

Community Corrections Institute



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PROVING YOUR POINT

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Probably more than at any other time during the last decade, correctional programs are under intensive scrutiny. Rising crime rates, escalating costs, judicial intervention, disenchantment with past results, offender agitation for change, etc. have all contributed to this situation. Dr. Martinson's comment that "nothing works" based on his research finds, David Fogel's "justice model", mandatory sentencing, longer sentencing, efforts to eliminate Parole, Mutual Agreement Programming, more institutional construction and commitments are a few of the responses to this scrutiny. This concern is most critical for community residential treatment programs because of the reduction of LEAA money available for such programs while increased commitments further reduce the financial resources available.

On the other hand, studies conducted by Ohio State University, the Massachusetts Department of Correction, the Massachusetts Research Center, the Correctional Economics Center, the University of Hawaii and Gene Karachau, among others, have demonstrated that community residential treatment centers can be effective and efficient as alternatives to traditional incarceration.

By and large, however, CRTCs have oversold their capabilities, have not identified and measured their performance in short term concrete behavioral goals, and have not developed public support for their continued growth and survival. Such shortsightedness has also prevented the development of data for making sound management decisions within CRTCs.

To reverse this trend, I recommend an internal data system to identify the programs' short-term goals, and to measure program performance in reaching these goals. Many programs are subject to continuous criticism because goals are subjective and open to misinterpretation. The first step, then, is to state program goals in realistic, concrete terms. A program should not only say how many residents it will work with in a given year, but how many will successfully complete the program. For those successfully completing the program, a number of additional goals should be included.

Such a statement has five main advantages:

1. The public is explicitly told that such a program can do. Implicit in the statement is what it cannot do or be responsible for.
2. The potential residents of such a program have a clearer idea of what will be expected of them. This will reduce manipulation and tension between residents and staff.

3. It afford the program the opportunity to be measured against other programs by objective criteria when funding priorities are considered.
4. It establishes the performance to be measured for making management decisions. These measurements are used in identifying staff and resident strengths and weaknesses, as well as overall program results.
5. It limits the confusion associated with the goal of reducing recidivism which can only be accurately measured scientifically over a much longer period of time. The need for a control or match group has also limited our ability to measure a program's impact on recidivism.

The following is an example of a summary of program objectives for a CRTC:

Resident Flow Summary

1. 75% of program screened applicants will be accepted.
2. Occupancy will average 85% of capacity for the year.
3. 80% of those released will be successful program completions.

Resident Service Summary

	<u>% of Completions</u>
1. Full-time Vocational Placement	95%
Employed	65%
School	10%
Vocational Training	20%
2. Upgrading Vocational Skills	30%
3. Accepted by State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency for Services	25%
4. Money Management	100%
Weekly Financial Budgeting	100%
Average Savings	\$300
Reestablish Positive Credit Rating	50%
5. Leisure Time Activity	100%
Individual	75%
Program	100%
6. Volunteer Community Service	50%
7. Participation in Out-Residency Before Completion	50%
8. Relocation to a New Neighborhood Upon Completion	50%

This summary should be accompanied by a fuller statement explaining each point in more detail. Such a statement would also identify time frames in which activity will occur, and who on the staff will be responsible for providing or developing which services.

In order to monitor program, staff, and resident performance in these areas, simple weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual reporting forms need to be developed. Following are samples of these forms.

WEEKLY PROGRAM FACT SHEET

Program _____

Week Ending _____

of Referrals _____

Accepted _____

Goal _____ Discrepancy _____ Occupancy Rate _____

Released _____

% Successful _____ Goal _____ Discrepancy _____

Arrived	Leaving	Institution	Status	Name	Vocational Placement/ Type	Skill Upgrade/ Voc Rehab	Sav-ings/ Credit	Vol./ LTA	Out-Res/ Re=Loc.

MONTHLY REPORT

Program _____

Month _____

Service Category	Goal	Performance	Discrepancy	Prior Quarter
# Referred/ % Accepted	/75%			
Occupancy Rate	/85%			
# Released/ % Successful	/80%			
1. Vocational Placement	95%			
-Employed	65%			
-School	10%			
-Vocational Training	20%			
2. Skills Upgrade	30%			
3. Voc. Rehab. Acceptance	25%			
4. Money Management	100%			
--Budgets	100%			
--Savings	\$300			
--Credit Rating	50%			
5. Leisure Time Activity	100%			
-Individual	75%			
-Program	100%			
6. Community Services	50%			
7. Out-Residency	50%			
8. Relocation	50%			

The quarterly and annual report forms are identical to the monthly form. As you can readily observe, it is quite simple to understand a program's strengths and weaknesses at a glance with this data.

Other variations would be to report out the same information on unsuccessful program releases monthly, quarterly, and annually and/or compile these reports by counselor before doing the consolidated program report.

Counselors are directly responsible for their clients. Their supervisors are responsible for validating the accuracy and completeness of the information. Program directors are responsible for analyzing the information and developing immediate corrective action when performance falls more than 10% below the goal.

To enhance the image of the program other data can be easily included, such as each resident's weekly salary, federal and state taxes paid, family support payments made, program costs, etc.

This approach clarifies what a program can do and takes very little time to set up. Staff resistance results because the information provided can lead to staff accountability. Therefore, these performance goals must be developed with the staff, and reviewed at least annually to ensure staff acceptance and commitment.

In spite of the value of such an approach, possible limitations that need to be watched for are:

1. Goals can be reached without learning desirable behavior patterns. A resident could save \$300 without developing a stable, realistic budget and thus not learn the skills of money management.
2. Areas outside the control of the resident or program could prevent the desired performance from being achieved. A sudden drop in employment opportunities would have an impact on not only the vocational goals but also the money management goals. The same is true if the number of referrals is insufficient to maintain the occupancy rate.
3. Services may become limited to insure a program's or staff member's "successful" performance. Higher risk goals could be dismissed while high probability goals would be included.
4. These limited goals could force residents to reject their needs and interests for the programs.
5. Staff could lose sight of individual resident concerns and become focused on the numbers game.
6. The goals could become too rigid, eliminating the necessary flexibility for insuring realistic expectations afforded by resident and staff capabilities and community resources.

7, Programs may attempt to "cream" residents and reject applicants who need the services the most.

Careful consideration and monitoring of these issues is critical if continued growth of viable and effective CRTC's is to occur.

END