

The author(s) shown below used Federal funds provided by the U.S. Department of Justice and prepared the following final report:

Document Title: Process Evaluation of the Rhode Island Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program (RSAT): The Operations of a Minimum-Security Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program, Final Report

Author(s): Craig T. Love Ph.D.

Document No.: 189585

Date Received: August 8, 2001

Award Number: 97-RT-VX-K012

This report has not been published by the U.S. Department of Justice. To provide better customer service, NCJRS has made this Federally-funded grant final report available electronically in addition to traditional paper copies.

Opinions or points of view expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Final Report

PROPERTY OF
National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS)
Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000

Process Evaluation of the Rhode Island Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program (RSAT): The operations of a minimum-security residential substance abuse treatment program.

Grant No. 97-RT-VX-K012

Draft and Final Report

FINAL REPORT

Approved By:

[Signature]

Date:

8/1/01

Submitted by

ACCEPTED AS FINAL REPORT

Approved By:

[Signature]

Date:

8/01/01

Craig T. Love, Ph.D.
Center for Alcohol and Addictions Studies
Brown University

I. Executive Summary: 2,500 - 4,000 words highlighting key findings & their policy implications.

The Rhode Island Department of Corrections, Spectrum Health Systems, Inc., and the Center for Alcohol and Addictions Studies at Brown University collaborated on the process evaluation of a residential substance abuse treatment program (RSAT) established in the Rhode Island Department of Corrections minimum security unit for men. The ongoing program is based on a relapse prevention model (Marlatt & Gordon, 1985) and is centered on an academic format. The approach is designed to teach inmates how to adapt in the community to avoid their problem causing addictions and to focus on productive and healthy lifestyles. The program, called the "Correctional Recovery Academy" when started, began in 1997 and the process evaluation was conducted in 1998- 2000.

The process evaluation consists of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The evaluation staff observed a large segment of cases, over 30 separate sections and documented the nature of the program, inmate interactions with the program and delivery of the material in class and by the staff. The focus of the observations was to determine whether the program as delivered corresponded to the program as written. The staff were also interviewed, as were the inmates. In the course of these observations and program feedback, the evaluation team was able to provide useful information to the program staff on various aspects of the program. As a result of this formative component of the evaluation, specific features of the "Correctional Recovery Academy" was modified to improve the overall program.

In addition, several focus groups were conducted. Each group was selected to obtain information about each phase of the program, including active participants, dropouts, returnees, graduates in the "graduate program", and graduates not in the "graduate program." In each case the focus group was conducted within a formal structure. Each inmate was given a copy of the guiding questions (see appendix) and was encouraged to respond to the points that were indicated in the questions. The inmates were not offered rewards or other incentives for participating in the program evaluation. They were willing participants in the evaluation project who frequently expressed appreciation for the opportunity to have their viewpoints heard.

We had to implement a change in or original research design. We originally indicated in our proposal that we would use a waiting list comparison group for our study. We assumed that the growing inmate population would continue after the project began and that the new inmates would include a large proportion of substance abusers needing treatment. In fact, the prison population increased, but so did the length of prison time they are required to serve. Since the increasing population also included individuals who would not meet the RSAT criteria of having only 6 months left to serve, most new offenders were substance abusers that were not yet eligible to participate in the RSAT program. A large segment of new admissions received sentences that required that they serve more than 3-5 years. The RSAT program required enrollment of offenders within 6 months of release to maximize the impact of the program on inmate outcomes. Our focus

groups and informal discussions with treated offenders returning back into the population suggested that the change places them at increased risk for relapse and/or re-offending.

Our alternative plan, discussed with the project officer, was to use as a comparison group individuals participating in a shorter (Talbot) program that involved only 6 sessions in an outpatient program. The common elements between the two groups are that participants in both programs expressed intent to receive treatment and both were willing to enroll in prison based drug treatment programs. There is concern that use of Talbot participants as a comparison group would include a bias in that individuals who enrolled in the Talbot program were only willing to participate in the minimum program and were more interested in attaining certificates to impress the parole board than engaging in serious treatment. That is, the level of commitment for the Talbot group is expected to be lower than that of the Spectrum Academy group. The former program requires an investment of a couple of hours per week for 6 weeks while the latter requires participation in a program that consumed most of the inmates' day, each day, for 6 months. However, we have found that both groups expressed interest in using their respective program certificates to influence parole decisions in their favor and in both groups we found that some of the inmates who admitted entering the program to impress parole actually were subsequently engaged by the program staff to become more serious about treatment. There were some differences between the Talbot and Spectrum clients with the former group younger, less educated and more likely to have a serious drug offense. The impact of these differences will be explored in the follow-up project.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

1. The major obstacle to success in the program centered on the reading level of the material and some of its content. Parts of the program materials were written at a level that was beyond the comprehension capacity of some of the participants. Some materials were presented in contexts that made acceptance difficult. For example, many of focus group participants complained that the Men's Work (an anger management, domestic violence) program was presented by all women staff and did not deal well with the male perspective. Inmates who complained about the program indicated that they resented some of the comments made by the female staff and felt that the program was designed to make them feel bad. They complained that they were not allowed to express their viewpoint. Some inmates suggested that it would have been easier for them to learn from their own perspective. Staff indicated that there is little doubt that the curriculum will make some of these inmates feel uncomfortable but that the discomfort can result in a positive impact on the participants. Nonetheless, the information may have been better presented by men or women who are able to create a more accepting environment in which inmates could openly express their views in the process of relearning their socialization about gender issues. This and other findings suggest that attention must be paid to staffing, staff training, and characteristics of staff. All materials are provided in Spanish and have been helpful with inmates who have difficulty with English. However, a large proportion of the Spanish-speaking inmates are also illiterate.

2. Inmates' responses to our focus group questions are predictable based on previous behavior and their level of commitment to recovery. Inmates who dropped out of the program told us that they did not need the treatment anyway. There was a tendency for this group to attribute most of their problems to others, including their family, the prison system, or the treatment program. Many inmates focused on a specific unit officer who, for some, created a major problem or helped create a healing environment, depending on the inmate's perspective. Some inmates (mostly those who were returnees or dropouts) indicated that a certain officer seemed to focus on making the inmate's lives difficult. They indicated that the officer persistently picked on inmates for minor infractions and generally created an unpleasant atmosphere for program participants living in the program dorm. According to inmates in the dropout group, "many inmates left the program because of him." On the other hand, inmates in the completers group were more likely to see that the officer's actions created a good environment for study, getting homework done, and generally creating a peaceful atmosphere. They expressed an appreciation for his consistent efforts at keeping the unit quiet and peaceful. The completers and graduates indicated that he helped make their participation in the program successful.
3. According to staff and inmates, one of the program features most closely associated with inmate success, aside from the inmate's own attitude, is the structure of the program. Rather than being a "touchie-feelie" program, the Spectrum program has structure, focuses on behavior, and teaches the offender how to behave in socially positive ways. The inmates learn about their own specific behaviors and how they lead to problems for them. The successful program participants and staff both indicated that the program provides its participants with tools for successful life in the community. For example, the program focused on "triggers and traps" activities, cues, and behaviors that lead individuals into problem behaviors resulting in untoward consequences. Successful participants learn how to avoid those cues and avoid problem behaviors and their resulting negative consequences
4. Inmates were particularly positive about the use of "Seminars". These sessions engage the offenders by offering them a venue in which to explore their own issues and ways to address them. In the "Seminars" inmates lead a group discussion about their own personal behaviors. Many of the inmates indicated that they never previously had the opportunity to talk in front of a group like that. Most of the inmates indicated that they had made their first public presentation ever in the "Seminars". The experience helped them create a sense of self-worth and gave them confidence. This component of the program is clearly the inmate's favorite and, according to all focus groups, the one in which they felt the most profound growth. As we understand the inmates' responses, the "Seminars" help inmates understand their issues in their own terms. Even inmates in the dropout and returnees groups spoke very highly of the "Seminars."

5. A major consistent finding is that the offenders who were successful in either program (intervention or comparison) usually also identified a particular staff member with whom they had established a relationship. Inmates tended to attach more to the staff who were in recovery. They were clear that recovering staff can identify with their point of view and could present the material in a more meaningful way. When asked how they know who was in recovery, the inmate participants said either that the staff self-disclosed or that "they just knew". The later group of staff may or may not have been in recovery but the identified staff were able to communicate with the participants in a positive way. This suggests that staff training has to focus on skills associated with accepting and listening to the inmate's perspectives and reflect them in discussions about change in behavior. While staff cannot be trained to have charisma and appeal to inmates, success can be improved by training staff on communications with inmates. In other contexts, training that engages participants in taking the perspectives of others has had an excellent impact on youthful offenders.
6. One of the important questions addressed in the process evaluation is whether the program presented to the inmates resembled the program presented in the curriculum. While the Spectrum management team was understandably reluctant to share their curriculum, our on-site review of the curriculum and teacher instructions, coupled with observations of classes, suggested that the program staff generally followed the curriculum- at least as far as we were allowed to review it. Any detected exceptions to the curriculum were discussed in staff meetings and Spectrum management generally discouraged their staff from deviating from the curriculum at all. There was some staff resistance, usually among new staff members who did not want to follow the program exactly as specified. The only real threat to program consistency was the frequent turnover of staff. The new staff training included several discussions regarding the importance of consistency in presenting the program as prescribed in the program manual.
7. Our understanding of inmate satisfaction with the program was based mostly on discussions with inmates, observations in the classroom, and focus group comments. Inmates most likely to be least satisfied with the program are among dropouts and returnees. However, it was noted that many of these same inmates expressed interest in re-enrolling in the program, either after dropping out or returning to prison.
8. We also asked program participants whether they felt that they were getting what they expected from the program. The response was universally yes. Not because of what the program staff said about the program, but what other inmates said. Inmates paid much more attention to what their fellow inmates said. Information provided by program or prison staff had less impact on recruiting participants that did their fellow inmates. This

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

suggests that the most effective strategy to recruit inmates is to engage inmates in the process.

9. Of the 173 Spectrum inmates studied in this sample, 95 (54.9%) completed, 62 (35.8%) were terminated by staff and 16 (9.3%) withdrew from the program. Those terminated were somewhat younger (31.9 years) and voluntary withdrawals were somewhat older (36.4 years) than graduates (32.8 years). 56.3% of the voluntary withdrawals did not graduate from high school or have a GED in contrast with those who graduated (56.8%) and were terminated by staff (42.6%). Poor reading ability may have contributed to the voluntary withdrawal. The differences between Talbot graduates and Spectrum participants are few but significant. Talbot graduates are younger (30.9 vs. 32.3 and 32.8 for Spectrum non-graduates and graduates, respectively), more likely to be Hispanic (23.6% versus 14.3% and 17.9% for Spectrum non-graduates and graduates, respectively), and more likely to have a drug possession charge (54.1% versus 32. % and 46.4% for Spectrum non-graduates and graduates, respectively).
10. Correctional Recovery Academy staff were generally very positive about the program. They like the structure, knowing what to offer in each class and the fact that the program deals with inmate behavior. They liked the concept of practicing behavior, learning chains of behavior that lead to choices to return to substance abuse and crime or to remain sober. The major negative comment by several staff was the concern that the program did not let the staff have enough flexibility to adapt to the special characteristics of the groups with whom they were working.

The most important programmatic implications of these results are that most inmate Can, indeed, function well within a behavioral base program in a residential treatment program. Inmates are capable of learning in this "academy" even though many of them have dropped out of school, have had major failure experiences, and usually harbor negative feelings toward school. This program can work. It is also important to note that most inmates find the program to be a positive experience and can learn in these circumstances. The inmate reactions to staff, including those in recovery, the presence of all women staff in the Men's Work program suggest that attention need to be paid to the composition of staff teaching the programs and the content of the classes presented. That is, the nature of the staff is as important as the nature of the program content and methodology. Successful inmates are successful because they connected with a staff member with whom they could connect. Inmates were very sensitive to who is and is not a recovering person. We asked staff about the need to be in recovery in order to be effective. The staff showed mixed feelings about the question. Most staff think that it is helpful to be recovering but most also think that an all-recovering staff would be unhealthy. The optimal model included both in the staff.

II. Project Description: *Description of the program evaluated, the questions researched, and the relevance of the evaluation.*

Introduction

Several recent studies have provided evidence that substance abuse treatment within prison settings can work (Lipton, 1998; Martin et. al., 1999; Wexler, et. al, 1999, Knight, et. al., 1999; Griffith, et. al, 1999). Dr. Lipton's review presents a reasonable argument for including substance abuse treatment in prisons. A large number of individuals who are imprisoned are also substance abusers who have often had little help with their addictions. According to Lipton, providing substance abuse treatment in prison "... provides a propitious opportunity for treatment. It is propitious because these persons would be unlikely to seek treatment on their own, without treatment they are extremely likely to continue their drug use and criminality after release, and there are now cost-effective technologies to effectively treat them." (p. 39). Lipton and all three of the other studies conclude that the residential in-prison treatment programs result in reduced rearrest rates and drug use in comparison to inmates who do not receive such a program. Inmates who participate in both in-prison treatment and aftercare were most likely to be successful in avoiding criminal justice involvement and substance use.

While this evidence suggests that future investment of funds for treatment in prisons is warranted, the active ingredients in treatment that make these programs work is not clear. What are the important components of treatment? The process evaluation of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections Minimum Security RSAT program is one attempt to address this shortcoming of current correctional treatment data. In this evaluation, we examine the inner workings of a cognitive behavioral residential treatment program for male inmates in a minimum security facility.

The evaluation methodology incorporates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection. Further, our evaluation has had both a formative and summative process. New and existing programs, like the Correctional Recovery Academy, often find themselves in a state of "flux" with regard to program definition or description, scheduling, intake information and forms, maintenance of participant records/information, etc. as they "live" the early months of program implementation. We have provided our program team with information about some of the problems we observed with the curriculum and have suggested that changes be made. The program team responded positively to the suggestions and modified the program accordingly. The summative evaluation presented here is based on the resulting program.

Our emphasis on qualitative methods allows us to examine the way in which the programs, staff and inmates interact to create the program. In this way, the primary focus of this evaluation is to discern the nature of the "black box" of treatment that is provided to the RSAT participants in Rhode Island. The result is that the evaluation provides a reasonably accurate and coherent definition of the program. All too often, program evaluations engage in collecting "objective" data from assessments and counting various aspects of the inmates and the program.

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

The current evaluation combines qualitative and quantitative methods in assessing the program and its operations. A clinician served on the evaluation team to observe the program and assess its veracity with the planned program with respect to the program manual and to determine how well the program suited the inmate participants.

Decision makers and other recipients of evaluation outcomes need to know not only whether the program works but also what it is about a program that worked or didn't work. The results of this evaluation will contribute to program managers' decisions regarding which aspects of the program are worthy of keeping and which need deletion or modification. When tied to an outcome evaluation, these results can provide a reasonable estimate of which components work best to contribute to positive outcomes.

In our original proposal, we indicated that we would use a waiting list comparison group for our study. Our understanding of the participant flow was that more offenders needing drug treatment would enter the prison system and that the number of offenders needing and enrolling in the Spectrum program would grow. Indeed, the population of the prison system was increased by a growing number of individuals needing substance abuse treatment. However, we did not anticipate that the added number of offenders would also have longer sentences. A large segment of new admissions received sentences that required that they serve more than 3-5 years. The result was that a waiting list did not materialize. Our alternative plan, discussed with the project officer, was to use as a comparison group individuals participating in a shorter (Talbot) program that involved only 6 sessions in an outpatient program. The common elements between the two groups are that participants in both programs expressed intent to receive treatment and both were willing to enroll in prison based drug treatment programs. There is concern that use of Talbot participants as a comparison group would include a bias in that individuals who enrolled in the Talbot program were only willing to participate in the minimum program and were more interested in attaining certificates to impress the parole board than engaging in serious treatment. That is, the level of commitment for the Talbot group is assumed to be lower than that of the Spectrum Academy group. The former program requires an investment of a couple of hours per week for 6 weeks while the latter requires participation in a program that consumed most of the inmates day, each day, for 6 months. However, we have found that both groups expressed interest in using their respective program certificates to influence parole decisions in their favor and in both groups we found that some of the inmates who admitted entering the program to impress parole actually were subsequently engaged by the program staff to become more serious about treatment.

Description of the Spectrum RSAT program in the minimum security facility of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections

The current program, the Correctional Recovery Academy, opened its doors in April, 1997. The residential unit originally had the capacity for 40 inmates, but was expanded to accommodate an additional 10 inmates by the fall of 1997. A private company, Spectrum

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

Health Systems, Inc, manages the RSAT program. The program lasts approximately 6 months, depending on the progress of each inmate in the program and is consistent with NIJ policy regarding the length of stay after treatment for RSAT participants. Some inmates move through the program quickly, completing in 6 months or less, while others require more time, up to a year or more. Thus the program was adaptive to the needs of individual participants.

While NIJ policy of is to have the RSAT program limited provide the program to inmates who will be released shortly after completing the RSAT program, it is not always possible to do so. The Spectrum group did their best to enroll individuals who were within 6 months of release, but also enrolled clients who had more time left to serve. The program staff wisely accepted participants who had more than 6 months to serve in order to keep program counts high enough to sustain the programs and groups. As in any prison system, the growing number of inmates serving longer sentences created a difficult situation. Failure to keep beds full in the treatment unit placed the program at risk to lose beds to individuals not in the program. This is not a product of poor administrative support for the RSAT program, but is the result of needing bed space in an already crowded system. In fact, the Spectrum group created a graduate program to accommodate those program completers who were not scheduled to be released within a short period of time after completing the program. The current graduate program includes inmates serving as staff assistants and peer mentors and a second group of graduates who are in work release but continue to participate in weekly meetings with other graduates.

The minimum security Rhode Island RSAT program draws its participants from a pool of male offenders who have been moved from more secure facilities or offenders who were assigned to the minimum security unit because of their lower security status. By program and institution policy, inmates volunteer to participate in the program. The results of both inmate and staff interview suggests that neither group thought that the inmates were coerced into treatment. Ultimately, it was the inmates' own choice. The only exception to the voluntary nature of program enrollment is when an inmate is court-ordered to participate in a drug treatment program. In that case, offenders are required to enroll in drug treatment programs whether they complete them or not depends on the offender.

Spectrum's Correctional Recovery Academy program is based on behavioral/cognitive theory and incorporates such behavioral approaches as the use of homework and classroom formats. The program provides a forum for inmates to express themselves and engage in problem solving to prepare them for release.

Philosophy

The program philosophy (Spectrum Health Systems, 1996) centers on cognitive behavioral principles. The focus of the intervention is to train inmates to respond to situations (such as cues to use drugs) differently so that they end up in positive situations rather than

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

criminogenic circumstances involving substance use. Criminogenic circumstances are those that are likely to lead to further criminal justice involvement. A key assumption is "...that destructive habit patterns and thoughts can be changed through the application of self-management and self-control techniques" (Spectrum Health Systems, 1996, page 10). It is a "down to earth" approach, designed for comprehension among inmates and to produce changes in behaviors. Changes in attitudes and beliefs will follow changes in behavior. The program curriculum addresses inmates' behaviors and criminal perspectives that often lead them to relapse to alcohol, other drugs, re-arrest and re-incarceration.

Inmates are treated with respect and are expected to take the initiative in participating in all phases of the program. This includes timely completion of any homework assignments, full participation in work programs and maintenance of a clean disciplinary record in the institution. Inmates are expected to learn new social skills, demonstrate pro-social attitudes, provide peer counseling for their colleagues, and uphold the Academy's standards and values. Participants are expected to be active in the program and not passively receive services. Inmates are assessed for content comprehension at the end of each curriculum topic. The assessments include a) a review of written homework assignments, b) a demonstration of the ability to verbally define and describe new skills taught in classes; and c) a demonstration of the ability to apply the principles and skills in daily living. If the assessment indicates inadequate skill development, the offender is provided additional instruction until the inmate can reflect comprehension of the material.

Stated Program Objectives

RIDOC determined that a large proportion of their inmates (70-80%) are substance abuse involved when committing their offenses. It follows that **one prerequisite to reducing recidivism in the RIDOC system is to reduce offender involvement in substance abuse. Subsequently, substance abuse treatment is a key factor in the RIDOC effort to reduce the number of inmates who return to prison.** The Spectrum Health Systems' primary treatment program goal is logically related to the RIDOC goal. **According to Spectrum Health Systems, the primary goal of their program is to reduce the risk of relapse to substance abuse.** This is achieved through "comprehensive release preparation, aftercare planning and placement." The program participants are to graduate with the skills needed to be successful in relapse prevention and completion of aftercare treatment goals.

Program Content

Spectrum's treatment approach includes cognitive re-structuring, training in relapse prevention skills, and social reintegration. The program offers the inmates concrete solutions to life situations that they can practice while in prison and can readily use in the community after

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

release. They teach inmates skills in avoiding relapse situations and foster behaviors and attitudes that instill prosocial values. Spectrum has offered skills training in:

- “avoiding further substance abuse and crime;
- relapse prevention’
- developing a strong work ethic;
- anger management;
- problem solving;
- stress management;
- developing a balanced life consisting of productive work and constructive leisure time “

Program Structure

Each new inmate is assessed at intake by his primary counselor. The needs assessment conducted by the counselor identifies the type and severity of substance abuse, history of previous treatment, most frequent triggers for relapse, community functioning, social interaction skills, need for employment support, and marital/family needs. The needs assessment protocol has been modified on occasion. At the beginning of the current process evaluation, the Spectrum program had just developed a new assessment instrument that included additional measures of psychopathy and impulsivity, level of life skills, emotional volatility, capacity and readiness to work, quality of relationships, and social affiliation. The instrument was developed in-house and psychometric properties of the instrument are not yet available.

While each inmate receives the same material, the information collected from the intake assessment is used to devise an individualized treatment plan that includes specific actions to be taken in the following needs categories:

- Specific Addiction Factors
- Motivations and Values
- Critical Thinking and Planning
- Anger and Violence
- Work and Discipline
- Social Support and Resources
- Social Sensitivity

The assessment occurs at intake and is reviewed every 60 days thereafter. In addition to the treatment plan, the assessment information collected contributes to the construction of specifically tailored homework assignments that address each inmate’s own issues, such as specific triggers for relapse. As part of that assessment, the treatment plan is also reviewed by the inmate, his counselor, Spectrum staff and, on occasion, correctional staff. The treatment

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

plan is used to monitor the inmate's progress in completing special assignments corresponding to his established needs. The treatment plan review is also used to identify additional needs that may have surfaced and to determine whether or not any changes in the treatment plan are necessary. The ultimate goal of this assessment/treatment process is to prepare the inmate for release, job placement, and provision of needed family counseling referrals.

The six-month program is highly structured. Each staff member is required to consistently use the curriculum materials presented in the treatment manual. The materials include guidelines for discussion, exercises, and homework assignments that are to be completed on the inmate's own time. Homework is tailored to the needs of each offender. Thus, each participant may do different homework tasks that allow each to practice the lesson at hand in terms of their own needs and issues. On the most part, staff uses information from initial assessments and reviews to determine inmate need and how to structure individual homework assignments.

Each instructor individualizes the program by selecting the specific assessment items on the knowledge tests, examples for presentation, and other specific details to be presented within the written guidelines. The instructor selects examples and test items depending on the perceived need of the group, the style of the instructor, and progress made in previous classes. That is, the curriculum, though structured, allows the instructor to individualize the lesson plans for each instructor and class group. Peer counselors (drawn from program graduates) often make themselves available to inmates who have difficulty with comprehension and need help beyond the classroom to understand the Academy material.

The program curriculum/activities are offered during the hours of 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. in order to accommodate the minimum security facility's schedule and to allow inmates who have prison jobs to fulfill their work requirements prior to class time. All materials and instruction can be provided in Spanish. Some of the graduates are bilingual and can serve as special mentors for any new inmates who do not speak English.

The program is provided in an educational group counseling modality, although some individual work is provided. In crisis situations, inmates are usually granted more individual access to their counselor until the crisis is resolved. The program staff presents the same set of curriculum components, with homework assignments and some examples tailored to the individual circumstances of the inmates with whom they are working. The specific components include:

1. Core behavioral skills on which the remainder of the curriculum is built. Inmates must complete this component of the curriculum before progressing to subsequent components. After mastering the core behavioral skills, the inmate moves on to the training sessions.
2. Topic specific Correctional Recovery Training Sessions (CRTs) are written lesson plans that the staff adapt to each individual inmate's needs and trains inmates to

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

practice the core behavioral skills. The CRT topics include examples of specific circumstances they may face in the future and practice on how to deal with them. For example, what do you do when you encounter an old friend on the street who is not yet in recovery? The CRT addresses possible solutions and allows the inmate to develop his own stylized response to the situation. Each CRT includes homework and individual assignments of each inmate, based on needs assessment results and in-class observations by the program staff.

3. A Learn to Deal Group series is used to train participants in problem solving skills. It provides inmates a systematic cognitive exercise in which they practice cognitive restructuring.
4. Each inmate who needs assistance in obtaining work participates in a Learn to Work group. This experience capitalizes on the inmates work assignment and uses the opportunity to help the inmate develop positive work skills including making the effort, accepting supervision, taking responsibility for the work, and learning how to do the job.
5. Near the end of the program, each inmate will prepare a release package that involves preparation for life on the streets. Inmates establish self-help and/or treatment referrals for continued post-release substance abuse services, plans to locate a job, housing, and other essential things that will help them return to the community successfully.
6. Seminars. One of the favorite sessions, a different participant leads seminars each week. It is the responsibility of that inmate to present information about himself and how he plans to resolve his issues. Inmates share their experiences, present their views on recovery, and their own life skills development.

In addition to the various sessions, the residential treatment community has morning and evening meetings and academy-wide meetings. The morning and evening meetings are attended by the entire Academy community and are scheduled for 30 minutes each. They are much like "house meetings" held in more traditional therapeutic communities. Each meeting adheres to the following format: Discussion of program philosophy, any announcements, a word or reading of the day, expression of the Community Slogan, and growth reports.

The "graduate" program was developed by Spectrum after it became clear that many of the program participants would not be released immediately after completing the Spectrum program. More inmates have been retained for significant periods of time (6 months or more) after completing the program. This unexpected change in the status of program graduates arises from several sources. Sentences are longer than previously anticipated and individuals are serving a greater proportion of their sentences than before, resulting in more offenders serving

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

longer sentences. Further, the program staff needed to maintain full capacity or conceivably lose space to the ever-present crowding problem seen in most prison systems. As a result, the program staff invented a new reasonable program to accommodate this practical problem. The new graduate program helped sustain the count and provide a positive peer support environment.

The Graduate Committee is an organized group of Academy graduates. It includes a chairman, co-chairman and secretary. A set of group guidelines has been developed and the graduate committee members sign an agreement to actively participate in the graduate program. The graduate committee members continue to meet in groups on a regular basis and help new students with their program. The graduate committee has been particularly significant for the program because the peer mentors have been able to help students who have learning disabilities or are otherwise slower learners. This is an important addition to the program since it is a learning based program and some of the students have learning disabilities.

Other graduates who remain in the institution are not part of the formal graduate program. Graduates who are in the general population can attend Spectrum classes as they choose. Most are working on jobs in the institution and are living in choice housing. They are typically awaiting placement in residential treatment facilities in the community. Most take advantage of the Spectrum program and continue to maintain contact with the program and its staff.

Graduates not on the Graduate Committee but are part of the Spectrum Work Release program are assigned to work release details. They are formally associated with the Spectrum program and regularly attend "refresher" classes that are offered at times convenient to their work schedules.

Documentation

The Spectrum Health Systems agency maintains a complete record of program participation and achievement on each inmate. They document what program components the inmates were exposed to and how well the inmate responded to the comprehension assessment of each curriculum component. They also document the needs assessment results, any modifications in needs assessment, and the release plan developed by the program staff and inmate. All referrals made are also documented.

The Rhode Island Department of Corrections, in addition, has been diligently working to automate the entire inmate record system. They have been monitoring readmissions to institutions and have recently developed a recidivism data file that has greatly facilitated the proposed evaluation. Further, all disciplinary data are available on line. The RIDOC has been developing an objective classification system and have been working on automating that file as well.

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

Inmate Incentives For Program Participation

The program may be offered to inmates who are "court recommended" or who express interest for rehabilitation/recovery based on a variety of motives. Motives to express interest in treatment programs include: a. true desire for recovery; b. no desire to return to incarceration; c. early parole; d. something to do. Working as part of the Graduate Committee is attractive to some inmates. It is a reward to be given some responsibility and to have completed something that leads to any honor, even in the prison environment.

Evaluation Questions Addressed in this Report

Specific questions to be addressed in this process evaluation report focus on the summative evaluation. The questions addressed are:

7. Is the curriculum as presented in class consistent with the written curriculum?
8. What is the inmate level of satisfaction with the Program?
9. What is the RIDOC staff/administration's level of satisfaction with the Program?
10. What is the program staff level of satisfaction with the Program?
11. Do the participants feel they are getting what the program promised?
12. What are the inmate characteristics of program completers vs. non-completers
13. What inmate characteristics are most closely associated with positive intermediate treatment outcomes?
14. What are the program features most closely associated with positive intermediate outcomes?

Relevance of This Evaluation

This process evaluation provides the perspective on how well the service is being delivered, whether there are any operational problems with the program. While most of the data now available on RSAT programs are collected from "modified TCs," the Correctional Recovery Academy is a residential relapse prevention based program. The Spectrum Correctional Recovery Academy is a social learning/training program that deals more with how the individual responds to environmental cues than to group processes. The results of this program should add to the inmate's response repertoire so that he learns other responses than to attack an adversary or go to the bar when upset. The Correctional Recovery Academy is a behavioral intervention that includes practice of desired behaviors.

III. Scope and Methodology

Design

In our original proposal, we indicated that we would use a waiting list comparison group for our study. Our understanding of the participant flow was that more offenders needing drug treatment would enter the prison system and that the number of offenders needing and enrolling in the Spectrum RSAT program would grow. Indeed, the male population of the prison system has grown and the number of individuals identified who need substance abuse treatment has also increased. However, we did not anticipate that the added number of offenders would also have longer sentences. The result is that a waiting list did not materialize. Our alternative plan, discussed with the project officer, was to use as a comparison group individuals participating in a shorter (Talbot) program that involved only 6 sessions in an outpatient program. The common elements between the two groups, then, are that participants in both programs expressed intent to receive treatment and both were willing to enroll in prison based drug programs.

There is concern that comparisons between Spectrum and Talbot participants have a built in bias in favor of the Spectrum group. Individuals who enrolled in the Talbot program were only willing to participate in the minimum program and were more interested in attaining certificates to impress the parole board than engage in serious treatment. The assumption is that the level of commitment for the Talbot group is lower than that of the Spectrum Academy group. The former program requires an investment of a couple of hours per week for 6 weeks while the latter requires participation in a program that consumed most of the inmates day, each day, for 6 months.

However, we have found that both the Talbot and Spectrum groups expressed interest in using their respective program certificates to influence parole decisions in their favor and in both groups we found that some of the inmates who admitted entering the program to impress the parole board were subsequently engaged by the program staff to become more serious about treatment.

Among the Academy participants were those who completed the program and those who did not. The differences between the two groups are important and were examined in the focus groups. Our evaluation has become a three-group comparison, the Talbot program (brief intervention) and the Spectrum participants who completed and those who did not.

The evaluation design used a blend of qualitative and quantitative procedures to obtain process and outcome data. Most data were drawn from existing records that are gathered by staff in the course of administering the program. Qualitative data were also collected in focus groups, observations, and unstructured conversations with the staff and offenders.

Process

We took the following steps to develop an understanding of how the program works:

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

a. Structure and Operations

1. Interviewed of DOC and Spectrum staff to define interagency interaction, Administrative structure and other features of program management and philosophy
2. Observed program sessions to assess consistency of the program with the written Curriculum. Observations were made across sessions and cohorts.

b. Enrollment and recruiting

Conducted separate focus groups with the following categories of inmates:

- inmates not yet enrolled in the program
- inmates recently enrolled in the program
- inmates who are eligible for treatment but chose not to enroll (Talbot participants)
- inmates who have completed the program
- inmates who did not complete the program

The focus groups were used to identify the process through which inmates enrolled in the program, identify barriers to enrollment, determine level of coercion to enroll perceived by the inmates, characterize inmate's expectations about the program and determine their perspectives on it's strengths and weaknesses.

c Program Participation and Achievement

In the initial planning of this evaluation, we intended to collect a wide range of data from the forms used in the program. They would have been useful for the development of dosage and definition of program participation. Because of changes in the data collection process and inmate privacy concerns, all the planned data were not available to us. It became clear that our most reliable information came not from program records but our observations of the programs themselves.

We conducted observations of a sample of treatment program sessions to note quality and consistency of inmate participation. Notes from those observations were used to create a narrative description of how the program works, how inmates reacted to the staff and various aspects of the program.

Intermediate Outcome

For purposes of this report, the term intermediate will be defined as including program completion, increase in knowledge and skills and positive attitude toward recovery. The process evaluation team was able to determine immediate outcomes for the Correctional Recovery Academy. These outcomes can facilitate the evaluation of long-term outcomes by providing mediated effects that can be theoretically associated with long-term outcomes. The following

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

are intermediate outcomes for the project that can be measured within the first year of the project:

- program completion rate
- inmate satisfaction with the program will be assessed by an anonymous satisfaction survey administered at least twice during the evaluation.
- disciplinary activity before and after entering the program
- short term arrest rates after release

Data Sources and Types

This is a qualitative and quantitative evaluation. Qualitative data were derived from observation, document review, focus groups, informal discussions, and interviews with inmates, staff, and administrative personnel. The quantitative data are primarily criminal history data and institution performance records.

a. Observation: A clinician, familiar with the treatment programs offered by the Correctional Recovery Academy observed a random sample of classes of different topics and with different teachers. The goal of these observations are to determine how the program is received by the inmates, how the program fits with the inmate's capacity and interest level, how consistently the staff presented the program with the curriculum manual. The clinician observed over 36 sessions and conducted a series of informal interviews with staff and inmates.

b. Focus groups. The evaluation staff conducted five focus groups. Each focus group was selected to represent individuals of different status in the program including, graduates, active participants, and drop-outs. In each group, two evaluation team members led the discussion, with one focusing on questioning and the other on recording. All data were recorded by the two evaluators and compared for consistency. There were few inconsistencies. Those inconsistencies were resolved by review of the group discussion and, when necessary, through informal discussion with the participants.

The focus groups were conducted in a very consistent fashion. In each case, the evaluation team distributed consent forms and explained its purpose and the level of confidentiality to be applied. After signing the consent form, inmates were given a list of questions that were the focus of the group discussion. Inmates were encouraged to discuss whatever they wanted and it was made clear that the discussion could deviate from the question list if the conversation needed to go to a different topic. The purpose of that strategy was to allow the inmates to reveal issues that were not included in our question list. The discussion leader directed discussion to focus on all topics in the discussion list as the conversation allowed. The questions for each group were generally the same, but were reworded to suit the circumstances. For example, inmates in the "program withdrawals group" are asked "Why did you not complete the program?" while the graduates and active participants were asked "Why

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

did people you know drop out of the program?" Copies of the discussion questions are presented in Appendix A.

The goal of the focus group was twofold: a) to allow participants to present their own opinions in response to specific questions, and b) to gather a group of individuals with common characteristics to build a meaningful consensus. In this way, we could gauge participants' commitment to their own views, monitor changes that occurred when differing views were stated, and note the resistance of views to other points presented. A predetermined set of questions was asked allowing for flexibility of responses.

c. Automated inmate files. We were able to access the new INFACS system that the Rhode Island Department of Corrections has created. The data provided disciplinary records and criminal histories for all inmates and rearrest data for all inmates released. We used the data to create a record of incident reports before and after participation in the Correctional Recovery Academy and rearrest data on all offenders who were released for at least 6 months after completing the program. Too few offenders were released during our observation period to allow consistent reports of offender behavior. That will be achieved in a subsequent outcome study. However, the data were very useful in assessing the a priori differences among the subgroups of offenders (especially those who did and did not enroll, or did or did not complete the program). All data were drawn for inmates who enrolled the program (even if they entered the graduate program) during the observation period of March 1998 to October, 1999.

IV. Detailed Findings: Narrative Of Findings

The results are reported below in terms of the original 8 questions addressed in the evaluation. We were successful in drawing adequate information to address all but the final question. We will share some thoughts about the potential of the data for future analyses and reports.

The results of our data collection efforts were discussed above. We were very successful in our observations and review of the program manual. Although we were not able to remove the manual from the program director's office, the clinician on our team reviewed lessons carefully to determine the intent and content of the lesson and how it was delivered. Dr. Corrigan was able to identify strengths and weaknesses in the program, many of which were reported to the program staff. To their credit, the program team was quick to respond and resolve issues we raised. The Spectrum team was also monitoring the progress of their own program and developed new programs, assessment forms and other materials during the course of the evaluation. That is, the program was not left to stagnate and was consistently under review and improvement. Our feedback, then, was integrated into their ongoing self-improvement efforts.

In all of our focus groups all but one inmate agreed to participate. That individual, a member of the graduate group, expressed his reservations and declined to sign the consent form. He subsequently left without incident. That focus group session did not seem to be any less frank and open than any other focus group session. All of the sessions involved remarkably frank discussions. The responses are condensed and presented in Appendix B. The focus group data are organized around agreement and disagreement on each major issue.

1. Is the curriculum as presented in class consistent with the written curriculum?

This issue is a sensitive one among the staff and administration of the Correctional Recovery Academy. The Spectrum administration repeatedly admonished their staff to remain consistent with the curriculum in order to sustain a consistency in the quality and content of the program. In general, the programs we observed were clearly within the scope presented in the curriculum manual. Staff conducting the classes used the guidelines for discussions and presentation of the materials and adapted the materials to the group at hand. However, there were exceptions. In a very few occasions, staff conducted their own style of session, usually a variation on the AA model. On the other side of the scale, we observed a newer staff member using the manual as if it were the absolute rules. Inmate discussion was stilted because it was viewed as off the subject.

From the inmate's perspective, they were trying to understand concepts in terms of their own experience, which may be off the mark at the beginning. The opinion expressed by the inmates in focus groups and in informal discussions was that the program should allow them the opportunity to express their feelings and perspectives with the idea that they could learn by "putting it out there". This is certainly a point of exploration and experimentation for the program. One possible solution might be to extend the program for an additional month. That would allow time for further discussion by the inmates and allow more flexibility in the program while ensuring that all critical dimensions of the program are covered.

It is also true that the written curriculum may need periodic modification over time. It speaks well of the Spectrum Health Systems group that the curriculum was under ongoing revision during our observation period and we understand that it has been revised even further subsequent to the data collection phase of our evaluation. The staff and inmates could be of help in future modifications of the program. Both staff and inmates expressed an interest in developing the program further. The staff expressed an interest in more examples and the capacity to build their own examples to suit the population. Some topics seemed to be presented in a manner that was out of touch with the inmates' perspectives. We suggest that the Spectrum administration make use of periodic meetings with staff to collect their ideas on new topics and approaches and to monitor inmate reaction to the curriculum. Because of changes in prison populations over time (e.g. the ethnic makeup), the program will require ongoing monitoring.

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

Most program staff, administrators, and inmates suggested that the "RePac" program needs more development. One of the most difficult aspects of incarceration is readjustment into the community upon release. According to our observations and comments of inmates and staff, the RePac program needs more time and priority in the intervention. The observations and comments centered on the inmate's need to adapt to the community and need more preparation and community based support in completing the adjustment.

Our focus group participants clearly indicated that they learned material from the curriculum and classroom discussion. When we asked all of the focus group participants "What are the most important things you learned from the program?" Most inmates responded with program vocabulary such as: "It teaches you different ways of thinking to prevent a return to your old behaviors". Some even gave vocabulary directly from the curriculum by using such words as "Prioritizing," "Forecasting", and "They taught me about 'triggers and traps.'" One inmate indicated that "practicing the principles of recovery will help you gain faith in yourself." Others talk about the nature of their emotional functioning including "dealing with my anger" and "there is a way to change."

There were some differences based on group membership. For example, the program drop-outs did not provide the usual buzz words. Instead, they focused on behavior improvements. One drop-out claimed he is now able to "walk away from things because of things I learned from Spectrum." This respondent described in detail how he was now able to avoid violent responses that heretofore were the source of his problems. Another inmate learned to be "more open" and indicated that now "it is a lot easier to express myself. For instance, "I was never able to tell my mother that I loved her." That is, even the inmates who dropped out of the program felt that they gained something because of their participation in it. According to the inmate focus groups, there was value in partial participation in focus groups.

2. What is the inmate level of satisfaction with the Program?

Inmate satisfaction with the program is important as an indication of communication with inmates and the rapport established between inmates and the program staff. It is also an important index of the relevance of the program to inmates. From a prison administrator's point of view, it is important to note whether the program is adequately attractive to the inmates to not only improve the offender's likelihood of a successful reintegration but also to meaningfully occupy the inmate's time.

One clear source of information about inmate satisfaction with the program is the observations we made. Inmates were generally responsive to staff instruction, did their homework and usually participated in class (group sessions). The inmates expressed frustration and sometimes anger when not allowed to express their feelings to their satisfaction. A few

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

episodes of redirecting the discussion away from inmate topics led to less apparent interest among the inmates and less enthusiasm in their interactions with the staff. Inmates were likely to slouch in their chairs and roll their eyes after a few censuring responses from staff. Yet it was noted after repeated observations of the same classes that the offenders returned with more energy and enthusiasm for the next class. We noted that inmates were clear that the classes were to be taken seriously and they attended to the topics at hand in the classroom.

In conversations and focus groups, we noted that the inmates were varied in their responses to the program and its environs. For instance, inmates expressed strong feelings about the officer who usually worked in the "F mod", the dorm in which the program participants lived. Offenders in the graduate group indicated that the officer was very strict about maintaining peace and quiet in the dorm. It was a welcome relief from the usual noisy environment of most dorms and it made it possible for them to reflect on their homework and readings. Other inmates, including those in the drop-out focus groups, were less positive about the officers "over controlling" actions. They saw the office as a major detriment to the program. Inmates currently in the program had mixed views about that particular officer. In that focus group there was a consensus that the officer was a problem to inmates. But in private conversations with the inmates, some said he was a positive influence while others thought he was out to get them and saw him as a major detraction from the overall positive program.

Inmates and program staff reached consensus on what the program needed. Some of the treatment staff and several inmates in all focus groups indicated that they thought that the program needed more one-on-one time between inmates and staff. Most inmates expressed interest in delving into their own issues. Staff feel that there needs to be more time to work with specific individuals who may show a greater interest or need for additional time. Those inmates interested in individual interventions want to have the staff get to know them as individuals and have the opportunity to express their perspectives on the program and their own recovery process. Most inmates across all groups focused on the need to be able to express themselves as part of the learning process. They thought that the program was too structured to allow them time to process the material adequately.

Several inmates suggested that the structure of the program could be modified to accommodate differences of opinion among the inmates and staff. The ensuing discussions would be helpful for understanding the points being made. At this point, a common complaint is that inmates who ask questions or attempt to engage in a discussion of an issue are cut off and they feel that the discussion would help them understand the points being made in class. They would make room in the program for such discussions.

There were some differences of opinion regarding the program. The focus group that included inmates who withdrew from the program addressed the idea of shortening the program. Other inmates were interested in lengthening the program to allow themselves more time to

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

process the information they received and engage in discussions about their own issues. Graduates and current inmates were more focused on release issues and indicated a desire to have a greater focus placed on preparation for release. The RePac module was a good start, but more attention to planning the details of their release in the community was a number one request among the focus groups. Graduates and other inmates close to release were very concerned that they did not have adequate planning to complete their release.

Inmate's assessment of the effectiveness of the program depended on their success in completing the program. Program graduates and most current participants were very positive about what they have learned. In one particularly moving comment, an inmate participant indicated that he was now not afraid to ask for help in solving problems. Others were very articulate in describing changes in their relationships with their families and others. A very promising note is that the graduates in particular were quick to point out that they had much more work to do because they still had unhealthy behaviors to deal with. Even inmates in the Withdraw focus group suggested that they too had seen some changes in themselves. However, they also expressed problems with the program that got in their way. Members of the graduate committee suggested that their recovery depends on continuing in refresher programs and other support for sobriety. As a result, inmate graduates have repeated programs and enrolled in any sobriety focused program available, including the Talbot House minimal program. Inmates will continue in any available program to maintain support for recovery, according to the participants.

3. What is the RIDOC level of satisfaction with the Program?

To determine RIDOC level of satisfaction we interviewed administrators and line staff, security supervisors, treatment administrators and dorm officers. The dorm officers indicated that working with the Spectrum program was a "breeze." The inmates were more focused on the structure offered by the Spectrum program and were easier to manage than inmates in other parts of the institution. One officer was particularly concerned that the structure of the program during the day be continued in the evening hours. He characterized his activities and enforcement of the rules as part of the Spectrum program.

We interviewed the parole board to identify their perspective on the role of program participation on inmate release dates. The perspective that parole is granted based on program participation is so pervasive that it warranted investigation. In fact, the parole board indicated that a slew of program certificates of completion does not often influence their decisions to set an earlier parole date. If an inmate is engaged in programs that relate to his/her issues, and the programs appear to be helping the inmate, parole may be granted earlier. It is not so straightforward as the inmates appear to think. On the other hand, inmates fears about enrolling in the Spectrum program may prolong their stay is accurate. Some inmates indicated that they

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

did not want to enroll in Spectrum because they are close to a parole hearing and fear that the parole commission will delay their release until they finish the program is accurate. The parole commission members were clear that they approved of the Spectrum program and want offenders to complete such an important program. They will set off release dates in order to complete the program and they will also delay release dates of individuals who need a program like Spectrum's.

The results of our interviews with administrators was very positive. The institution administration and staff supervisors were very positive about the Spectrum program. Most were pleased to see inmates constructively occupied and were impressed by the changes in attitude seen in many inmates. The Spectrum staff were very responsive to the prison official's needs and adjusted their schedule to meet prison needs. No one had anything negative to say about the program.

We were also interested in the perceptions about Spectrum among inmates in the general population. Inmates with whom we talked provided one of two general perspectives. The first perspective, from inmates who may be interested in participating in the program, they indicated that other inmates who participated in the program generally thought that the program was worth it. They received very good recommendations from those inmates. Others who were more distant from the program, not interested in participating, were very negative about the program and were suspicious of inmates who showed interest in it.

4. What is the program staff level of satisfaction with the Program?

We conducted informal discussions with staff. Our discussion focused on staff descriptions of their program. The discussions were handled as informal discussions but staff were assured confidentiality and they were able to volunteer any information they chose. We agreed to not quote the staff but allowed them to speak off the record. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of our discussion with the Spectrum staff was their clear understanding of the concepts underlying the Correctional Recovery Academy. All were consistently clear and provided the same general answers. This suggests that the Spectrum Health Systems group is undertaking the responsibility to train their staff well.

Most staff discussed the structure and curricular support in the program as two key positive features of the program. Staff appreciated the information, guidelines and examples provided. Many also appreciated the nature of the Academy, because it focused on learning new behaviors rather than other more traditional intervention models such as therapeutic communities and self-help. Many felt that the program was a good fit for the prison inmates because it deals with concrete behaviors that can be learned. They felt that the material was at the inmate's level and found that most inmates could relate to the program materials and content.

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

The staff also raised an issue that was touched on by some of the inmates. Staff were concerned about their effectiveness in terms of recovery status. Most staff volunteered whether or not they were in recovery and discussed the implications for their effectiveness. Some recovering individuals were dealing with the disconnect between their more traditional recovery and the Correctional Recovery Academy's behavioral recovery approach. Staff not in recovery were concerned about their credibility with the inmates. Indeed, the inmates expressed some concern that the staff didn't know enough to help them. Upon further discussion with various staff, it became clear that recovery by itself is not enough. It also appears that with experience, any staff can carry out the Correctional Recovery Academy curriculum.

Staff did express some frustrations with details of the program. For instance, an occasional inmate has a problem understanding English. No staff at the time were fluent in Spanish and had to rely on a fellow inmate to translate for them. In our conversations with both inmates, it was clear that there were positive results. While not an ideal situation, the inmate doing the translation indicated that he got more out of the program because he had to explain the material as he went. The Hispanic Spanish speaking inmate was also illiterate and appreciated the opportunity to work with a fellow inmate to learn material that he could not have learned even when written in Spanish. Harmless or not, the language barrier hindered the staff's ability to interact with that offender.

Staff also expressed a concern about the mixed reaction they received from Rhode Island Department of Corrections line staff. In most cases the Spectrum staff were treated with respect but were also viewed by a different group of line staff as being superfluous to the prison. That small segment of such staff expressed their dislike to the Spectrum staff and suggested to potential inmate participants that the program is useless.

5. Do the participants feel they are getting what the program promised?

From our observations of the program, discussions with inmates, and focus group responses, it appears that most inmates knew what to expect from fellow inmates who had participated in the Academy or knew inmates who had done so. Many inmates were referred to the program by their counselor, drug treatment or other RIDOC staff members who described the program to them. In our focus groups several inmates indicated that they were not deterred by the negative comments of inmates. Some indicated that inmate resistance suggested that the program might be substantive.

All focus group participants were asked "What are the most important things you learned from the program?" Inmates responded with program related "buzz" words such as "It teaches you different ways of thinking to prevent a return to your old behaviors". Some even gave vocabulary directly from the curriculum such as "Prioritizing," "Forecasting", and "They taught me about 'triggers and traps.'" One inmate indicated that "practicing the principles of recovery will help you gain faith in yourself." Others talk about the nature of their emotional functioning

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

including “dealing with my anger” and “there is a way to change.” These are the things inmates are told about the program both by fellow inmates and Spectrum staff. Only some of the inmates from the “drop-out” group were not as articulate in the vocabulary of recovery. As noted elsewhere, even this group felt that they were improved by their experience with the Spectrum program.

A second theme emerging from our informal discussions and focus groups is that most inmates agreed that their own level of investment in the program determined what they gained from the program. This theme appeared in discussions with inmates who completed, graduates and non-completers. The last group suggested that they didn't need to have treatment, they felt that they have no problem. In their opinion, the program as offered is the program as promised, they just don't need it.

Our interview with the parole board included a discussion of their perspective on the value of the Spectrum program. They were very positive about the Academy and were very supportive of the program and encouraged inmates to complete it. It was their opinion that graduates of the Spectrum program were far better prepared for parole than were those who needed it and did not get the treatment.

It is interesting to note that there is a consensus that offenders who are dealers but do not use drugs are still in need of substance abuse treatment because they are participating in the “addiction lifestyle”. Most inmates do not agree with that statement.

In some ways the inmates and Rhode Island Department of Corrections are receiving more than they expected. As the data collection component of the project drew to an end, the Spectrum program staff were developing new aspects of the Graduate program with input from the graduates themselves. They are developing study tools (e.g. a game called “Recovery Jeopardy”) and they were exploring a “Graduate Hour “ in which graduates participate as peer mentors in small group settings.

Expansion of the graduate program is an important development because of the problems with program completers who still have time to serve. In all focus groups, the inmates expressed concern about the vast differences between the environments in the regular units in comparison with the program focused units. Graduates are generally concerned with sustaining their recovery both in prison and after release. Returning to general population, they say, makes it difficult to sustain a recovery because of the prison culture and distrust many inmates have about program participants. Inmates suggested that staying in the graduate dorm is far more attractive than staying in a two man room in general population. Many of the graduates continue taking programs (even the less intense Talbot program) because they wanted to keep in touch with recovery.

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

The expansion of the Graduate program in the ways suggested calls for a focus on preparing graduates for providing quality services. They should be offered training in peer counseling skills to include at least basic communications and effective listening skills. Such training can only contribute to a successful return to society.

6. What are the inmate characteristics of program completers vs. non-completers

As noted below the program has a 54.9% retention rate, which compares favorably with retention rates in other prison based programs. This is of particular significance since the Correctional Recovery Academy offered in the Rhode Island prison system is based on a cognitive-behavioral model rather than the usual therapeutic community. From an administrator's point of view, then, the Correctional Recovery Academy can provide an attractive program to inmates and that it can successfully occupy inmates' time in a constructive manner. However, inmate responses to the program are as diverse as they are in any other program.

Inmates who successfully complete the program have more positive attitudes in discussions and focus groups than do drop outs. The most enthusiastically positive responses to questions about the Spectrum program came from program completers. Program dropouts tended to be more negative in their responses. Most returnees indicated that they would like to participate in the Spectrum program again, and many have. One very apparent difference between the graduate and drop-out groups is that the graduates tended to own their shortcomings whereas the drop-outs tended to blame the program, the program staff, someone in the family or anyone else for their failures. This study does not have the capacity to determine beforehand whether these groups differed before they enter the program or after. That is, is there a self-selection process that allows the more motivated inmate to be more successful or are inmates drawn into the treatment to become directed toward recovery? While no definitive conclusions to this question can be drawn, the available qualitative evidence suggests that it is a mixture, some are motivated to enter treatment for recovery but others said they changed their focus from impressing the parole board to recovery. As one program graduate put it, "I was determined to make it through this program and get my ticket out, but I learned something on the way." This was the most common comment among inmates who graduated or were currently in advanced stages of the program. It appears that about half of them came with motivation limited to getting a certificate of completion but changed their goals to attain sobriety. In most cases focus group participants indicated that they shifted gears after developing a relationship with a staff member or dealing with concepts that particularly hit home.

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

Inmate characteristics by completion group

All participating inmates are male, many of who have participated in other substance abuse programs at other facilities in the Rhode Island Department of Corrections system. They include a mixture of ethnic groups with 25% African American, 60% white and 15% Hispanic. The inmates range in age from 18 to 50 years or more. All inmates are eligible to participate in Exhibit 1. Characteristics of the three study groups; Spectrum Graduates, Spectrum Non-graduates, Talbot Graduates.

Characteristic	Spectrum Graduates	Spectrum Non-Graduates	Talbot Graduates
Number	95	78	72
Mean age	32.8	32.3	30.9
Percent Caucasian	56.8%	55.8%	45.8%
African American	25.3%	29.9%	29.2%
Hispanic	17.9%	14.3%	23.6%
Education Level			
Non-graduate	46.3%	45.5%	57.1%
High school/GED	46.3%	45.5%	38.6%
Post HS studies	7.4%	9.1%	4.3%
Instant offense			
Violent	22.1%	23.1%	15.3%
Drug or drug Possession	46.4%	32.0%	54.1%
Property offenses	24.2%	35.5%	27.8%
Current Sentence	2.88yrs	2.47yrs	1.67yrs
Proportion of adult life spent incarcerated			
since 1990 if born before 1972	29.2% n=73	30.0% n=49	29.8% n=47
since age 18 if born after 1972	33.8% n=22	37.6% n=29	29.1% n=25

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

the Correctional Recovery Academy unless they have severe mental illness, have extensive history of violence and the inmate must be 6 months free of disciplinary action. It is important to note that inmates volunteer to participate in these programs. Pre-program characteristics become important because there is an element of self-selection in analysis of data.

The two Spectrum samples, Graduates and Non-Graduates are quite similar except for a few details. Members of the Graduate group are more likely to be serving time for a drug related offense (46.4%) than the Non-Graduates (32.0% drug related offenses) but more likely to be incarcerated for a property offense (35.5%) than the Graduates (24.2%) or Talbot graduate (27.8%). The other difference between the Spectrum Graduates and Non-Graduates is the longer history of incarceration. The younger members of the Non-Graduate group have spent more of their adult life in correctional facilities (37.6%) than the Graduates 33.8% or Talbot "youngsters" (29.1%). In all cases, however, it is clear that all of these individuals have spent significant portions of their lives incarcerated.

The Talbot group differs from the Spectrum group in some ways. They tend to be younger (30.9 versus 32.8 and 32.3 for Graduates and Non-Graduates, respectively). They are also more likely to be Hispanic (23.6%) than their Spectrum counterparts (17.9% and 14.3%) for the Graduates and Non-Graduates, respectively. Talbot Graduates are less likely to be incarcerated for violent offenses (15.3%) and more likely to be incarcerated for drug or drug possession charges (54.1%). The Spectrum program participants tend to have more property offenses (22.1% and 23.1% among Graduates and Non-Graduates, respectively). The sentences imposed on the Talbot group are shorter (average of 1.67 years) than their Spectrum Graduates (2.88 years) and Non-Graduates (2.47 years).

It appears, then, that the Spectrum program, in comparison to the Talbot program, draws older, more experienced offenders who are more likely to have completed high school or beyond, less likely to be Hispanic, have more time to serve, and less likely to be serving time for drug or drug possession charges. Spectrum is more likely to graduate individuals with drug related offenses and, at least among the younger offenders, offenders less experienced with incarceration.

Note that the racial/ethnic distribution of Talbot graduates, presented in Exhibit 1, do not sum to 100% because 1.4% of this population is Native American, a group not included in the analyses. Both Spectrum group racial/ethnic distributions sum to 100%, barring any rounding errors. Total number of offenses does not add up to 100% because only the three most common types of offenses are listed. All re-commitment data are from August 1999.

Retention rates and their implications

There are a total of 245 inmates in the study. One group is the Talbot minimum program (n = 72), and two are from Spectrum, those who completed the program (n = 95) and those who terminated participation before completing it (n = 78). That is a completion rate of 54.9% for

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

the 173 Spectrum RSAT participants. The 78 inmates who did not finish the program, 62 (79.5%) were terminated because of administrative reasons such as transfers, early releases (n = 13), failure to comply with program regulations because he didn't participate in the program (n = 35), because of disciplinary infractions (n = 11), and other unspecified reasons (n = 3). Sixteen of the inmates who did not complete the program withdrew from the program on their own volition. A comparison of the characteristics of the Spectrum Graduates, Spectrum Terminations, and Voluntary Withdrawals is presented in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2. Comparison of inmates who complete (Spectrum Graduates), are removed from (Spectrum Terminations), and drop-out of (Voluntary Withdrawals) the Spectrum Correctional Recovery Academy.

Characteristic	Spectrum Graduates	Spectrum Terminations	Voluntary Withdrawals	Total
Number	95	62	16	173
.Percent	54.9%	35.8%	9.3%	100%
Mean age	32.8	31.9	36.4	32.1
Percent Caucasian	56.8%	55.7%	56.3%	56.1%
African American	25.3%	31.1%	25.0%	27.2%
Hispanic	17.9%	13.1%	18.8%	16.2%
Education Level				
Non-graduate	46.3%	42.6%	56.3%	45.7%
High school/GED	46.3%	45.2%	43.8%	45.7%
Post HS studies	7.4%	11.3%	0.0%	8.7%
Instant offense				
Violent	22.1%	24.6%	17.6%	22.5%
Drug or drug Possession	46.4%	32.3%	31.3%	39.9%
Property offenses	24.2%	35.5%	50.0%	30.6%
Current Sentence	2.88yrs	2.39yrs	2.80yrs	2.69yrs

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

The completion rate of 54.9% is relatively good for any residential substance abuse treatment program in prison. In other residential treatment programs, Martin et al (1999) provided data that shows a 48.1% completion rate in their CREST program, a therapeutic community in the Delaware Prison System. Further, Wexler, et al. (1999) reported a 67.4% completion rate in their Amity program. That is, all three program completion rates are within 15% points. The data in Exhibit 2 support the comments made by inmates that the program was voluntary. Note that 16 inmates withdrew from the program.

Generally, the three groups are similar with some notable exceptions. We have observed elsewhere that the cognitive behavioral model requires at least a basic facility with language and concepts taught in language terms. It is noted that a larger proportion of individuals who voluntarily withdrew did not graduate from high school or obtain a GED (56.3%). Similarly, it is noted that a larger proportion of the clients who withdrew from the program are Hispanic (18.8%) and a larger proportion of individuals who were dropped from the program are African-American (31.1%). While the differences are not that large, our interviews and focus groups clearly indicate that some inmates have difficulty dealing with the homework, writing assignments and level and frequency of reading assignments. These data support those observations given the lower education level and greater number of Hispanics who typically do not have a good command of the English language. Those dismissed from the program tend to be younger, have a higher prevalence of violent offenses and have shorter sentences than their counterparts. Perhaps younger offenders have more difficulty adapting to the prison structure and are more likely to engage in negative behaviors in the institution and be less ready to participate in treatment. While most analyses will compare the three major treatment groups (Spectrum Completers, Spectrum Non-completers, the Talbot group) it must be recognized that inmates in the non-completers group are heterogeneous, with the 16 voluntary withdrawals being much older, with longer sentences and less education. Because the research questions are focused on program completers, and because of the small n in the withdrawal group, the Spectrum Non-completers group was combined.

Differential Case Flow

The differences in time between program significant events are presented in Exhibit 3.

It appears that the Talbot graduates tend to be in prison longer (9 months) before they enroll in their respective programs. This is also true of the Spectrum non-graduates who are in prison a full month longer (average 8.4 months) than the Spectrum graduates (7.4 months). The time in treatment is appropriate for the six-month Spectrum program and one and one-half month program at Talbot. All Talbot program participants had the same amount of time in their program, there was no variance in time in treatment for that group. Everyone in the Talbot group was engaged in the program for 1.4 months. The average length of stay for Spectrum program non-completers is 2.4 months, a surprisingly high figure. The standard deviation of the

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

length of stay for program non-completers is relatively small (1.65) and suggests that most drop-outs stayed from 22 days to 4 months.

Exhibit 3. The distribution of months between entering prison, entering treatment, remaining in treatment, and leaving treatment (completion or not) and time to release.

Group	Time interval (in months)		
	Enter prison- to enter tx	In treat- ment	End of tx to release
Spectrum graduates	7.4	6.3	11.9
Spectrum non-graduates	8.4	2.4	8.6
Talbot graduates	9.0	1.4	4.6

There is also a wide range of times between program termination and release from prison. Spectrum graduates had an average of 11.9 months wait before release while the Talbot graduates had the least amount of time (4.6 months from release). These differences are important, suggesting the need to pro-rate outcome performance measures such as disciplinary actions and reconvictions.

Another difference between completers and dropouts is in exposure to previous programs. We asked each group to characterize their previous experience. Most of the inmates in the graduate programs are experienced program participants. They have participated in all the available programs in the institution (Parenting, Domestic Violence, school, and other treatment programs). Several of the graduates had been in the Talbot (6 hour) program before or after participating in the Spectrum program.

While all groups indicated they heard about the program from other inmates (“At intake from the other inmates”, “Heard about it at Medium”, “I heard some of guys I work with talking about it”) more of the currently active participants (Phase I and Phase II) than any other group indicated that they were encouraged to enter the Spectrum program by staff or other authority

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

figures ("The classification board recommended it"). In one case a named staff member told the inmate that he do Spectrum before enrolling in other programs at the institution. Common responses. Inmates were drawn into the program because of information provided by other inmates ("At intake from the other inmates", "Heard about it at Medium", "I heard some of guys I work with talking about it"). A few inmates were encouraged by staff at the intake center or by a counselor in their housing unit.

As noted above, most inmates indicated that they enrolled in order to impress the parole board. The program graduates were clear about how something or someone in the program got to them so that their motivation for completing the program changed ("I was mainly thinking of improving chances for parole, but I started liking what they were teaching." "At first it was for parole, but once you're in a couple of months you start seeing and understanding things you didn't even know were wrong with you.").

In our focus groups we discussed reasons for dropping out. One of the withdrawal group members, who has already applied for reentry into the Spectrum program, indicated that he was not ready for treatment. ("I just wasn't ready for it. I'm getting back into it though."). Most graduates and current participants attribute program completion to the investment of the participant and not to any feature of the program. (You have to stay active. You can't complete a program if you don't stay active." "A lot of people aren't ready to be part of a program that gets you involved. They don't want to have to talk about things."). One of the graduates indicated that some individuals drop out of the program because of peer pressure ("There are around 600 inmates in the general population, and there are only 40-60 of us who are maybe trying to get better, so sometimes when someone's friends see them changing, some of them can't take that pressure from their friends."). That was presented in the context of unhealthy priorities. Staff also indicated that some inmates are dropped from the program because they were transferred to another institution or were released from prison early. These withdrawals are not related to inmate performance or attitude.

Some inmates in the graduate groups indicated that the dorm setting (40 bed) was a very negative aspect of the program and many inmates drop out because they can get smaller dorm rooms (6 man rooms to 2 man rooms) outside of the program. Also, more active inmates indicated that inmates drop out of Spectrum because it interferes with school programs and work availability.

The program withdrawal group tends to attribute failure to complete the program to issues related to the staff and nature of the program ("They don't want to hear you. They don't give you time to talk." "It was hot." "I quit school in the seventh grade so I'm not used to sitting in a classroom"). This contrasts with the graduates who tend to attribute program drop-outs to lack of individual motivation ("Some inmates just aren't ready to deal with their addiction." "It isn't a big enough priority for them."). Program completers are more likely to attribute some of their success to the support offered by fellow inmates, particularly early on in the treatment

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

process (“The first month is the hardest- everyone wants to sign out. Staying in has a lot do with other inmates who tell you to stick it out, because most guys want to sign out”).

7. What inmate characteristics are most closely associated with positive intermediate treatment outcomes?

One index of early program outcome is inmate disciplinary performance. It is expected that offenders who graduate from the program will have fewer incident reports than will inmates who are not graduates or who enrolled in the Talbot program. It is important to note in these findings that the inmate flow is so irregular (see Exhibit 3), and the relationship between RSAT program participation and release has not been consistent. That is, inmates are in the institution for varying periods of time before they enroll in the RSAT program and, similarly, inmates who complete the program, drop it, or who complete the Talbot program have widely varied times to release. As a result, all incident report data presented in Exhibit 4 are pro-rated on a per year basis.

Exhibit 4. Prorated disciplinary rates (incidents per year) of Spectrum graduates, non-graduates and Talbot graduates.

Group	Disciplinary Charges Before Tx	Disciplinary Charges During Tx	Disciplinary Charges After Tx
Spectrum graduates	1.4	0.7	0.3
Spectrum non-graduates	1.1	0.5	0.8
Talbot graduates	1.2	0.4	0.5

The Spectrum graduates had higher rates of pre-program disciplinary charges and the lowest post-program disciplinary charges. The rating per year was a way of standardizing the rates and makes them generally comparable. Thus, it is noted that the non-graduates have more than twice the disciplinary rate of the graduates. Even the younger Talbot graduates had a better disciplinary record than did the Spectrum non-graduates. It appears that the Spectrum non-

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

graduates are a self-selected group who have not yet accepted the need for treatment. Our focus group data described above supports that conclusion.

The RIDOC recidivism data have already been analyzed to establish base recidivism rates for the entire system (Fontaine, 1997). These rates will be contrasted with recidivism rates of the two groups to be followed in this evaluation, the intervention and comparison groups. Recidivism (return to prison with a new offense or parole violation) within the first 13 months ranged in any one year (releasees from 1985-1995) from 30% to 40% with an average of 34.6%. The 25 month post-release recidivism rates varied from 41% to 51.6%, with an average of 45.5%. The 3 year recidivism rates (within 37 months) ranged from 46.6% to 56.3% with an average of 51.0%. Assuming that the drug involved offenders are at greater risk for recidivism, then it is expected that the comparison group will have worse than average recidivism and the treatment group a better outcome. It is also noted that the difference between the 13 month and 25 month recidivism rates is 10%, the difference between the 25 and 37 month recidivism rates is an average of 6%. This supports the idea that the recidivism rates must include at least a 24 month follow-up. We have collected preliminary data on time to rearrest for 21 graduates, 14 non-graduates and 9 Talbot graduates. Thus far, it takes Spectrum non-graduates longer to be recommitted (7.4 months) than it does the Talbot graduates (3.4 months) and Spectrum graduates (5.2 months). If these differences continue in the long-term follow up study, then the implications of dropping out will need further examination.

8. What are the program features most closely associated with positive intermediate outcomes?

The focus group discussions led to unexpected comments. In nearly every group of graduate or current participant, inmates indicated that something or someone connected with them and helped them get motivated. Most inmates admit that they enter the program with the idea of using it to their advantage ("get a certificate and get early parole"). Those who graduated suggested that they completed more because they began to see that they "needed to change" Inmates also liked the "seminars" because they allowed them to express their issues in a group of peers. Several inmates indicated that those experiences were the first public speaking experiences they have ever had. The attractive part of the "seminar" was that it gave them a chance to talk about themselves, be the focus of a session, and get feedback from their colleagues. In a few cases offenders indicated that the material and topics discussed caught their attention.

.Analysis and Discussion

The data presented above rely on qualitative data collection methodologies. While they are subject to error, these data do present a consistent picture of how inmates respond to the behaviorally based Correctional Recovery Academy. The program has proven itself to be a viable approach with promising outcomes. Variables that seem to be powerful mediating factors include the age of the offenders and the length of their sentence. For instance, an individual who has a drug problem but has 10 months to serve, is less likely to express an interest in the 6 month residential program because it may interfere with their release date. In fact, parole board members indicated that the decision to release someone might indeed be delayed until they complete a program such as the Spectrum Academy.

This study and the subsequent follow-up study will have to address the voluntary nature of programming at the Rhode Island Department of Corrections. The inmates tend to self-select, yet the proportion of individuals who do not complete is relatively high. The implications of this will be important in the future analyses of the follow-up data. In a related matter, the use of the brief Talbot program as a comparison group is problematic in the sense that it too involved self-selection. That is, individuals opt to participate in the shorter program and are able to "get it over with". These two concerns make it difficult to conduct a randomized design. Instead, a better comparison group will need to be defined.

Given these shortcomings, the study is still offers an important resource for the corrections professionals and criminal justice agencies.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

- The major obstacle to success in the program centered on the reading level of the material and some of its content. Parts of the program materials were written at a level that was beyond the comprehension capacity of some of the participants. Some materials were presented in contexts that made acceptance difficult. For example, many of focus group participants complained that the Men's Work (an anger management, domestic violence) program was presented by all women staff and did not deal well with the male perspective. Inmates who complained about the program indicated that they resented some of the comments made by the female staff and felt that the program was designed to make them feel bad. They complained that they were not allowed to express their viewpoint. Some inmates suggested that it would have been easier for

them to learn from their own perspective. Staff indicated that there is little doubt that the curriculum will make some of these inmates feel uncomfortable but that the discomfort can result in a positive impact on the participants. Nonetheless, the information may have been better presented by men or women who are able to create a more accepting environment in which inmates could openly express their views in the process of relearning their socialization about gender issues. This and other findings suggest that attention must be paid to staffing, staff training, and characteristics of staff. All materials are provided in Spanish and has been helpful with inmates who have difficulty with English. However, a large proportion of the Spanish speaking inmates are also illiterate.

- Inmates' responses to our focus group questions are predictable based on previous behavior and their level of commitment to recovery. Inmates who dropped out of the program told us that they did not need the treatment anyway. There was a tendency for this group to attribute most of their problems to others, including their family, the prison system, or the treatment program. Many inmates focused on a specific unit officer who, for some, created a major problem or helped create a healing environment, depending on the inmate's perspective. Some inmates (mostly those who were returnees or dropouts) indicated that a certain officer seemed to focus on making the inmate's lives difficult. They indicated that the officer persistently picked on inmates for minor infractions and generally created an unpleasant atmosphere for program participants living in the program dorm. According to inmates in the dropout group, "many inmates left the program because of him." On the other hand, inmates in the completers group were more likely to see that the officer's actions created a good environment for study, getting homework done, and generally creating a peaceful atmosphere. They expressed an appreciation for his consistent efforts at keeping the unit quiet and peaceful. The completers and graduates indicated that he helped make their participation in the program successful.
- According to staff and inmates, one of the program features most closely associated with inmate success, aside from the inmate's own attitude, is the structure of the program. Rather than being a "touchie-feelie" program, the Spectrum program has structure, focuses on behavior, and teaches the offender how to behave in socially positive ways. The inmates learn about their own specific behaviors and how they lead to problems for them. The successful program participants and staff both indicated that the program provides its participants with tools for successful life in the community. For example, the program focused on "triggers and traps" activities, cues, and behaviors that lead individuals into problem behaviors resulting in untoward consequences.

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

Successful participants learn how to avoid those cues and avoid problem behaviors and their resulting negative consequences

- Inmates were particularly positive about the use of “Seminars”. These sessions engage the offenders by offering them a venue in which to explore their own issues and ways to address them. In the “Seminars” inmates lead a group discussion about their own personal behaviors. Many of the inmates indicated that they never previously had the opportunity to talk in front of a group like that. Most of the inmates indicated that they had made their first public presentation ever in the “Seminars”. The experience helped them create a sense of self-worth and gave them confidence. This component of the program is clearly the inmate’s favorite and, according to all focus groups, the one in which they felt the most profound growth. As we understand the inmates’ responses, the “Seminars” help inmates understand their issues in their own terms. Even inmates in the drop-out and returnees groups spoke very highly of the “Seminars.”
- A major consistent finding is that the offenders who were successful in either program (intervention or comparison) usually also identified a particular staff member with whom they had established a relationship. Inmates tended to attach more to the staff who were in recovery. They were clear that recovering staff can identify with their point of view and could present the material in a more meaningful way. When asked how they know who was in recovery, the inmate participants said either that the staff self-disclosed or that “they just knew”. The later group of staff may or may not have been in recovery but the identified staff were able to communicate with the participants in a positive way. This suggests that staff training has to focus on skills associated with accepting and listening to the inmate’s perspectives and reflect them in discussions about change in behavior. While staff cannot be trained to have charisma and appeal to inmates, success can be improved by training staff on communications with inmates. In other contexts, training that engages participants in taking the perspectives of others has had an excellent impact on youthful offenders.
- One of the important questions addressed in the process evaluation is whether the program presented to the inmates resembled the program presented in the curriculum. While the Spectrum management team was understandably reluctant to share their curriculum, our on-site review of the curriculum and teacher instructions, coupled with observations of classes, suggested that the program staff generally followed the curriculum- at least as far as we were allowed to review it. Any detected exceptions to the curriculum were discussed in staff meetings and Spectrum management generally discouraged their staff from deviating from the curriculum at all. There was some staff resistance,

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

usually among new staff members who did not want to follow the program exactly as specified. The only real threat to program consistency was the frequent turnover of staff. The new staff training included several discussions regarding the importance of consistency in presenting the program as prescribed in the program manual.

- Our understanding of inmate satisfaction with the program was based mostly on discussions with inmates, observations in the classroom, and focus group comments. Inmates most likely to be least satisfied with the program are among drop-outs and returnees. However, it was noted that many of these same inmates expressed interest in re-enrolling in the program, either after dropping out or returning to prison.
- We also asked program participants whether they felt that they were getting what they expected from the program. The response was universally yes. Not because of what the program staff said about the program, but what other inmates said. Inmates paid much more attention to what their fellow inmates said. Information provided by program or prison staff had less impact on recruiting participants than did their fellow inmates. This suggests that the most effective strategy to recruit inmates is to engage inmates in the process.
- Of the 173 Spectrum inmates studied in this sample, 95 (54.9%) completed, 62 (35.8%) were terminated by staff and 16 (9.3%) withdrew from the program. Those terminated were somewhat younger (31.9 years) and voluntary withdrawals were somewhat older (36.4 years) than graduates (32.8 years). 56.3% of the voluntary withdrawals did not graduate from high school or have a GED in contrast with those who graduated (56.8%) and were terminated by staff (42.6%). Poor reading ability may have contributed to the voluntary withdrawal. The differences between Talbot graduates and Spectrum participants are few but significant. Talbot graduates are younger (30.9 vs. 32.3 and 32.8 for Spectrum non-graduates and graduates, respectively), more likely to be Hispanic (23.6% versus 14.3% and 17.9% for Spectrum non-graduates and graduates, respectively), and more likely to have a drug possession charge (54.1% versus 32.% and 46.4% for Spectrum non-graduates and graduates, respectively).
- Correctional Recovery Academy staff were generally very positive about the program. They like the structure, knowing what to offer in each class and the fact that the program deals with inmate behavior. They liked the concept of practicing behavior, learning chains of behavior that lead to choices to return to substance abuse and crime or to remain sober. The major negative comment by several staff was the concern that the program did not let the staff have enough

flexibility to adapt to the special characteristics of the groups with whom they were working.

The most important programmatic implications of these results are that most inmates can, indeed, function well within a behavioral based program in a residential treatment program. Inmates are capable of learning in this "academy" even though many of them have dropped out of school, have had major failure experiences, and usually harbor negative feelings toward school. This program can work. It is also important to note that most inmates find the program to be a positive experience and can learn in these circumstances. The inmate reactions to staff, including those in recovery, the presence of all women staff in the Men's Work program suggest that attention need to be paid to the composition of staff teaching the programs and the content of the classes presented. That is, the nature of the staff is as important as the nature of the program content and methodology. Successful inmates are successful because they connected with a staff member with whom they could connect. Inmates were very sensitive to who is and is not a recovering person. We asked staff about the need to be in recovery in order to be effective. The staff showed mixed feelings about the question. Most staff think that it is helpful to be recovering but most also think that an all-recovering staff would be unhealthy. The optimal model included both in the staff.

VI. Conclusions and Implications of Findings:

In brief, the Spectrum Correctional Recovery Academy process evaluation suggests the following findings:

1. Cognitive, academy formatted programs will be accepted by inmates. The strategy not only places an emphasis on behaviors but it also presents their issues in terms that they can understand.
2. There are some inmates who have difficulty in the academic setting and with the reading and homework assigned to them, but that can be remedied with the use of fellow inmates as tutors and general mentors. Such a strategy is helpful to the advanced participant as well as the inmate who is having trouble processing the material
3. One of the strengths of the Spectrum program is that the organization invests in the ongoing development of its program materials. They listened to our comments early in the evaluation and modified their curriculum a little. In keeping with that spirit, it is suggested that Spectrum review the materials with a group of their best graduates to obtain inmate input into the program and its documents. Inmates had several reasonable ideas that may further strengthen the program .

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

4. One of the key elements of a successful program is the inmate contact with an inspiring individual. While a few inmates indicated that some of the ideas discussed in the Academy were useful, most indicated that a conversation with a staff member, observing a colleague undergoing change, etc. were all very important elements to the growth of the individual. This seems to be a key element in most treatments and we have such limited understanding of it.

5. Inmates who are serious about recovery have major roadblocks in the general population. It is important to keep these motivated inmates separate from the general population, at least in housing. The graduate programs have proven to be very helpful in keeping inmates away from the pressures applied by inmates not sympathetic to recovery or inmates who are cooperative in programs like that. Inmate post-program failure in the general population can be attributed to the realities of social pressure in such an institution more than to a lack of motivation.

6. Further, the graduate program is useful to inmates to give them support for sustaining their sobriety. Motivated inmates take any program or activity that helps them stay in touch with that issue.

7. In spite of the Department of Correction's efforts to retain a policy of voluntary participation in treatment, some inmates are pushed into the program by judges, staff and family. Many others enter the program for the reward of an early release. After being coerced into treatment, some of the inmates are actually engaged by the program and continue on in a far more motivated state than when they started. The dropout rates are a clear indication that inmates are not forced to complete the program.

VII. Endnotes:

References

Knight, K., Simpson, D.D., & Hiller, M.L. Three-year reincarceration outcomes for in-prison therapeutic community treatment in Texas. **The Prison Journal**, 79, 337-351,

Lipton, D.S. (1998) Treatment for drug abusing offenders during correctional supervision: A nationwide overview. **Journal of Offender Rehabilitation**, 26, pp 1-45.

Marlatt, G.A., and Gordon, J.R. (1985) Relapse prevention. In G.A. Marlatt and J.R. Gordon, (eds.) **Relapse Prevention**. New York: Guilford.

Martin, S.S., Clifford, B.A., Saum, C.A., & Inciardi, J.A. (1999). Three-year outcomes of therapeutic community treatment for drug-involved offenders in Delaware: From prison to work release to aftercare. **The Prison Journal**, 79, 294-320.

Final Report Grant # 97-RT-VX-K012

Wexler, H.K., Melnick, G., Lowe, L., and Peters, J. (1999) Three-year reincarceration outcomes for Amity in-prison therapeutic community and aftercare in California. **The Prison Journal**, 79, 321-336.

Focus group #2

Individuals who completed the program

Concerns: Enrollment and selection of a program

1. How and what did you hear about the program in which you enrolled?
2. How did your experience in the Tier 1 program affect you?
3. How many other Department of Correction substance abuse programs have you participated in? How many before and how many after the last substance abuse program you completed?
4. What have you heard about the substance abuse programs here or at other institutions?
5. Why did you enroll in the program that you enrolled in?
6. Was it difficult to enroll in the program?

Concerns: Knowledge gained from program participation

7. What are the three most important things you have learned from participating in your drug treatment program?
8. Did you learn anything new about addictions, drugs, or other related matters while in the program

Concerns: Attitudes and evaluation about the program

9. Why did you complete the program?
10. Why did people you know drop out of the program you completed?
11. What do you like least about the program?
12. What do you like best about the program?
13. What has been most helpful about the program?
14. What has been least helpful about the program?
15. What features do you wish the program had that was not available?
16. Has it been easier or more difficult to do time since completing the program?

Concerns: Behavior change

17. In your opinion, are you doing anything different since you completed the program?
18. Is your behavior different after completing the program?

Focus group #3

Individuals who dropped out of the program

Concerns: Enrollment and selection of a program

1. How and what did you hear about the program in which you enrolled?
2. How did your experience in the Tier 1 program affect you?
3. How many other Department of Correction substance abuse programs have you participated in? How many before and how many after the last substance abuse program you did not complete?
4. What have you heard about the substance abuse programs here or at other institutions?
5. Why did you enroll in the program that you enrolled in?
6. Was it difficult to enroll in the program?

Concerns: Knowledge gained from program participation

7. What are the three most important things you have learned from participating in your drug treatment program?
8. Did you learn anything new about addictions, drugs, or other related matters while in the program?

Concerns: Attitudes and evaluation about the program

9. Why did you not complete the program?
10. Why did other people you know drop out of the program?
11. What do you like least about the program?
12. What do you like best about the program?
13. What has been most helpful about the program?
14. What has been least helpful about the program?
15. What features do you wish the program had that was not available?
16. Has it been easier or more difficult to do time since dropping out of the program?

Concerns: Behavior change

17. In your opinion, are you doing anything different since leaving the program?
18. Is your behavior different after participating in the program?

Focus group #4

Tier 4 completers with no aftercare

Concerns: Enrollment and selection of a program

1. How and what did you hear about the program in which you enrolled?
2. How did your experience in the Tier 1 program affect you?
3. How many other Department of Correction substance abuse programs have you participated in? How many before and how many after the last substance abuse program you completed?
4. What have you heard about the substance abuse programs here or at other institutions?
5. Why did you enroll in the program that you enrolled in?
6. Was it difficult to enroll in the program?

Concerns: Knowledge gained from program participation

7. What are the three most important things you have learned from participating in your drug treatment program?
8. Did you learn anything new about addictions, drugs, or other related matters while in the program?

Concerns: Attitudes and evaluation about the program

9. Why did you complete the program?
10. Why did people you know drop out of the program you completed?
11. What do you like least about the program?
12. What do you like best about the program?
13. What has been most helpful about the program?
14. What has been least helpful about the program?
15. What features do you wish the program had that was not available?
16. Has it been easier or more difficult to do time since completing the program?

Concerns: Behavior change

17. In your opinion, are you doing anything different since you completed the program?
18. Is your behavior different after completing the program?

Focus group #5

Individuals did not participate in substance abuse programs

Concerns: Enrollment and selection of a program

1. How and what did you hear about the substance abuse programs offered at the institutions you have in which you stayed?
2. How did your experience in the Tier 1 program affect your decisions about participating in substance abuse programs?
3. How many other Department of Correction programs have you participated in?
4. Why have other people enrolled in the substance abuse programs here or at other institutions? Why have those who did not participate, chosen not to do so?
5. Why did you choose to not enroll in substance abuse programs available in the institution?
6. Is it difficult to enroll in a substance abuse program if you want to? Have you had problems because you do not enroll?

Concerns: Knowledge gained from program participation

7. What do people who do participate learn on the substance abuse programs offered at the institution?
8. Did you learn anything new about addictions, drugs, or other related matters while in prison here?

Concerns: Attitudes and evaluation about the program

9. What could have been offered to make the program more attractive to you ?
10. Why did other people you know drop out of the program?
11. What features do you wish the program had that was not available?
12. Has it been easier or more difficult to do time because you didn't participate in one of the programs?
13. Why did other people enroll in drug abuse programs?

Concerns: Behavior change

14. In your opinion, are you doing anything different since entering prison this time?

Focus group #6

Completers who have returned

Concerns: Enrollment and selection of a program the last time

1. How and what did you hear about the program in which you enrolled?
2. How did your experience in the Tier 1 program affect you?
3. How many other Department of Correction substance abuse programs have you participated in? How many before and how many after the last substance abuse program you completed?
4. What have you heard about the substance abuse programs here or at other institutions?
5. Why did you enroll in the program that you enrolled in?
6. Was it difficult to enroll in the program?

Concerns: Knowledge gained from program participation the last time

7. What are the three most important things you have learned from participating in your drug treatment program?
8. Did you learn anything new about addictions, drugs, or other related matters while in the program

Concerns: Attitudes and evaluation about the program

9. Why did you complete the program?
10. Why did people you know drop out of the program you completed?
11. What do you like least about the program?
12. What do you like best about the program?
13. What has been most helpful about the program after you got out?
14. What has been least helpful about the program after you got out?
15. What features do you wish the program had that was not available?
16. Has it been easier or more difficult to do time since completing the program?
17. Now that you are back, are you going to enroll in any programs- substance abuse, education, etc.?

Concerns: Behavior change

17. In your opinion, are you doing anything different since you completed the program?
18. Is your behavior different after completing the program?
19. What are the major factors that brought you here today?

FOCUS GROUP # 7

SPECTRUM STAFF - INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

INFORMATION:

1. How long have you been teaching in the Spectrum program?
2. How long have you been teaching at this facility?
3. How many other DOC programs have you worked or taught for?
If so, which ones?
4. What brought you to the Spectrum program to teach?

CONCERNS: THE PROGRAM

1. In your opinion, what is the short term goal of the program?
...the long term goal of the program?
2. What do you think of the program as a whole?
3. What do you like most about the program?
4. What do you like least about the program?
5. If you could, what would you add to the program?
...what would you delete?
6. In your opinion, is the program effective?
7. Do you believe that program meets its goals?
8. Is there another way that might be taught/presented that you think might be more effective or helpful?

CONCERNS: CURRICULUM

1. What do you think of the curriculum as a whole?
2. What do you think about how the class schedule is organized/arranged?
3. Do you feel the time allotted to each class is appropriate?
...too long? ...too short?
4. Do you think the testing/grading system adequately reflects curriculum content?
5. Do you think the testing/grading system adequately reflects what the students have learned?
6. What 2 classes do you most enjoy teaching?
...least enjoy teaching?
7. In your opinion, what 2 classes help to foster the greatest amount of change in participants?

CONCERNS: STUDENTS

1. What types of expectations do you set out for students?
2. What do you believe their expectations are of you?
3. Is there a particular type of inmate that seems to be lower risk in terms of program success?

CONCERNS: DOC

1. Do you feel, as a Spectrum teacher, accepted by DOC?
2. What do you think DOC perception is of you/program?
3. What do you think DOC perception is of Spectrum students?

CONCERNS: LOGISTICS

1. What do you think of the location of staff offices with relationship to classrooms?
2. In your opinion, is the program staffed adequately enough to meet its goals?
3. Do you think the current method keeping is adequate?
If so, how? If not, why not? What changes would you recommend?
4. In your opinion, is there adequate "down time" for staff as it relates to quality teaching?

Topic: Previous program participation

Common responses. Most of the inmates in the graduate programs are experienced program participants. They have participated in all the available in the institution (Parenting, Domestic Violence, school, and other treatment programs). Several of the graduates had been in the Talbot (6 hour) program before or after participating in the Spectrum program.

Differing responses. It appears that the graduates and current program participants have had experience in previous programs. The only group to include inexperienced program participants is the program withdrawal group. The one individual in the withdrawal group who was planning to re-enter the Spectrum program had participated in a long list of activities.

Topic: Recruitment

Common responses. Inmates were drawn into the program because of information provided by other inmates ("At intake from the other inmates", "Heard about it at Medium", "I heard some of guys I work with talking about it"). A few inmates were encouraged by staff at the intake center or by a counselor. One current inmate asked his lawyer to find out about available drug treatment programs. Most inmates indicated that enrolling in the program was easy, "I just signed up". The only individuals who had difficulty indicated they didn't have a drug problem but needed to have addictions treatment for addictions other than substance abuse. One individual indicated that Spectrum staff encouraged him to enroll because he was a dealer and living "the lifestyle".

Differing responses While all groups indicated they heard about the program from other inmates more of the current participants (Phase I and Phase II) than any other group indicated that they were encouraged to enter the Spectrum program by staff or other authority figures ("The classification board recommended it"). In one case a named staff member told the inmate that he do Spectrum before enrolling in other programs at the institution. While the groups did not otherwise differ, it is noteworthy that the initial recruits were "actively recruited by program staff." This does not seem to be the case for more recent recruits.

Topic: Reasons for enrollment

Common responses Most inmates indicated that they enrolled in order to impress the parole board. Most of the graduates indicated that something or someone in the program got to them and their motivation for completing the program changed ("I was mainly thinking of improving chances for parole, but I started liking what they were teaching." "At first it was for parole, but once you're in a couple of months you start seeing and understanding things you didn't even know were wrong with you."). A few inmates indicated that they didn't want to enter the program for fear that the parole board would choose to keep him in prison to complete the program. That is, if they were too close to

having a parole hearing, they felt that the parole board would likely give them more time in prison just to finish the program.

Differing responses The graduates are clearly different from other participants in that they indicated they had a personal investment in the program (“I was looking at myself and I knew I needed to change myself”, “Sick of the life I was living.”).

Topic: Reasons for completion or non-completion

Common responses One of the withdrawal group members, who has already applied for reentry into the Spectrum program, indicated that he was not ready for treatment. (“I just wasn’t ready for it. I’m getting back into it though.”). Most graduates and current participants attribute program completion to the investment of the participant and not to any feature of the program. (You have to stay active. You can’t complete a program if you don’t stay active.” “A lot of people aren’t ready to be part of a program that gets you involved. They don’t want to have to talk about things.”). One of the graduates indicated that some individuals drop out of the program because of peer pressure (“There are around 600 inmates in the general population, and there are only 40-60 of us who are maybe trying to get better, so sometimes when someone’s friends see them changing, some of them can’t take that pressure from their friends.”). That was presented in the context of unhealthy priorities. Staff also indicated that some inmates are dropped from the program because they were transferred to another institution or were released from prison early. These withdrawals are not related to inmate performance or attitude. Some inmates in the graduate groups indicated that the dorm setting (40 bed) was a very negative aspect of the program and many inmates drop out because they can get smaller dorm rooms (6 man rooms to 2 man rooms) outside of the program. Also, more active inmates indicated that inmates drop out of Spectrum because it interferes with school programs and work availability.

Differing responses The program withdrawal group tends to attribute failure to complete the program to issues related to the staff and nature of the program (“They don’t want to hear you. They don’t give you time to talk.” “It was hot.” “I quit school in the seventh grade so I’m not used to sitting in a classroom”). This contrasts with the graduates who tend to attribute program drop-outs to lack of individual motivation (“Some inmates just aren’t ready to del with their addiction.” “It isn’t a big enough priority for them.”). Program completers are more likely to attribute some of their success to the support offered by fellow inmates, particularly early on in the treatment process (“The first month is the hardest- everyone wants to sign out. Staying in has a lot to do with other inmates who tell you to stick it out, because most guys want to sign out”). It is interesting to note that members of the graduate program were not concerned about the limitation of being in the Spectrum program on available jobs. They indicated that over 30% of the income is withdrawn to cover various costs, including any fines, and special victim’s funds. The graduates who live in the general population and do not serve on the graduate committee were mostly in work release and did not see that as a problem.

Topic: General population inmate perception of the Spectrum program

Common responses. There appears to be two different types of opinions on Spectrum. The first is from individuals evaluating it as a potential resource. In that perspective, Spectrum is usually highly rated and the comments are usually expressed in the form a good recommendation from a friend. The second perspective is in terms of the role of treatment, personal changes within participants, and change in general. For example, some participants say that there is a negative impression among some inmates (“It [Spectrum Program] does get a bad rap from some people in the yard, staff too.”). The inmates generally dismissed negative comments about the program from staff. They indicate that it is related to the correctional officers contract disputes.

Differing responses. No differences in responses were apparent.

Topic: Perceived knowledge gained from program

Common responses The focus group participants were asked “What are the most important things you learned from the program?” Inmates responded with program related “buzz” words such as “It teaches you different ways of thinking to prevent a return to your old behaviors”. Some even gave vocabulary directly from the curriculum such as “Prioritizing,” “Forecasting”, and “They taught me about ‘triggers and traps.’” One inmate indicated that “practicing the principles of recovery will help you gain faith in yourself.” Others talk about the nature of their emotional functioning including “dealing with my anger” and “there is a way to change.”

Differing responses The program drop-outs did not provide the usual buzz words. Instead, they focused on behavior improvements. One drop-out claimed he is now able to “walk away from things because of things I learned from Spectrum.” This respondent described in detail how he was now able to avoid violent responses that heretofore were the source of his problems. Another inmate learned to be “more open” and indicated that now “it is a lot easier to express myself. For instance, I was never able to tell my mother that I loved her.” That is, even the inmates who dropped out of the program felt that they got something out of it.

Topic: Liked least, least helpful

Common responses. Some of the most common complaints about the program are about specific aspects of the program. For example, inmates from all groups indicated that the program was too rigid not allowing for diversity of opinion. “Staff don’t allow enough differences in the program. When the inmates raise an issue with the way the program recommends something is done, they are sometimes cut off and not given a chance to air their perspective.” One particular officer was the focus of concern and was mentioned by all groups because “he is worse than a wife... has all these little stupid rules, and acts like the mod is his house.” A majority of inmates agreed with the following comment “During the program, one officer was particularly negative and harassed inmates by constantly monitoring every move the targeted inmate made. It is an uncomfortable situation and he is on duty during a time when most inmates re in the dorm.” Inmates in the withdrawal group indicated that they were unable to complete the program because of the officer. Another dislike almost universally indicated among the inmates is the “Men’s Work” sessions. Nearly all inmates complained that it “ is not a good fit with the Spectrum program. The style of the program and the materials are too different and it seems

inconsistent with Spectrum's other materials." One inmate seemed to express the opinion of his graduate colleagues that the material in the Men's Work "...is gender-biased. Written as if it applied to all men. It beats up on the men a little bit. Some men are abused too." All groups indicated that the dorm situation was difficult. It rarely afforded the needed quiet to do home work and many inmates noted that they could be living with a lot fewer inmates in their room.

Inmates also criticized some of the content features of the program. They suggested that the scope of the program was too narrowly focused on drugs and addictions and did not offer enough on other related issues. "The program is perceived by many inmates as only a 'drug program', although the program says it is appropriate for those dealing with problems of "criminal addictive thinking."

The physical facilities also drew negative comments. The dorm room is distracting and provides little space or quiet to do homework. Another individual was supported in saying that the rooms in which the program activities are held are too hot and stuffy. Inmates seem to respond negatively to the termination of inmates from the program. It seems to upset them. This was mentioned by all groups and may have been related to a recent specific incident. From the inmate's perspective an inmate is discharged from the program without much of an explanation to the discharged inmate or the rest of the community. "One guy was kicked out just because he didn't want to answer a question about a sexual issue..he was shy or he didn't know the answer or something..... but he got kicked out, just for that, after doing three months in the program. He needed more of a chance than that."

Differing responses Inmates in the Withdraw group were more likely to complain about the burden of the program. "I don't understand why it has to be six months when it's only 3 months at Medium." The "cops on the dorm" issue was perceived quite differently by graduates than by the current group of participants and the withdraw from the two program graduate groups. Members of the graduate groups tended to agree that "they [the correctional officers] were just doing their jobs" and that "when the tough correctional officer was on duty, the room was quiet and you could get homework done." That is, most complaints about the officers were from currently enrolled inmates. Indeed, we conducted a follow-up discussion with the officer in question. He seemed to have a perspective on the program that if it worked then they could deal with him and the unit was better run and inmates would have more time to do their homework and other tasks in peace.

While most inmates were very positive about the Spectrum staff, the current participant group offered a complaint that the staff didn't always practice what they preached. "I would say, [the Spectrum staff] did not always practice what they taught us - like Prioritizing, and Organization... things like that. They'd bring the wrong sign-up sheet for something, or change a test date on us, or teach us the wrong lesson."

Some inmates in each group indicated that they had problems understanding the material. While several of these inmates indicated that their colleagues helped them, it was their complaint that it was not easy to understand things. The material could use improvement so they can understand it better.

Topic: Liked most, most helpful

Common responses Inmates liked the style of the program. "It's a reality-based program- something that's related to everyday life. You can relate it to our life, or a friend's, or to family..." Most inmates valued the seminars. In this segment of the program inmates had the chance to speak out and focus on their own issues. "They give you a topic and you have to dig deep. You have to be honest with yourself because there's group discussion after you're done ... They [staff and inmates] give you feedback and you talk about it." The structure of the program was particularly appreciated. They thought that it helped them "get their act together" and that it was useful in helping them serve their sentences. "I was very stubborn, but this taught me I can change my beliefs and the way I think about things- the way I approach things." Many graduates and current program participants indicated that the program seemed to help them get ready for the outside, offering tools for survival and using the community support. "It encourages you to admit you have a problem and shows you how to ask for help... shows you how to get help from others, to use community resources."

In addition to seminars, many inmates like the morning meetings "Guys have to read in front of forty to fifty other guys. Just to get up there and have to do that is growth. Most of us have never had to do anything like that before."

Most participants were very positive about the Spectrum staff and were particularly pleased that some of the them are recovering. Graduates indicated that they completed the program because of the support of the staff. "Their knowledge isn't just from books. They really know what they're talking about and understand the process." Several inmates identified specific staff members or staff in general as part of the reason why they completed. Staff were appreciated for encouraging and helping them to succeed.

Differing responses Graduates, whether or not on the graduate committee, claimed that the support they received from their colleagues was very helpful and facilitated their completion of the program. This differs from the withdrawals and current program participants who did not see the positive side of being close to so many people. The Phase I group was particularly taken with the mix of recovering and non-recovering individuals among staff. "there's a good mix of recovering people among them... they all have their own style... they're all intellectually challenging."

While all other inmate groups were very positive about the Spectrum staff, the Withdrawal group had some reservations about staff. One inmate was more open about the problems. "At first I couldn't stand them. I was just like, 'That's wrong the way they talk to us.' But I deal with them. Each one of them has their good points." The group also indicated that many of them were doing extra home work.

Topic: How to improve the program

Common responses. Add more one-on-one time with counselors. Inmates thought that the one-on-one sessions could help get them through the material. "In six months I've only been seen once about a report card or something. They don't know you as individuals. I know they don't have a lot of time, but they need to help us through these disagreements and things we're not used to dealing with."

Several inmates suggested that the structure of the program could be modified to accommodate differences of opinion among the inmates and staff. The ensuing discussions would be helpful for understanding the points being made. At this point, a

common complaint is that inmates who ask questions or attempt to engage in a discussion of an issue are cut off and they feel that the discussion would help them understand the points being made in class. They would make room in the program for such discussions.

Differing responses. The Withdraw group is the only one to discuss the length of the program. They want it shortened by length and amount of time it takes per day "I would just cut the class hours down." Graduates were more focused on release and indicated that there was not enough material regarding preparation for life in the community. They suggested that the RePac program (which focuses on release planning) be amplified and more focus put on it than currently exists. The change to the community is particularly difficult so the graduates have recommended that Spectrum have a program in the community to offer transitional housing to facilitate the difficult process of readjusting in the community.

Topic: Program materials and their presentation

Common responses. Inmates participants seemed very positive about the information provided. One inmate tried to identify specific pieces " Yes, especially some of the handouts: 'Time out from the river of life' and 'Climbing the slippery mountain.' Those weren't the exact names, but something like that, and I thought they were really good. Others agreed that the material was professionally presented. Inmates were also very positive about the use of homework. One individual expressed commonly held feelings about homework "Spectrum gave me something am to hold on to for the rest of my life, including both the homework and the literature. What I wrote for the homework – those were my inner most thoughts."

Differing responses. There were no differences among groups regarding this problem. Most inmates were very positive about the materials provided and that they created.

Topic: Perceived changes in behavior attributed to the program

Common responses When asked how has their behavior changed, the graduates and current participants all indicated that they were much more positive about things. "I always look for the positive in a situation now, no matter what I can find it. I can figure out how to assign blame for situations constructively." Others expressed an ability to relate to themselves and others. "I learned to open up, to be free to express myself." "I have been unable to ask anyone for help. I didn't ask for help, but now I am not afraid to ask someone for help." Other inmates expressed ability to deal with things and communicate in an honest fashion. "Spectrum gave me the tools to look at everything I had dealt with in the past and put everything on the table."

Differing responses Individuals in the Withdraw group insisted that their behavior changed a little after participating in the program. While all of the graduates and most of the currently enrolled inmates were clear about the changes, the withdraw group suggested that their limited participation had some effect on their behavior. But "I still have some negative things I do, but that's how I deal with things- by clowning around." Members of the graduate committee responded to this line of questioning by suggesting that they were motivated to continue their recovery by observing the experiences of those

going through the program. They claimed that the graduate program was particularly helpful for their own recovery, as do other graduates (both in and out of the graduate committee) who continue in other programs, including the Talbot program.

Topic: Comparisons with other programs

Common responses. Only three inmates provided responses one about the current Talbot program and the other regarding the Marathon program that existed prior to the Spectrum program. According to an inmate who has done both programs, "the Marathon program is more spiritually based while Spectrum is more about the tools you need in your everyday life, and more informational stuff." The Talbot program was described as covering much of the same material as the Spectrum program but they do it differently. Another inmate indicated that Spectrum was different because "it is real" as opposed to fluff. "In Spectrum you have to work to keep up. You cannot get by without staying active."

Differing responses There were no systematic differences among the groups.

Topic: Perceived reason why participants return to prison

Common responses. Graduates were the most articulate on this subject. They identified several factors that are barriers to a successful return to the community. Inmates agreed that "It is hard to be alone and out there on your own." Another respondent suggested that the program is fine but that the environment overwhelms the effects of treatment. "I think the program's still with them. They just maybe don't use it enough, especially when they're used to having other people around them to talk about the program all the time."

Differing responses. Most other inmates had no idea why individuals return to prison. When asked, the current sample indicated that the likelihood that they would complete the program was very high (many said 100%) and most were optimistic that their program participation would lead to a successful return to the community.

Topic: Future participation in programs.

Common Responses: Most of the respondents agreed that they would participate in treatment in the future. In fact, several of the graduates in the committee are enrolled in the Talbot program. Few of the graduates outside of the graduate committee participated in programs. Even one member of the program withdrawal group recently re-enrolled in the Spectrum program.

Differing responses: It was clear that more of the graduate committee members were engaged in or plan to enter additional substance abuse treatment programs than were graduates who did not enter the graduate program. While one member of the withdrawal group had already re-enrolled in the Spectrum program, others indicated that they didn't see the need for themselves ("That's something I have to think about. I'm not sure.").

PROPERTY OF
National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS)
Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000