



Recidivism Reduction Programs

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Various skill sets are needed from leaders and employees to implement correctional intervention programs. Leadership trickles from the top down within organizations and it is imperative to have the correct leadership in place to run successful programs. Staff must be trained in a proper way and program evaluation needs to be conducted on a regular basis to ensure the success of a correctional intervention program.



For any type of program within correctional institutions, proper training needs to be completed to implement a recidivism reduction program. Leadership starts from the top down; if leaders within an organization are not vested into programs within an institution, this mentality will trickle down throughout all ranks within the institution. When this occurs, this impacts the offenders who are to be rehabilitated and it also impacts the staff and the quality of work that they are performing.

The transition from corrections to the community is considered a potentially important juncture for individuals who are exiting a correctional facility; it can be problematic that so little is known about how the criminal justice system can best tailor interventions to take advantage of this critical stage to ensure a successful transition into the community (Willison and Davis, 2006). According to White (2007), the field of corrections has access to models and tools that demonstrate how to reduce recidivism and to contribute to furthering public safety. These evidenced based practices and modules do exist but are not being utilized. Changes require staff to reconsider the old and familiar ways that have been done; while doing this, it can make many uncomfortable within an organization. Recidivism reduction programs are an important part of the rehabilitative process according to Wilson and Davis (2006); somewhere between 90% and 95% of offenders who serve a incarcerated term will eventually return to the community.

Leadership in Corrections

Leadership is a quality that some naturally possess. Having the ability to lead a group of employees and having these employees buy into a vision can be a powerful tool. This along with the ability to delegate

can be powerful when trying to achieve objectives. Edwin Catmull, the president of Disney Animation, once said, "Leadership is not driving the train, it's laying the track." Leaders should be putting forth the ideas and the foundations of a program, while it is the staff who should be performing the programs. Power and influence require a skill in decision making and getting things done. Successful implementation of a program requires an understanding of how to negotiate through a maze of interest and convincing those who represent other interests of the value of a goal so they can support your goal (Correctional Leadership, n.d.).

According to White, (2007) a leader must make the commitment to do the following:

- Create an organizational culture that facilitates and reinforces recidivism reduction activities and encourages and supports evidence-based practices.
- Realize that changing organizational culture such as values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior occurs through positive modeling and positive reinforcement. Training, practice, while rewarding responses that you want to see. The evidence is clear that in the long run, mandating or forcing staff into compliance does not work.

If a leader does not make these commitments, the program(s) will have a high tendency to fail. Research has shown that if the staff believes in the success of an idea in the workplace, then the idea is more likely to succeed. As leaders, the creed must match the deeds; incongruence between what a leader says and does will not only earn them a condemnation for their hypocrisy but will also derail efforts to promote the change in which way they profess to believe (White, 2007).

Employee Training in Corrections

According to Glick and Prince (2016), organizations should hire full time trainers, coaches, and mentors to provide support and help develop staff proficiency for a new program; the training component is the step that is concrete for staff development and is the easiest to accomplish. Strategic planning is the process of organizing and defining goals for future and current needs in the workplace; after this, planning how to recruit and/or develop a workforce that is capable of implementing and achieving goals is the priority (Recruit Develop and Retain Staff, n.d.). There is a large commitment of resources to recruit and train new employees; these commitments include a financial and time commitment. There can also be hidden costs of training new hires, such as the cost of instruction materials, equipment, and time for the formal training, the cost of a mentor's time, and the loss of productivity until the new hires master the job. (Taylor, 2018). According to Recruit Develop and Retain Staff (n.d.), in order to recruit, retain, and develop staff, an organized plan that addresses each aspect should be developed based on a strategic plan; in workforce development, planning strategies and goals are clearly defined, and the specific intentions and functions are outlined.

According to Taylor (2018), to calculate the cost of training a new employee, one would need to add the cost of the hidden and obvious factors and then add the annual salary of the new hire. There is the same cost associated with the training of current employees when implementing a program. The most common way for employers to protect their investment in employee training has been to encourage loyalty through job satisfaction (Kraus, 1993). Most organizations are experienced in methods of delivering training,

but there is a gap between what is learned and what is applied and practiced (Glick and Prince 2016). This gap needs to be filled by continued education training sessions on best practices being applied.

Program Evaluation in Corrections

A leader of an organization or agency must perform a program evaluation. Once a program is implemented and staff is properly trained, the program needs to be continuously evaluated. Program evaluation is a key component to assessing the success or failure of a program. Program evaluation is important to all staff, as it provides objective, observable, and concrete information regarding if a program is working as designed and implemented (Glick and Prince 2016). Staff need to know if the work that they are performing is successful for re-entry for the offenders.

Process evaluation can also be referred to as a formative evaluation, and targets how well programs are delivered to a client, and whether the program was implemented is in accordance with the program design, ensuring integrity and fidelity (Glick and Prince 2016). Process evaluation is a good tool to use when ensuring success for program implementation. Stakeholders oftentimes mandate the type of evaluations that are conducted within an agency, based on what the perceived needs of the system are, and if there is merit to using either when evaluating programs; a comprehensive program evaluation should include both process and outcome methodologies (Glick and Prince 2016).

A program evaluation begins with an assessment of the needs being measured. This assessment involves a review of the objectives of a program, the outcomes that are expected as a result of the treatment

intervention, and then a consensus among staff as to what variables are important to explore (Glick and Prince 2016). This process continues with data collection, data analysis, and interpretation, and finishes with a written report. Program evaluation needs to be completed to ensure the program is covering the principles required. Correctional intervention literature has identified a group of principles that determine effective correctional treatment programs. According to Wilson and Davis (2006), these principles are: (1) treatment should address dynamic risk factors; (2) programs should employ cognitive-behavioral, skills orientated, or multimodal treatment approached; (3) interventions should focus on the needs of the participant; (4) treatment interventions should be implemented appropriately and in a well-supported manner.

Organizations should set aside the correct resources that are needed to completely implement a new program in an evidence based manner (Glick and Prince 2016). Often time resources are scarce in government organizations who are being asked to do more with less funding. When implementing a new program there will be a need to review current practices, caseload sizes, policies, and procedures to align all the areas to fit the philosophy and vision suggested from implementing the new program (Glick and Prince 2016). The philosophy and vision of a program is crucial for a correctional institution. If the philosophy and vision do not align, the program is set up to fail. When a program fails, this affects the system at large, it has a ripple down effect through the court system and the institution that impacts staff and ultimately impacts the offender. This also has an effect on the community and recidivism rates, as mentioned a goal of the criminal justice system to successfully rehabilitate offenders

and close the revolving door. An offender should be leaving a facility with the tools that are needed to be successful in society so that they do not reoffend and reenter an institution.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are a lot of issues within the criminal justice and corrections systems. Leadership development and staff training is something that can be easily controlled and addressed if needed as this is a controllable dynamic. As mentioned, the proper leader needs to be in place and have a plan of action to achieve the rehabilitative goals of the correctional system. Once the leader is in place, the institutional staff needs to see the vision of the leader and help to institute this vision. The staff needs to be properly trained to implement a recidivism reduction program. Once these programs are implemented, there needs to be a defined evaluation process to analyze the success or failure of programs. This will help meet one of the ultimate goals of the criminal justice system, which is the rehabilitation and the rehabilitation process.

When new programs are being implemented, current programs need to be assessed as well, this will help ensure that there is no overlap in programs and all programs are working to meet the goals set forth. In today's era of government agencies, funding is an issue; it is hard to achieve the mission and goal of an agency or organization without the proper funding. Grant funding is being used to fund a majority of rehabilitative programs. The problem with this is that grant funding eventually goes away and the burden to fund programs shifts. This becomes an issue for governing bodies that have to decide to continue funding a program. The program evaluation aspect will play an essential role in this. An agency

will have program evaluations to present to the governing body to show the success of a rehabilitation program that may help the funding continue for programs within a correctional institution. ■

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