

EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICES

"The most important finding from the intermediate sanctions literature is that programs must deliver high 'doses' of both treatment and surveillance to assure public safety and reduce recidivism. 'Treatment' alone is not enough, nor is 'surveillance' by itself adequate. Programs that can increase offender-to-officer contact and provide treatment have reduced recidivism."

Joan Petersilia, Ph.D.

In *Crime: Public Policies for Crime Control*, James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (Eds.), ICS Press, Oakland, California, 2002

For the past several years, the Community Justice Assistance Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ-CJAD) has been focused on implementing effective programming based upon local and national research outlining the components of programs that are proven to reduce recidivism and produce long term change in offender behavior. This body of research is often referred to as Evidence Based Practices.

How Has TDCJ-CJAD Promoted Evidence Based Practices In Community-Based Programs?

- Trained teams from 36 Community Corrections Facilities (CCFs) to redesign programs and ensure that research-based treatment strategies are utilized.
- Provided technical assistance to CCFs to assist in the development and implementation of action plans.
- Began evaluating CCFs using the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI), which is a research-based instrument that measures the quality of programs.
- Trained over 300 Community Supervision Officers and 30 trainers in conducting a cognitive-behavioral program for offenders called "Thinking for A Change."
- Sponsored an annual Sentencing Conference which brings together county decision making teams comprised of judges, district attorneys, defense attorneys and CSCD directors. Sentencing Conference speakers promote the principles of evidence-based practices in order to help Texas leadership explore how they may more effectively utilize the full range of available sanctions to ensure public safety.
- Provided funding for Motivational Interviewing.
- TDCJ-CJAD incorporated evidence based practices into the Substance Abuse Treatment Standards, as required by Texas Government Code § 509.015.
- Provided progressive sanctions training to judges, key CSCD personnel in order to facilitate CSCD compliance with the 79th legislative appropriation bill.

What Are The Essential Components Of Programs That Work (Proven To Reduce Recidivism)?

- **Assessment of Risk:** The right people are in the right programs. Offenders are given a validated risk assessment instrument, and intensive programs are reserved for those at higher risk of recidivism.
- **Assessment of Crime Producing Needs:** Programs target crime-producing behaviors (substance abuse, but also criminal values, anti-social peers, poor problem solving, relapse).
- **Research-based Strategies:** Programs use structured cognitive-behavioral curricula that target anti-social thinking and other factors related to criminality (e.g., impulsivity, poor problem solving skills, lack of consideration of consequences) are used.
- **Motivation:** The programs have a motivational component and trained staff on strategies to strengthen program compliance and completion.
- **Peers/Family:** Programs strengthen the family/pro-social peers.
- **Aftercare:** Post-release supervision/services are provided to offenders.

What Are The Essential Components Of Programs That Work (Proven To Reduce Recidivism)? (continued)

- **Quality Control:** Programs are evaluated using a research-based process evaluation targeting the critical components of effective programs to assure that the program is being delivered as it was designed (e.g., the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory - CPAI).
- **Public Safety:** Programs track offender recidivism rates to determine the program's effectiveness.

What Is Thinking for a Change?

- It is a cognitive-behavioral program for offenders developed by the National Institute of Corrections.

Why Are Cognitive-Behavioral Programs Effective?

- Cognitive-behavioral programs specifically focus on modifying anti-social thinking and promoting self-responsibility.
- They are directed towards long-term change in criminal behavior by promoting internal constraints rather than relying on external control. (Reduction in Recidivism).
- They focus on replacing criminal thinking with specific pro-social skills in everyday situations (e.g., Consequential Thinking).

What Is The CPAI?

- The CPAI is a research-based tool to ascertain how closely a correctional program meets known principles of effective correctional treatment.
- It is based on extensive research on recidivism.
- It examines 6 areas:
 - Program Implementation and Leadership
 - Assessment
 - Program Characteristics
 - Staff Quality/Experience/Retention
 - Program Evaluation
 - Level of Funding/Resources

Where Can You Get More Information on Evidence Based Practices

- The TDCJ-CJAD Bench Manual provides an overview of what works. It can be obtained at the TDCJ home page at www.tdcj.state.tx.us or at www.tdcj.state.tx.us/publications/cjad/bench-manual.pdf. (Please note: The TDCJ-CJAD Bench Manual will be revised to incorporate legislation passed by the 79th Legislature)
- Tools of the Trade at <http://www.nicic.org/Library/020095>