

STAFFING THE SHOCK: ENABLING, TRAINING, AND PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES FOR HIGH-IMPACT INCARCERATION PROGRAMS

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The question posed...is intended to expose the absurdity of the “nothing works” formula; “Nothing” is meaningless, and “works” is only considered in terms of recidivism. The time is right for a new generation of evaluations of penal initiatives which leave behind the sterile debates and re-hashing of the same research findings associated with “Nothing Works.” G. Mair

Plagued by the one-dimensional override of *recidivism* as the culminating factor measuring program success, researchers continue to lock-step in the quantitative camp. What is recidivism? Why are correctional programs solely measured via this factor?

It is pure logic to expand the analysis of recidivism to include the role of the community: Recidivism says more to us about society as a whole than about prisons. Recidivism is a near worthless concept when it comes to making practical judgments about human beings who are subject to the criminal justice process. There is simply no way of knowing what recidivism rates actually are. The most expertly devised, carefully executed studies are unfailingly shot through with variables and unknown factors. Untold thousands of those who are entered into the statistics as failures (because they return to prison within a prescribed period) eventually succeed in straightening out their lives (Campbell, 1980). The latest NIJ “Boot Camp” Research Report is replete with statements of the incapacity for accurate *recidivism* analysis. Nonetheless, Boot Camps are essentially left to prevail under the stigma of recidivism intervention.

The, June 2003, NIJ Research for Practice, *Correctional Boot Camps: Lessons From a Decade of Research, (NCJ 197018)*, highlights findings from 10 years of data analyzing whether boot camps are successful in reducing recidivism, prison populations, and operating costs. The report found that although boot camps generally had positive effects on the attitudes and behaviors of inmates during confinement, these changes did not translate into reduced recidivism. Programs were often too brief to exert a lasting effect on inmates released to the community and they lacked, as well, a strong treatment model or sufficient preparation for reentry into the community. Boot camps' efforts to achieve multiple goals contributed to conflicting results. For example, lengthening camps so that more treatment programs could be included, which reduced recidivism; also shortened the discount in time served and undercut lower prison bed costs.

The importance of solid staging, packaging and delivery of a training support system within the cyclical programming environment of correctional policy and programs is critical. These training structures enable flexibility for operational exigencies as well as providing a foundation for evaluation and standards compliance. I reintroduce the following “decade old” paper addressing these issues during the nascent movement for high impact (boot camp) correctional programs in the United States in the 1980s.

The extensive interest and expanded programming of high-impact incarceration programs, nationally, brings into focus the important facets of selecting, training, and retaining staff assigned to these programs. High impact incarceration programs consist of a controlled environment of staff-inmate and inmate-inmate interactions. Consequently, high-impact programs must be carefully controlled against excesses and abuse of authority.

Correctional officers and program staff must be carefully screened, selected, and trained in their performance as professional behavioral modification specialists. Staff duty assignment to “shock incarceration” programs requires exceptional forbearance as a role model to both staff and inmates. Staff must be well grounded and centered in the program’s mission and objectives. Staff assigned must possess a personal and professional capacity for attention control and emotional balance, since inter-personal communications (IPC) among boot camp staff and inmates are uniquely and deliberately more concentrated than in regular custodial settings.

The typical “shock program” consists of a demanding regiment operating in a highly competitive environment. While this environment is essential to the program goals, it must be constantly monitored for signs of distorted authority or other features of negative contamination to both staff and inmates. Moreover, a solid high-impact incarceration training program requires continuous evaluation to ensure congruence with training and performance objectives. The standards recently promulgated by the American Correctional Association for *shock-incarceration* programs are essential developmental components. High-impact incarceration will continue to receive scrutiny by both correctional and external bodies in their development as a permanent feature of 21st century correctional programming.

These programs have an excellent track record of a positive individual and peer development during the duration of the program. Many “graduates” have returned to the community eager to continue in their new life-skills mode. However, there are usually sparse supporting aspects in their previous social setting. The negative peer pressure rapidly comes into conflict with the new “graduates” goals. Increasingly, modern day boot camps have initiated structured community follow-up contact with their clients. For example, former participants are invited to return their Boot Camp setting and participate in group discussions, serve as graduate speakers, or more importantly, have an opportunity to vent and receive coaching from their former instructors. These various programs have greatly increased the “survival” for individual graduates.

It is critical that institutional and community corrections practitioners, researchers, and government legislative committees continue to develop community-based “Boot Camp” reinforcement activities. An excellent model may be found in the USO - United Service Organization - a network of “drop-in” centers for armed forces personnel, supporting positive individual adjustment and survival “away from home.”

ENABLING OBJECTIVES

Enabling objectives represent the generalized goal objectives of a comprehensive training program. They must seek to:

1. Explore the concepts of discipline, self-discipline, authority, power and discretion in order to develop a deeper understanding of the role of the correctional officer.
2. Relate those concepts to specific issues of correctional training, classroom management and control, and the overall philosophy and atmosphere of the correctional training environment.
3. Examine and develop the concepts of self-image and self-awareness through reflective insight and relate these elements to those of assertiveness, confidence building, and authority.
4. Apply the principles and theories of adult learning to assist others to learn through the creation of an educationally sound, pleasant, and safe environment.
5. Employ principles of educational technology in designing lesson plans, audio-visual aids, computer based training (e.g. power-point), and training manuals.
6. Apply examples of practical correctional work to training content.
7. Explore the relationship between the correctional officer and the community, including issues related to attitudes, culture, society, and race.
8. Develop correctional officers' interpersonal and problem-solving skills by improving their ability to communicate and listen.
9. Practice reflective listening-skills in helping and counseling role(s) and to develop an empathetic approach.
10. Provide feedback to others regarding performance in a non-threatening manner and provide counseling in the use of video for that purpose.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

Training objectives represent the instructional guidelines and learning objectives of a specific program. They just seek to:

1. Use three types of analysis to identify topics suitable for a course.
2. Specify overall objectives and supporting sub-objectives for the course topics.
3. Construct criterion test items that match the objectives.
1. Select learning materials and activities that match the objectives and the trainee's needs.
2. Modify existing materials and activities to avoid "reinventing the wheel."
3. Recognize when to design and produce additional materials and activities not existing.
4. Plan strategies for harnessing the motivation of the trainee.
5. Plan for the evaluation and revision of the course.
6. List and describe the components that should be present in a comprehensive leader's guide.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

Performance objectives represent the on-the-job application of training content. They must seek to:

1. Ensure that the skills and tasks of the job function are accurately reflected in the application of the training course delivered to support the job function.
2. Ensure that the evaluation of job performance includes measurable tasks and objectives related to the unit and the larger agency mission.
3. Ensure that a feedback system exists that accurately indicates changes and adjustments in the job function in order to maintain accuracy in entry and post-entry training programs.

Haas (1978) clearly illustrates that the pragmatic usage of the above objectives is contingent on a well-conducted job task analysis. The job task analysis must seek to do the following:

- ✍ Identify all jobs in the agency or system
- ✍ Compile a list of duties for each job
- ✍ Compile a list of tasks for each duty
- ✍ Describe the steps necessary to complete each task
- ✍ Assign characteristics to each task or step
- ✍ Aggregate the characteristics and analyze them for training implications

The steps in each task above will vary depending on how large the department is and whether the program is line or management-level-training. As an exercise for applying the concepts covered, it is useful to describe the steps for each of the six tasks above. (These steps can be rewritten within the respective *context* of high-impact (Boot Camp) incarceration program content and control.)

The results of task analysis can help measurably in several areas. In sequencing instruction, the task should be taught as nearly as possible to the way it occurs on the job, making it easier for the trainee to apply the new knowledge or skill. In designing a curriculum, if a particular attitude or skill shows up repeatedly, spanning a large number of tasks, training specifically in that attitude or skill should occur. Moreover, you can more easily decide which task should be covered in pre-service training, in-service, and on-the-job training (OJT). Task lists can also be easily converted into OJT guides for use by the trainer in keeping track of trainee progress during OJT and assuring performance evaluation criteria. If it is clear from the analysis that a given task can be performed in a certain amount of time and at a certain level of accuracy, employee performance evaluations are made more objective and congruent.

THE NATION'S MOST EFFECTIVE MODELS

In 1989, the National Institute of Justice issued a national survey report on high-impact incarceration programs. Four effective models were cited: New York's Camp Monterey Shock Incarceration Facility, Oklahoma's Regimented Inmate Discipline (RID) Program and Mississippi's Regimented Inmate Discipline Programs (Parent 1989).

The New York program is a highly integrated network concept of military discipline, physical training, education, counseling, and positive peer interaction. The program was also instituted at the Riker's Island Complex of the New York City Department of Correction, the world's largest municipal detention service. It is important to draw on the vast knowledge of the correctional officer corps and other professionals in developing high-impact incarceration programs.

The growing body of research in the use of discretion by correctional officers is an excellent and rich base for substantiating selection of staff assigned to these programs. The early studies by Duffee (1974) identified the quality of institutions' correctional environment in relation to the attitudes of officers toward the stated objectives of the correctional agency as a whole. This operationalization of the organizational environment used two primary factors: formal structures used by the organization to manage inmates; and, the collective attitudes of correctional officers toward inmates. This resulted in significant co-variation between the type of institution and the attitude of staff toward their work.

The research by Gilbert (1990) provided a base of data relevant to selecting "shock" staff as well as training program considerations. Gilbert cited the necessity for monitoring the informal content that reflects inherent behavioral qualities of instructors and staff in training programs. This is the key to the success of any high-impact incarceration venture. As Gilbert states, "This dramatically points out the need for careful selection, training, monitoring and evaluation of instructors, especially those instructors within specialized training programs – e.g. behavioral modification." (Gilbert 1990).

The inmate population of most of the existing high-impact incarceration programs consists of streetwise young offenders who are just entering the system and have never seen the inside of a maximum-security prison. This highly distilled target population group offered many challenges and opportunities in the on-going development of boot camps and related programs.

New York's six-month shock program includes 500 hours of physical training as well as 546 hours of the therapeutic (12 Steps to Recovery) approach to treating addiction based on the Network program of both Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous. It also included 20 mandatory hours of academic education and 650 hours of hard labor, working on facility projects, community service work, and projects in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Conservation. Of the nine high-impact programs surveyed nationally, New York was the only one where both officer and program staff are required to undergo one month of shock-type training before inmates arrived (Coughlin 1990). In addition, the program included an intensive therapeutic community approach to *habilitation*; inmate graduates underwent a full year of intensified parole follow-up.

With this solid perspective of the New York State “shock program” control, it is clear how important the categories of program, training, and performance objectives become. Trainees (both staff and inmates) not only need but have a right to know exactly what is expected of them, why they were being asked to perform certain activities, how to proceed, and how they would know when they had achieved the objectives. Under these conditions, they were more likely to successfully achieve the stated program objectives.

In addition, this prevents perceptions that the trainer had some “hidden agenda” that they must try to discover. This is the essential context of training-content that precludes the eventual success of any program at the operational level.

The above sample categories of enabling training and performance objectives are especially significant in relation to the application of behavior science training for both staff and inmates. Finally, the extensive body of case law regarding *vicarious liability* for correctional programming and training further substantiates the need for careful program development. These objectives are essential guidelines for sustaining effective high-impact incarceration programs.

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