

**Helping young offenders  
stay out of trouble:**

**Some creative approaches to  
community-based  
programs**

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## Outline

### Introduction

#### A. Consultation

- What is it?
- Common pitfalls
- Guidelines

#### B. Staffing

- Look at how the jobs are defined
- Find the right people
- Keep the right people

#### C. Program services

- Levels of influence
- Some generalizations
- Example 1: Combining intensive supervision and therapy
- Example 2: A youth employment program

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## Introduction

(First: presenter's background & experience)

1. Let's not throw out the baby with the bath:

“That program is from somewhere else, so we can't use it here”

2. Let's not repeat the mistakes of the past:

“Take this program and do it like we did”

3. Middle ground:

➤ Consider non-local approaches

➤ *Investigate* rather than *assume* they will be appropriate

➤ Adapt promising approaches as needed

➤ Make resources available to do so.

## A. Consultation

### 1. What is it?

- ◆ It means different things to different people
- ◆ Areas of potential conflict:
  - Community vs government expectations
  - Indigenous vs non-indigenous views
  - Factions within the indigenous community

### 2. Common pitfalls

- Numbers – too few
- Status – too low
- Biased selection: chasing the rubber stamp
- Engagement too short
- Engagement too late
- Advice disregarded

### 3. Guidelines

- a) Get the right people, in the right numbers
- b) Engage consultants from the earliest planning stage
- c) Keep them involved for the right length of time
- d) Government and non-government people educate each other
- e) Negotiate conflicts between community expectations and gov't expectations
- f) Maintain atmosphere of safety and respect.

## **B. Staffing**

### 1. Look at how the jobs are defined

Place value on

- Culture-specific knowledge & networks
- Understanding of local community
- Credibility and respect
- Ability to walk in both worlds

### 2. Find the right people

- Word of mouth and informal networks
- 'Inside track'
- Select interview panel carefully

### 3. Keep the right people

- Understand the barriers
- Counteract institutional racism
- Supervision and support
- Professional development
- Mentoring
- Cross-training

## C. Program services

### 1. Potential levels of program influence

- Individual offender
- Family
- Clan or tribe
- Community
- Systemic: sociopolitical, economic etc

### 2. Some generalizations

- ◆ Mainstream programs:
  - Strong on individual level
  - Weak on family, community, systemic levels
- ◆ Indigenous programs:
  - Strong on community, systemic levels
  - Weak on individual level
- ◆ A solution - blend the two approaches by:
  - effective consultation
  - joint program development
  - bicultural staffing

## **A blended approach: Example 1**

### **Combining intensive supervision and therapy**

#### **Target group:**

Moderate risk young offenders assessed as needing more structure than Probation Supervision but not requiring imprisonment

#### **Goal:**

To provide an effective alternative to prison or youth training centres by effectively managing young offenders in the community

#### **Entry point to CJS:**

Many possibilities, eg

- diversion
- deferred sentence
- participation is a condition of community-based sentence
- alternative sentence, eg 50/50 split

## **Program structure:**

- ◆ 1 program director/manager, clinically trained
- ◆ 1 therapist and 2 case managers/mentors per 12 clients
- ◆ Case manager role:
  - Court advocacy
  - Help families ‘navigate the system’
  - Home visits
  - School/work site visits
  - Service linkages for
    - young offender
    - his/her family members
  - Monitor a curfew
  - Coordinate a weekly group, eg
    - self-development
    - life skills
  - Activities: field trips, sports, cultural events...
  - 24/7 mobile/pager coverage for emergencies
  - Progress reports to Probation/Court

◆ Therapist role:

- Assess candidates for program suitability
- Provide weekly offence-specific group therapy:

Example 1: Group therapy with sex offenders

- overcoming denial, taking responsibility
- victim empathy
- sex education
- relationship skills
- managing impulses and emotions
- relapse prevention

Example 2: Group therapy w driving offenders:

- drink-driving education & victim awareness
  - overcome high-risk attitudes, beliefs & lifestyle factors
  - substance abuse assessment & treatment
  - assertiveness and managing peer pressure
  - cooperation with legal sanctions
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- Provide structured family component, eg
    - Fortnightly parent group
    - Fortnightly family meetings
  - Provide 1:1 therapy as needed
  - Coordinate follow-up group
  - Progress reports to Probation/Courts

## **A blended approach: Example 2**

### **A youth employment program**

#### **Target group:**

At-risk unemployed youth, or unemployed young offenders eligible for community-based orders

#### **Goal:**

To reduce re-offending risk by getting young offenders into stable employment

#### **Program structure**

- ◆ Program provides short-term stipend for prospective employers, eg
  - 50% of employee wage for 3 months
- ◆ Employers encouraged to keep employees on beyond stipend period

- ◆ 3 phases:
  - Pre-employment job readiness training (3 months)
  - Stipend employment period (3 months)
  - Follow-up support (6 months)
  
- ◆ 1 coordinator:
  - community networker
  - identifies prospective employers
  - supervises & supports case managers
  
- ◆ 1 case manager/outreach worker per 6-8 clients:
  - facilitates a pre-employment job readiness group for Phase 1 clients

Example of a job readiness group protocol:
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Identify skills &amp; interests: career planning</li><li>- Identify barriers &amp; needs</li><li>- Attitudes, values, work habits, lifestyle</li><li>- Assertiveness training</li><li>- Conflict resolution</li><li>- Problem solving</li><li>- Responding to racism</li></ul> |
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- Resume development & application process
- Interview skills

- facilitates a maintenance group with employed clients:
  - o weekly for Phase 2 clients
  - o monthly for Phase 3 clients when ready

#### Example of a maintenance group protocol:

- Check in with each participant
- Identify problems/barriers
- Review and practice skills, eg problem solving
- Identify next steps

- arranges other service linkages as needed
- monitors client work attendance and performance, including spot-checks on site
- meets regularly with employer (weekly in Phase 1, monthly later on)
- meets regularly with parent/s or family
- reports progress to Probation/Courts.

## Conclusion

Important to foster the development of bicultural or blended programs

Harder work but more effective than staying with mainstream approaches

Young offenders will respond to programs that

- meet them at their level
- provide staff they can relate to & respect
- address their needs in ways that feel real
- take community and social concerns into account.

Questions to think about:

- Which parts of this presentation sound irrelevant or off-base for the groups you work with & the region you come from?
- Which parts sound relevant or useful?
- How might the useful parts be adapted to better reach the groups you work with and the region you come from?