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SUBSTANCE ABUSE INTERVENTION DIVISION (SAID):
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS'
DRUG TREATMENT PROGRAM FOR WOMEN OFFENDERS

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March 1994

152204

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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Acknowledgments: Support for this paper was provided by grant 92-IJ-CX-K108, "Criminal Justice Drug Treatment Program for Women Offenders," from the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.

SAID: OVERVIEW AND HISTORY

This report describes the Substance Abuse Intervention Division (SAID) for women offenders at Riker's Island in New York City. It covers background information, program features (including client eligibility criteria), client selection process (including needs assessment) treatment intervention/delivery, and discharge and aftercare.

Since 1989, the New York City Department of Corrections has operated a modified drug-free therapeutic community treatment program called the Substance Abuse Intervention Division (SAID) to deal with the increasing numbers of drug-dependent offenders. This program aims to coordinate the delivery of all substance abuse services for inmates and to prepare the inmates for treatment. It also implements services for substance abusers; establishes standards and monitors the quality and effectiveness of all substance abuse services; develops resources needed for referring and placing inmates into community, long-term residential, outpatient, or jail-based state programs; and identifies new funding for expanding jail-based services.

SAID manages 32 separate dormitories with approximately 1600 inmates in five different jails. On Riker's Island, the SAID program operates two facilities for male offenders and two facilities for female offenders in dormitory settings. In addition to managing its own programs, SAID also delivers substance abuse counseling services to other programs in the jail.

The two units for women contain 202 beds. One hundred beds are located in the Rose M. Singer Center for adult female detainees, and 102 are in the Ward's Island Family Restoration Project for adult sentenced females. The average length of stay is 53 days; however, most female inmates stay less than five days. Despite the short lengths of stay, the modified therapeutic community approach appears to be successful on Riker's Island.

Since inmates believe that SAID housing remains free of sexual harassment and other types of inmate violence, they consider it "safe" and prefer it to other jail housing. SAID units are brighter, cleaner, and more organized than those of the general inmate population. SAID inmates are more respectful toward jail staff, and there appears to be a genuine "family-like" rapport among the inmates, guards, and counselors that is lacking in the general inmate population.

About 80% of the female inmates are held on drug-related charges, in particular the sale of drugs. Most were arrested during drug raids in which the main perpetrators were men. However, this recognition is not translated into special empowerment training designed around women's issues. In fact, the SAID program operates in essentially the same manner for both men and women, with only minor modifications for female inmates.

Structure and Philosophy

The SAID program is a highly structured modified therapeutic community, offering interventions designed for drug and alcohol abuse and general life enrichment. The major components of the SAID program include: (1) a structured and supportive environment; (2) an emphasis on building positive community living skills; (3) group and individual counseling; (4)

substance abuse counseling; (5) cooperative peer interaction; (6) education; and (7) physical exercise.

An important part of the program's structure is its emphasis on discipline and developing basic habits. Counselors stress the importance of small things, like habitually making the bed, getting up early, and keeping busy. Inmates are given 33 tips for practicing cleanliness and are expected to follow them. Any violent behavior violates program rules and results in termination.

The program philosophy emphasizes a "family" orientation, in which conflict is mediated by peer pressure and group resolution. Inmates are expected to be responsible for their conduct, as well as the conduct of others. This responsibility breeds a sense of respect and dignity among the SAID inmates, which is not in the general inmate population.

Inmates leave the SAID program either by being discharged from the institution, by requesting to be moved out of the program, or by being expelled for acting out violently. Although inmates can request to be moved back to the general prison population, counselors try hard to dissuade them from leaving the program. Only after persistent requests will an inmate be dismissed.

In order to provide clients with the most comprehensive services possible, the SAID program integrates the special services available through the program with other services provided on Riker's Island. Health services are provided by Montefiore Hospital, which provides all health services for inmates at Riker's Island. Pregnant women in their first and second trimester can volunteer to be in the SAID program, but they receive no special training or health care until their third trimester, when they are moved out of the SAID program and into a special maternity program.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

A small number of counselors and correctional officers form the SAID program's professional staff under the supervision of the Department of Corrections. The program's administration staff includes a coordinator-supervisor, house manager, chief expediter and secretary. The chief expediter supervises the coordinator who is the senior resident inmate in the unit and who is supposed to conduct herself as a role model at all hours. She is also responsible for ensuring that clients attend the program meetings, updating the information on each of her assigned clients, maintaining phone lists, and monitoring sign in/out sheets.

SAID counselors are recruited directly by the Department of Corrections, and there is no subcontracting with any other drug treatment providers. Counselors play an important role in monitoring and documenting the progress of inmates in terms of their treatment goals and their group participation within the program. Generally, the counselors who are hired have considerable experience working in residential drug treatment programs. Both men and women counselors work with female inmates. The counselors are paid up to \$29,000, which is considered attractive compared to salaries in community-based programs.

The Department of Corrections provides the correctional officers assigned to SAID with its own two weeks training on dealing with drug-abusing inmates in a therapeutic community.

Corrections officers are present for 24 hours and perform regular custodial duties as well as working closely with the counselors and inmates. This management style promotes the development of mutually beneficial relationships between staff and inmates, thereby fostering a positive, caring, and efficient working relationship.

ELIGIBILITY, SCREENING, AND NEEDS ASSESMENT

Eligibility Criteria

Inmates interested in entering the SAID program must meet the following criteria to be admitted:

- They must be nonviolent offenders.
- They must have scored less between 1-10 on the Department of Corrections' risk classification instrument.
- They must agree to participate in all SAID activities.
- They must have medical clearance.
- They cannot have a history of psychiatric disorder.
- They cannot use any psychotropic drugs.
- They cannot be in their third trimester of pregnancy, although inmates who are less than six months pregnant can enter the SAID program.

Inmates who become part of the SAID program move through four service stages. First, when they are in new admission housing units, they are recruited by SAID counselors. Second, after volunteering for the SAID program, they spend between five and ten days in a screening and assessment unit (SAU), where counselors evaluate their appropriateness for the treatment. Third, inmates who pass the screening are sent to the therapeutic housing units (THU), where they receive structured, intensive treatment from SAID staff. Finally, upon release, inmates are referred to community-based treatment programs.

Recruitment

Since bed space at Riker's Island is at a premium, any empty spaces left in a SAID dormitory will be filled with non-SAID inmates. This threat acts as a powerful incentive to the counselors recruit new members, since non-SAID inmates would be disruptive to the program. SAID counselors are quite effective at recruiting new inmates, and the program is kept at near capacity.

Counselors recruit inmates into the SAID program by holding group meetings with inmates in the new admissions housing. During these meetings, the counselors describe the program and its advantages for the inmates. Interested inmates tell their correctional officer that

they want to enter SAID. Since participation in SAID is voluntary, inmates who do not wish to participate are transferred to a non-program area of the jail.

Once interested inmates pass their medical check up, they are sent to a Screening and Assessment Unit (SAU), where they receive group and individual counseling and are evaluated for their appropriateness for the SAID program. Few interested inmates are turned away from the program. Aside from some medical conditions such as epilepsy, which the unit is not prepared to handle, the only reasons that an inmate may be rejected have to do with security and/or the screener's intuitive feeling that the inmate is not serious about the program. Interviewees indicate that almost everyone who seeks admission to the SAID program is accepted.

To screen clients, counselors fill out a one-page form that describes the inmate (current charges, an identification number, case number, etc.), gives a brief description of the inmate's medical and mental health history within the last two years, and the inmate's substance abuse history. The screener can then write comments on a few lines that are left for his/her comments and signs and dates the form.

Inmates accepted to the program must sign an Inmate Consent Form, which states that the inmate understands her obligations and responsibilities as a program participant. This consent form also explains that the inmate will be assigned a primary counselor who will orient the inmate to the SAID program. In addition, it details the conditions under which the counselor might disclose information about the inmate to other counselors.

Screening and Needs Assessment

The Screening and Assessment (SAU) Unit administers a program developed instrument (Psychosocial Narrative) which is intended to measure the psychological and social level of the inmate. This index combines questions about drug history (including the type of drugs and method of use, age at first use, frequency of use), legal history (including prior arrests in the last 12 months, nature of current charge etc.), prior medical history (including drug treatment), educational background, family situation, and the assessor's impressions about the inmate's mental status, based on appearance, mood, appetite, and attitude toward the interviewer. This information is used to create a treatment plan that outlines treatment goals, and the counseling strategies that will help the inmate meet these goals.

Depending upon their legal status (whether detainee or sentenced), the program clients are placed in appropriate units. Detainees are housed in two dormitories called "New Hope" and "Dignity House," while sentenced women are housed in tent-like structures called "Sprung" structures. Counselors document the progress of inmates in terms of both their treatment goals and their group participation within the SAID program.

Once an inmate passes screening, she is sent to a therapeutic housing unit (THU), where she receives fully structured intervention services, including counseling, relapse prevention training, and educational seminars.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The SAID program's daily schedule is undergoing revision. The new schedule will be two-tiered. When it is in full operation, all new inmates will begin in the "orientation unit," which initiates them to the SAID program. The orientation focuses on helping inmates to gain an understanding of their addiction and its consequences, to build a network of social support, and to develop basic life skills.

In the orientation unit, the typical weekday begins with a 7:30 wake-up call, followed by cleaning time, a dorm inspection, and an all morning exercise class. Each morning ends with a half-hour group meeting. After lunch, inmates may attend a variety of group sessions, depending on the day; a mandatory current events discussion; and individual counseling. Group counseling sessions cover topics such as addiction awareness, the SAID program, peer support, recovery training and planning, and skills for dealing with conflict. Weekend schedules include creative writing, life skills, group sessions on the identification of feelings, and a Big Sister group. Each weekday ends with an hour of personal time, and lights go out at 10:00PM.

Program Activities

When inmates have successfully progressed through the orientation phase of treatment, they will enter the "intervention unit," which provides more advanced training on individual life skills, education in cultural awareness, family therapy, relapse prevention, and discharge planning services. SAID inmates receive regular counseling on family issues and conflict resolution. Counseling sessions cover topics such as family dynamics and codependency, and inmates are given literature to read and/or send to their families.

The schedule of the intervention unit is much the same as the orientation unit, with the exception that group counseling covers more advanced topics and more attention is paid to developing computer literacy and family restoration skills that will help inmates readjust after discharge.

In both tiers of the SAID program, counselors are on the premises Monday through Friday. On these days, the program is in full operation, and the days are structured with a variety of individual and group activities. Weekends are less structured and provide more time for recreation. In the evenings and on weekends, inmates are responsible for maintaining the orderly operation of the unit, and inmates are expected to report to the counselors any disciplinary problems that occur during these days.

The SAID program provides a rigorous schedule that all inmates in the program must follow. Inmates are not allowed to stay in their beds or opt out of activities without a valid excuse. Work, a prior appointment, and illness are the only acceptable excuses for not participating in the program's activities.

Due to their short length of stay in the units, treatment for detainees is limited to psychosocial services, education services, and life skills training, whereas treatment for sentenced inmates is more intensive. Since the sentenced inmates stay longer than the detainees, work training is a critical part of their treatment plan.

Most of these SAID participants in the sentenced unit also work in the various "industries" housed on Riker's Island, earning approximately \$6.00 per week. The vocational training that Riker's Island offers tends to emphasize traditional women's work. Women can learn cosmetology, sewing or food service, or they can be certified as a nurse's aide. Although this training teaches skills that may help the women find work after discharge, it prepares them for traditional low-paying "pink collar" jobs and may do little to break the cycle of dependence.

Another program that offers services to SAID inmates at Riker's Island is called the Women and Infant Nurturing Services (WINGS), which began in December 1992. This program is also run by Montefiore Hospital, and it offers education in child care for new mothers with histories of drug or alcohol abuse, health services for mothers and babies, and the opportunity for mothers to live with their infants who are less than one and a half years old. The WINGS program offers daily substance abuse group meetings, twice weekly health education classes, and referral to treatment programs outside the jail for follow-up visits after release.

There is little direct link between the SAID program and WINGS. SAID participants who are pregnant can go into WINGS; however, SAID inmates cannot volunteer to work in the nursery, because their history of drug abuse disqualifies them.

Apart from the training mentioned above, Rosewood High School, located on the Island, offers GED classes in which SAID inmates are encouraged to enroll and job training in the various industries located on the Island (horticulture, nurses aides, cosmetology). The school helps inmates develop work skills while they earn a modest salary to help cover their personal expenses in prison.

Discharge and Aftercare

SAID operates a Discharge Planning Unit (DPU), which is a post-discharge or after-care service that oversees placement activity, develop linkages with community resources, and provides follow-up for clients.

SAID counselors try to prepare inmates for discharge by providing information about other treatment programs that they might attend on the outside. Since many participants are pre-trial detainees and may be released on bail or at court without prior notice, tracking and referral are difficult. Some effort is made to track inmates' progress after discharge. However, lack of finances prohibits intensive tracking and follow-up of referrals. Most of the information that counselors have about inmates who are no longer part of the program comes from letters that inmates write to individual counselors expressing their gratitude and filling them in about what has been happening in their lives and what they know about other counselors.

While in the program, the primary counselors make an assessment of the inmate's needs in order to determine whether they are eligible for particular treatments, whether they should be placed in residential or outpatient treatment, and whether they are their eligible for other entitlements (e.g., public assistance). These counselors also work with inmates' lawyers and the court to determine whether the inmates are eligible for treatment in lieu of prison time.

SAID staff give all new program participants an "exit" package within 24 hours of their arrival. This package contains information about substance abuse treatment facilities in New

York City. If the inmate is discharged before her primary counselor completes an assessment of her case, this information will help her seek treatment on her own initiative.

Inmates on their way to upstate prisons also receive a package of information that lists the various drug treatment services that are available at the state prisons. Primary counselors send "letters of recommendation" with these inmates to the upstate prisons. These letters say that the inmates are eligible for services and what kinds of treatment they should receive.

If the inmates are not going to upstate prisons, the primary counselors also work on arranging a referral to treatment programs. Referrals are arranged for all inmates for whom treatment is mandated by the courts, and for any other inmates who show an interest. There is one SAID discharge planning counselor who works with women and another who works with the HIV Mobile Unit (Trailer 12), which serves both men and women who are HIV-positive. HIV-positive women receive counseling from SAID staff, even if they do not reside in SAID dormitories. These women may live in SAID dorms, with the general inmate population, in Trailer 12, or in the CDU unit (for sick inmates). The SAID discharge counselor contacts treatment programs outside the jail to arrange placements for the female inmates. Sometimes treatment programs come to the jail to interview potential referrals. Once a placement is arranged, the SAID counselor gets a "letter of reasonable assurance" from the treatment program that they will be able to admit the client.

When Riker's knows that an inmate has been referred to treatment in the community, the Discharge Planning Unit contacts the program involved to see whether the inmate reported for treatment. The Unit regularly follows up every three to four months to ascertain whether the inmate continues to attend to treatment.

SUMMARY

The ultimate goal of the drug treatment services provided by the SAID program on Riker's Island is to prepare participants to re-enter the community as drug-free members of society. The SAID program seeks to teach inmates several important life skills:

- How to re-establish or improve relationships within their families, especially with their children
- How to strengthen marital commitment
- How to deal effectively with community agencies
- How to channel their aggression in more constructive ways
- How to improve self-esteem

Addressing these issues reflects the SAID program's genuine attempt to prepare inmates to face the challenges of returning to the outside world upon their release.

However, success in terms of recidivism, actual drug treatment outcomes, or changes in the inmates' lifestyles outside of jail are more difficult to gauge. Except for National Council of Crime and Delinquency's (NCCD) evaluation in progress, few mechanisms to evaluate the

SAID

program are currently in place. SAID units that serve women operate in the same manner as those that serve men. Little effort is made to gear the program toward the specific needs of female inmates. Nevertheless, women receive more counseling on family and parenting issues and are offered training in gender-typed jobs, such as nurse's aide and beautician. Considerable potential exists for providing programs more geared to women's needs through the cooperation of the child welfare, health, and corrections systems.