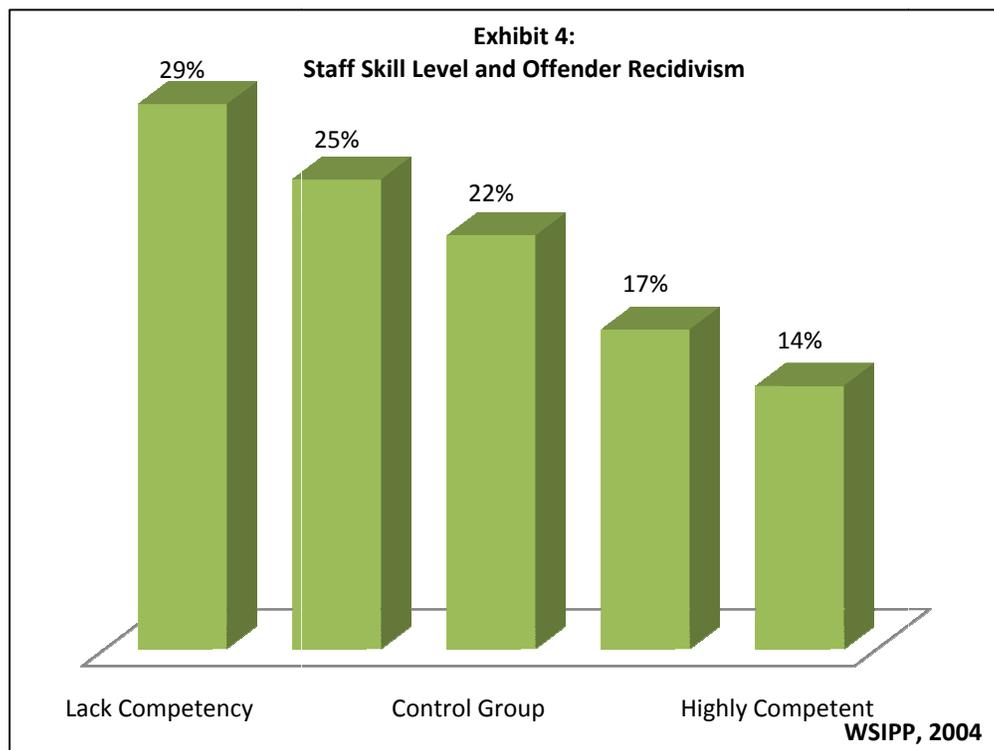
⁹ Andrews & Bonta, 2007.

¹⁰ Bourgon & Armstrong, 2005.

¹¹ Andrews & Bonta, 1998.

Ensuring Practitioners' Skills are in Alignment with the Research

Research conducted over the last decade provides important information about the influence staff can have over offender recidivism rates. Trotter¹² analyzed records of officers trained in a pro-social form of intervention that focused on modeling and reinforcing behaviors and teaching problem solving skills. His research showed that the offenders on the caseloads of these officers had lower recidivism rates than did the offenders on the caseloads of officers who did not possess or use these skills. Other studies support this finding. For example, in 2004, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy¹³ completed an outcome evaluation of Washington State's research based programs for juvenile offenders and found that the competency level of the staff working with the youth had a direct impact on the likelihood of recidivism regardless of the intervention program in which the youth participated. These studies and others with similar findings underscore the very important role that all staff can play in shaping—and changing—offender behavior. The good news is we do not have to rely solely on limited therapeutic opportunities to influence offenders; as has been noted already, *every interaction is an opportunity to positively influence behavior.*



¹² Trotter, 2006.

¹³ WSIPP, 2004.

REQUISITE TRAITS AND SKILLS.

A meta-analytic study conducted by Dowden and Andrews¹⁴ resulted in the identification of specific skills among corrections professionals that positively shape offenders' behavior. Exhibit 5 reflects the key traits and skill areas that have been correlated to improved outcomes among offenders.

Exhibit 5:¹⁵ Five Dimensions of Effective Correctional Treatment	
<i>Effective use of authority</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Firm but fair approach• Make rules clear, visible, understandable• Compliance through positive reinforcement• Keep focus of message on behavior, not person• Use of normal voice• Give choices with consequences• Guide offender toward compliance
<i>Modeling and reinforcing pro-social attitudes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive/negative reinforcement• Model and rehearse pro-social behavior in concrete and vivid way• Immediate feedback on why behavior is approved/disapproved• Offender encouraged to think about why certain behavior is desirable• Role playing with increasingly difficult scenarios
<i>Teaching concrete problem solving skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage offender in activities that increase satisfaction and rewards for non-criminal pursuits• Help offender develop a plan, clarify goals, generate options/alternatives, evaluate options
<i>Advocacy/Brokerage of community resource</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrange the most appropriate correctional service• Speak on behalf of client at home, school, work or other
<i>Relationship factors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open, warm, genuine, and enthusiastic communication• Self-confident• Empathetic• Flexible• Mutual respect and liking• Directive, solution focused, structured, non-blaming

SKILLS IN BUILDING RAPPORT.

In order for offenders to receive and integrate both positive and negative reinforcement – and to learn from pro-social role modeling – offenders must view those they are learning from as trustworthy. Trust between staff and offenders is built upon staffs' genuine interest in their success, staffs' sincerity in communication and action, and staffs' willingness to engage in meaningful change-producing professional relationships. This meaningful professional relationship in and of itself is insufficient to promote long lasting change, but is fundamental to the strategies that do promote long lasting change.

¹⁴ Dowden & Andrews, 2004.

¹⁵ Ibid.

SKILLS IN COMMUNICATION.

At least until recently, few correctional staff began their careers with the technical communications skills that have proven effective in working with recalcitrant clients. Yet, rarely do a few minutes pass when staff have an opportunity to use these skills. Whether interviewing an offender for a pre-sentence investigation, conducting a classification interview, or discussing an institutional work assignment, staff are continually collecting information from offenders. Likewise, staff routinely have opportunities to observe and correct offenders' behavior, whether responding to an institutional rule infraction, a violation of supervision conditions, or poor behavior in the probation office waiting room. All of these encounters offer an opportunity to reframe and redirect offenders' thinking and actions. In recognition of this, increasing numbers of agencies are providing some form of skill training to their staff. This training follows the same skill building regime described previously: direct instruction, demonstration, role play, positive reinforcement, feedback, and skill practice. Because all staff are in a position to influence offenders' behavior, these training opportunities are being made available to all staff. These skill advancements, along with Motivational Interviewing techniques, result in more thorough and accurate interviews (which form the basis of many correctional decisions such as classification assignments, program placements, etc.), offenders who are more engaged in their plans for change, reduced defensiveness, higher rates of institutional and community compliance, and, ultimately, higher rates of success among offenders.

Case Study:

Grant County, Indiana: Staff Skills

The Grant County Correctional Services Department has trained its degreed probation officer and case managers, along with management staff, on effective staff-offender interactions. Called EPICS (Effective Practices in Correctional Settings), the curriculum was developed by the University of Cincinnati in response to the need for skill building around the core correctional practices aimed at reducing recidivism. Staff received a four day intensive training that included multiple role plays, video role plays, and critique/feedback. The purpose of the training was to practice the behavioral techniques that lead to crime reduction and to gain comfort with these skills. The training was followed by clinical supervision to ensure that the skills were applied with fidelity.

Agencies that have received training in EPICS have agreed to participate in a research study conducted by Christopher Lowenkamp, Ph.D., to determine its effectiveness and to identify improvements in the training program.

BUILDING AGENCY CAPACITY.

In addition to providing initial training to staff in these skill areas, agencies should take the following additional steps in their efforts to maximize the influence of staff on shaping offender behavior:

- ✓ Develop written policies that reflect the agency's commitment to maximizing the influence staff interactions have on shaping offender behavior and describing the actions the agency and staff will take to fulfill this commitment;
- ✓ Provide "booster" training to staff to continue to reinforce and improve their skills in communication, problem solving, conflict resolution, etc.;
- ✓ Equip first line supervisors with the specific skills needed to mentor and coach staff in these areas, particularly with regard to providing constructive feedback;
- ✓ Develop written policies reflecting the agency's commitment to quality control and describing the actions the agency and staff will take to fulfill this commitment;
- ✓ Revise the agency's recruitment processes to assure that future hiring practices take into consideration the attitudes and skills staff need to possess to be most effective in their work with offenders;
- ✓ Revise the agency's performance appraisal process to reflect the agency's commitment to monitoring, building and strengthening the workforce's skills in these areas; and
- ✓ Revise the agency's promotional system to reflect the agency's commitment to reinforcing the importance of these skills to the effectiveness of the agency.

Case Study:

Maricopa County, Arizona: Workforce Competencies

In 2008-09, the Adult Probation Department in Maricopa County underwent an extensive review of the core competencies required of staff working with higher risk offenders. These competencies are considered to be the most important skills needed by the workforce in order to reduce recidivism. This plan was put forth in an effort to align agency efforts toward risk reduction. Once identified, these competencies will be used to recruit potential new employees, guide staff development plans and promotions, and inform the revision of performance measures. The process took approximately one year and included the assistance of a Workforce Development firm. This firm provided the thirty most common competencies for a human service-oriented job and helped the agency narrow the list down to the core 10-12. The core competencies are used to develop behavioral questions and scenarios for the purposes of recruitment and hiring, staff development and promotion, and agency succession planning.

Section II: Shaping Offender Behavior Coaching Packet Checklist

Key: 1 = Yes 2 = In process; no additional support needed 3 = In process; additional support needed 4 = No; support needed or N/A	Entire Agency	Staff Group A:	Staff Group B:	Staff Group C:	Staff Group D:	Staff Group E:
1. Does the agency have written policies and procedures that explicitly describe how staff should interact with offenders (e.g., every interaction is an opportunity to shape behavior; expectation to build meaningful professional relationship; use of positive reinforcement (4:1 ratio))?		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2. Have staff been provided introductory skill-based communication skills training (such as Motivational Interviewing)?						
3. Have staff been provided skill-based communication skills booster training?						
4. Have staff been provided guidance on those positive reinforcements sanctioned for use by the agency?						
5. Have staff been provided coaching on the effective use of authority?						
6. Have staff been provided explicit guidance on the use of negative reinforcements (e.g., how to use deliberate, measured responses to shape offender behavior)?						
7. Have staff received skill-based training on modeling and reinforcing pro-social attitudes?						
8. Have staff received skill-based training on teaching concrete problem solving skills?						
9. Have staff received coaching on brokering appropriate resources (as applicable to their role in the agency)?						
10. Have staff received coaching on building meaningful professional relationships?						
11. Have supervisors received training on how to coach staff in these skill areas?						
12. Does the agency have policy to explicitly guide quality assurance in these areas (e.g., expectations of line supervisors to coach staff; ongoing training and coaching opportunities for staff; hiring, performance evaluation, and promotional activities that are aligned with these staff skill expectations)?						
13. Do supervisors deliberately monitor staff's use of these skills and techniques, and provide structured feedback and coaching?						
14. Does staff diversity (i.e., culture, gender, language) resemble the diversity of the offender population?						

Section III: Action Planning Worksheet

GOAL:			
Objective 1:			
Tasks	Lead Person	Completion Date	Assistance/Expertise Needed
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
Objective 2:			
Tasks	Lead Person	Completion Date	Assistance/Expertise Needed
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
Objective 3:			
Tasks	Lead Person	Completion Date	Assistance/Expertise Needed
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Section IV: References and Additional Resources

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Additional Resources

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