

Correctional Program Assessment Inventory©

FINAL REPORT

Reassessment conducted on the
Competency Building Program

LaCrosse, Wisconsin

By

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***This is a reassessment of the Competency Building Program. The program improved in many areas, however, new areas of concern also emerged. Any modification or additions to the previous report will be bolded.**

Summary of the Program

The Competency Building Program is a community-based outpatient program that has been in operation since 1996. The program serves adjudicated male and female juveniles ranging from 12-16 year of age. The participants are typically on probation while completing the program requirements. **At the time of the re-assessment, the program was serving 8 clients with a capacity of 8. Currently, the program is on a waiting list.** The program includes that director and two part time staff members. The primary treatment provided is based on the Corrective Thinking curriculum published by Truthought. Finally, the participants are involved in the treatment for an average of 12 months.

Procedures

The Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI, Gendreau and Andrews, 1992) is used to ascertain how closely a correctional treatment program meets known principles of effective correctional treatment. There are six primary sections of the CPAI: 1) program implementation and the qualifications of the program director; 2) client pre-service assessment; 3) characteristics of the program; 4) characteristics and practices of the staff; 5) quality assurance and evaluation; and 6) miscellaneous items such as ethical guidelines and program stability.

Each section is scored as either "very satisfactory" (70% to 100%); "satisfactory" (60% to 69%); "satisfactory, but needs improvement" (50% to 59%); or "unsatisfactory" (less than 50%). The scores from all six areas are totaled and the same scale is used for the overall assessment score. It should be noted that not all of the six areas are given equal weight, and some items may be considered "not applicable," in which case they are not included in the scoring.

There are several limitations to the CPAI that should be noted. First, the instrument is based on an "ideal" type. The criteria have been developed from a large body of research and knowledge that combines the best practices from the empirical literature on "what works" in reducing offender recidivism. Second, as with any research process, objectivity and reliability are always an issue. Although steps are taken to insure that the information that is gathered is accurate and reliable, given the nature of the process, decisions about the information and data gathered are invariably made by the assessor. Third, the process is time specific. That is, the assessment is based on the program at the time of the assessment. Changes or modifications may be under development, however, only those activities and processes that are present at the time of the review are scored. Fourth, the process does not take into account all "system" issues that can effect program integrity. Finally, the process does not address "why" a problem exists within a program.

Despite these limitations, there are a number of advantages to this process. First, the criteria are based on empirically derived principles of effective programs. Second, the process provides a measure of program integrity and quality; it provides insight into the “black box” of a program, something that an outcome study alone does not provide. Third, the results can be obtained relatively quickly. Fourth, it identifies both the strengths, and weaknesses of a program. It provides the program with an idea of what it is doing that is consistent with the research on effective interventions, as well as those areas that need improvement. Fifth, it provides some recommendations for program improvement. Finally, it allows for benchmarking. Comparisons with other programs that have been assessed using the same criteria are provided, and since program integrity and quality can change over time, it allows a program to reassess its progress over time.

Data were collected through structured interviews with selected program staff on **April 30, 2002**. Other sources of information included the examination of several representative case files, and other selected program materials.

Norm Information

Researchers at the University of Cincinnati have assessed over 200 programs nationwide using the CPAI. Approximately 8 percent of the programs assessed have been classified as “very satisfactory” 20 percent “satisfactory”, 35 percent “satisfactory but needs improvement”, and 36 percent “unsatisfactory.” The average scores in each of the six areas are contained in the figure contained at the end of the report.

Program Implementation

The first section examines how much influence the current director had in designing and implementing the program, his qualifications and experience, his current involvement with the staff and the program participants, and the overall implementation of the program. **At the time of the initial assessment, Larry Winter was the director of the program, however, Ted Stein is currently the director. It should be noted that Larry is still actively involved in advising the program.**

Strengths:

The first area concerns the qualifications and involvement of the program director, or the person responsible for overseeing the daily treatment components of the program. **Larry Winter was directly responsible for the design of the program when it was created in 1996. However, Ted has been actively involved in revising the current program in several respects including the reevaluation of the consequences and rewards used by the program. Moreover, Ted is responsible for the development of a family/parenting component.**

Ted obtained his baccalaureate degree in psychology and a Masters degree in counseling. He is currently involved in hiring, supervising, and training staff to work in

the program. **In addition, the director runs all of the groups associated with the program.**

The second area of focus is the creation of the program itself. Effective interventions have several dimensions: they are designed to be consistent with the treatment literature on effective programs; interventions and program components are piloted before full implementation; the values and goals of the program should be consistent with existing values in the community or the institution; the program meets a need; and the program is perceived as cost effective.

The model currently in use by the program is an example of an appropriate intervention for offenders. Larry reviewed the literature related to correctional rehabilitation before beginning the program. Since that time, Ted has implemented a family component. It appears that he did review the pertinent literature before choosing the intervention. The program was developed in response to the need for more effective community based programming as it is typically at capacity or on a waiting list. Finally, the program is considered cost effective by program staff and currently has adequate funding.

Areas that Need Improvement

There is no evidence that the staff piloted the family/parenting group before full implementation.

The program has made significant strides in developing community support. At the time of the initial assessment, the relationship between the program and the community appeared to be strained by conflicting viewpoints. It appears that this relationship has been remedied. However, a strained relationship still exists between the program and several members of the criminal justice community. Although improved, the program is still hampered by several caseworkers that are unwilling to make referrals to the program.

Evaluation: Very Satisfactory

Recommendations

- **Any time a new intervention or component is instituted, a pilot period of at least one month should be conducted to sort out the content and logistics of the program/component. Modifications often are difficult to make once a program has been formally instituted.**
- **As mentioned in the previous report, the program must work to reconcile differences and rebuild support from the criminal justice community. The program has made critical changes to its system of rewards and consequences and thereby reduced some of the problems previously cited by staff. At this point, the program should strive to reconcile differences with**

the specific caseworkers in question. Meetings should be held to discuss remaining concerns and the programs should make modifications if the caseworkers can demonstrate the need for those changes.

Client Pre-Service Assessment

The extent to which clients are appropriate for the service provided, and the use of proven assessment methods is critical to effective treatment programs. Effective programs assess the risk, need, and responsivity of clients, and then provide services and treatment accordingly. The section on Client Pre-Service Assessment examines three areas regarding assessment: selection of clients, the assessment of risk, need, and personal characteristics of the client, and the manner in which these characteristics are assessed.

Strengths:

Clients assigned to the Competency Building Program exhibit a number of problems. Specifically, substance abuse, family dysfunction, and antisocial attitudes were identified by the program staff. The selection criteria includes juveniles charged with a class A misdemeanor or a pattern of lower level charges such as disorderly conduct. The program only accepts juveniles that score high or very high risk on the Youthful Level Service Inventory (Yo-LSI) and are **12** years old or older. Finally, staff feel the majority of the participants are appropriate for the treatment provided.

An initial assessment is conducted on potential program participants. The assessment process includes the Yo-LSI, the Sassy, a detailed bio-social screening, the Shipley IQ test, MACI, and the Jesness Inventory. The Yo-LSI, the Sassy, the Shipley IQ, the MACI, and the Jesness Inventory are standardized and objective instruments that provide an overall score.

Areas that Need Improvement:

None

Rating: Very Satisfactory

- **An LSI validation study is currently being conducted.**

Program Characteristics

This section examines whether the program targets criminogenic behaviors and attitudes, the types of treatment used to target these behaviors and attitudes, specific treatment procedures, the use of positive reinforcement and punishment, and methods used to prepare clients for return to the community. Other important elements of effective intervention include: the ratio of rewards to punishers, matching client's risk, needs, and personal characteristics with the appropriate treatment programs, treatment intensity,

staff, and relapse prevention strategies designed to assist the client in anticipating and coping with problem situations.

Strengths:

The intervention used by the program is designed to target criminogenic needs and behaviors associated with recidivism, including:

- Changing attitudes, orientations, and values favorable to law violations and anti-criminal role models
- Changing antisocial feelings
- Increasing self control, self-management, and problem solving skills.
- Improving skills in interpersonal conflict resolution
- Promoting more positive attitudes and performance regarding work and education
- **Promoting family communication and problem solving**
- Relapse prevention

The type of treatment provided by the program is based on a cognitive behavioral theory that has been shown to be effective with the general offender population.

The length of stay in the program varies and is determined by progress in treatment. Typically, the clients are involved in treatment for an average of **12** months.

Since the last assessment the program has developed feedback forms to be completed weekly by the parents and school personnel. This allows the program to monitor the youth's behavior while outside of the group setting.

The program staff monitor the Yo-LSI scores and reassessment scores to determine duration in the program. The staff indicated they expect to see significant reductions in the Yo-LSI scores before the youth is released from the program.

The group facilitators are all trained and certified to deliver the corrective thinking curriculum to the youth.

It appears the youth are given opportunities to provide input into the structure and rules of the program. The youth may discuss issues during confession day or they are able to complete feedback forms to discuss their remaining concerns.

The program has some rewards and punishers to encourage program participation and compliance. Rewards include: verbal praise and **'CB Bucks' which carry value towards earning privileges.** Punishers include: verbal warnings, a presentation by the client to the group, a thinking report, an empathy letter, an apology letter, a 12-page thinking report, a 500 word contract detailing the plan for change, or involvement in a jeopardy track. The program director indicates that punishments are used to increase responsibility and reinforce the lessons used in groups. **It appears that Ted is attentive to whether the punishments produce unintended negative consequences. He**

discusses why the punishment occurred and develops a plan with the youth to avoid future consequences.

Completion criteria established by the program appears to be based on progress in treatment. Specifically, the program uses a checklist to determine the participant's progress through treatment and the staff meet to discuss whether they feel the client's behavior is acceptable and warrants a successful termination from the program.

Effective programs train clients to monitor problem situations. The program appears to provide training to the youth in this area.

Upon leaving the program, the clients are routinely referred to other agencies relevant to their areas of need.

The director has implemented a family/parenting intervention developed by the Savannah Family Institute. The parenting group meets once a week for 9 sessions. It was reported that participation in the group is very high.

Areas that Need Improvement:

Although the program is based on the TruThought corrective thinking process, there is some evidence that the director is not fully using the curriculum to guide treatment groups. The youth expressed that they felt the program repeatedly utilized the same activities and was not engaging or challenging. The director should ensure that the groups are following a structured curriculum and becoming increasingly difficult to challenge participants.

The client's time should be more structured and designed to engage the client in prosocial activities. The program should make every effort to involve all clients in intensive and structured treatment activities, especially during the evening and weekends hours. This may also require that the program subsidize the treatment groups.

While the program does use the Yo-LSI to determine program duration, there is no evidence that the scores are used to vary the intensity of services offered. In fact, it was reported that the director does not review Yo-LSI scores. The program is limited to high or very high risk youth, however, even within this group the program should be varying the intensity of services. The program may not be intensive enough for the highest risk clients.

There does not appear to be a systematic matching of clients and staff, or clients to groups based on the responsivity characteristics assessed at intake. **Although the program assesses a variety of responsivity characteristics at intake, the information is not utilized consistently to assign clients to treatment services or caseworkers.**

Research indicates that rewards should be used at a much higher rate than punishers. The program does use some rewards, however, the frequency of rewards should be greater (approximately 4:1).

The current program director notes that the use of detention and other strict punishments has been eliminated from the program. However, the procedure used for administering consequences and rewards should be modified. First, the director exercises wide discretion when administering rewards such as bonus points or the amount for each “CB Buck.” Moreover, the program does not tie rewards or consequences to the results of the feedback forms filled out by parents or school personnel. Finally, the youth are not frequently informed about their progress in the program.

While the program does have completion criteria, the staff may wish to revisit whether this criteria is too vague. The program is engaging youth in the program for an average of 12 months, however, notes that some receive services for much longer (e.g., three years). The program staff should recognize that after 12 months (excluding aftercare), the impact of treatment might diminish. The youth needs to feel that the goals of the program are clear and realistic.

There is no evidence that the program staff are teaching the youth to plan or rehearse alternative reactions to high risk situation, nor is there evidence that the program trains the youth to practice the behavior in increasingly difficult situations.

Currently, there are no mechanisms in place to allow all youth that have completed the program to return for booster sessions. The youth who are rearrested may receive services or those who ask to return to the group are permitted, however, the booster sessions should be required of all the youth.

The program considers level three an aftercare level, however, attending the same group with less frequency is not enough to qualify as aftercare. Aftercare should include a separate group meeting and be targeted to their specific needs.

Evaluation: Satisfactory with a Need for Improvement

Recommendations:

- Detailed treatment manuals should be used for all aspects of the treatment program, and the manuals should be reviewed periodically by the staff, updated as needed, and used consistently. The curriculum already in existence should be used consistently. Even if modifications are made to the curriculum, the director needs to ensure that the manuals detail the goals of the groups, the content of the groups, and the recommended teaching methods. They should also include exercises or homework assignments. The curriculum used for groups should include specific exercises and assignments that provide youth with the opportunity to practice newly acquired behaviors

in increasingly difficult situations (e.g. resisting peer pressure, school conflicts, conflict with family). Detailed manuals facilitate staff training, quality assurance, and promote consistency in service delivery.

- The program should match clients to appropriate treatment groups based on risk, need, and responsivity levels. This will involve using risk/need data, incorporating responsivity characteristics of the clients, and developing additional treatment options and groups. For example, the program will want to consider matching clients to groups and counselors based on levels of cognitive functioning, motivation level, learning styles, level of anxiety, and communication style. For example, low functioning clients will have difficulty with a group facilitator or counselor that uses a highly verbal approach to treatment. Moreover, highly anxious clients will not respond well to a highly confrontational group or counselor.
- Treatment intensity, or “dosage” should be clearly matched to the client’s level of risk as measured by standardized assessment instruments. **The program staff should ensure that youth considered very high risk are receiving additional services.**
- While in the program clients should be involved in structured activities between 40-70 percent of their time. Given the program targets high risk youth, the program should consider referring all clients to additional groups to meet their criminogenic needs.
- The application of rewards should outnumber punishers by at least 4:1.
- For punishers to achieve maximum effectiveness, they should be administered in the following manner: escape is impossible, maximum intensity, earliest point in the deviant response, after every occurrence, immediate, alternative prosocial behaviors provided after punishment administered, and variation in the punishers. The staff should be trained how to implement a system of consequences to increase consistency and engender behavioral change. **On that note, the director should try to limit the amount of discretion used with the CB Bucks program. In other words, the director should tie the value of each to a specific behavior and the youth should be aware of this schedule. Moreover, the program should consider feedback from parents and school and reward or consequence youth accordingly. Finally, the youth should be informed about their progress in treatment so they can make the necessary adjustments to their behaviors to stay on track to graduate.**
- **Staff should review existing completion criteria to ascertain whether the program is providing youth with realistic avenues to complete the treatment process. If the youth is unable to understand or clearly recognize a graduation date is attainable, their level of motivation is likely to decrease. In addition, if staff consistently find that youth are taking well over 12**

months to complete the core program, the staff should re-evaluate whether the youth is still appropriate for the services the program can offer them. Giving the youth “more of the same” is likely to be ineffective.

- **Clients should be systematically trained in behavioral rehearsal techniques. That is, they should be trained to observe and anticipate problem situations, and plan and rehearse alternative prosocial responses in increasingly difficult situations. This should be an integral part of the treatment, and should be routinely done throughout all components of the program.**
- Youth should be required to return for booster sessions.
- **Aftercare sessions should be provided to the youths and their families in order to provide long-term supervision and treatment. The aftercare planning should begin during the active treatment phase and the duration and intensity based on the risk and needs of the participant.**

Staff Characteristics

This section concerns the qualifications, experience, stability, training, and involvement of the program staff¹.

Strengths:

The staff do meet our criteria for education **and stability**. The program currently employs two part time staff members. Both hold baccalaureate degrees in psychology and one holds a Masters degree in **professional development**. It appears that staff are hired on personal qualities relevant to the program. Specifically, **integrity, empathy, open mindedness, and trustworthiness** were key characteristics mentioned by the program director. The treatment staff are provided with clinical supervision through bi-monthly meetings with a qualified therapist. Moreover, there is evidence that staff participate in on-going training workshops and seminars, feel they are able to modify the program structure, and strongly support the goals and values of treatment.

Areas that Need Improvement:

Although the treatment providers are well qualified, the staff do not meet our criteria for experience. Further, while all staff complete the four day Truthought curriculum training, the duration and extent of the overall training process is limited. Finally, while staff are required to complete a yearly self appraisal, they are not routinely assessed on clinical skills related directly to service delivery.

¹ The education and experience of the program director are discussed in the program implementation section.

Evaluation: Satisfactory

Recommendations

- It is recommended that 75 percent of the staff work in a treatment facility for at least two years prior to working with the current program.
- New staff should receive three to six months of formal training in theory and practice of interventions employed by the program. It is important that the staff understand the treatment and intervention employed by the providers so that they can appropriately model and reinforce prosocial behaviors.
- All staff should be regularly assessed on criteria specifically related to the delivery of services.

Evaluation

This section centers on the type of feedback, assessments, and evaluations used to monitor how well the program is functioning.

Strengths:

The program provides internal quality assurance through periodic file reviews, staffings, attendance and participation logs for the groups. **The program staff developed a satisfaction survey that is completed prior to completion in the program. The staff also reassess the client using a battery of tests which include the Yo-LSI.** Finally, the program staff also track clients once they leave the program to monitor their progress.

Areas that Need Improvement:

The program has been in existence since 1996 and should be evaluated by an independent party. The program evaluations that currently exist have not been scrutinized by a peer reviewed process to assess the methodological quality.

Evaluation: Satisfactory with Need for Improvement

Recommendations:

- **The program should contract with an outside agency to provide an outcome evaluation of its services. The evaluation should include the development of adequate comparison groups and the results should be published in a peer reviewed outlet.**

Other

The final section in the CPAI includes miscellaneous items pertaining to the program such as disruptive changes in program, funding, or community support, ethical guidelines and the comprehensiveness of participant's files.

Strengths:

Client records are maintained in confidential files and include assessment information, treatment plans, and progress notes. There is a documented code of ethics that guide staff behavior with the clients. It appears there has been little change in funding over the last few years. **It appears the changes made by the new director have been well received by the community. Finally, the program has an advisory board designated with directing the program in some fashion.**

Areas that Need Improvement:

As previously mentioned, the animosity between the program and some members of the criminal justice community has been detrimental to the development and continued growth of the program.

Evaluation: Satisfactory

- **Efforts should be made to resolve the remaining issues and parties should work together to develop an implement the most effective option for the youth.**

OVERALL PROGRAM RATING:

The Competency Building Program received an overall score of **70.6** percent on the CPAI. This score is in the "**Very Satisfactory**" category.