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INSIGHTS

Offender Preparation & Education Network, Inc.

DRC — District Resource Centers Defined

by Desiree Hernandez, DRC Program Administrator

Often referred to as "one stop shopping," District Resource Centers provide a highly structured, education-directed supervision program created with the intent to improve the offenders' social and living skills. First implemented in San Antonio, Texas in 1994, by the Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice/Parole Division, the program targets high-risk offenders who have been unable to complete prior supervision periods. The DRC accomplishes its goal of altering criminal behavior by requiring offenders to participate in a comprehensive group of counseling and educational programs designed to promote personal growth and responsibility.

Upon leaving the Institutional Division to return to their legal county of residence, in areas where a DRC exists offenders will report to that center within 24 hours of their release. Once there they go through intake where they are assessed, placed on a DRC Caseload or a Regular Supervision Caseload and referred to appropriate programming based on the assessment.

DRC caseload ratios are maintained at 25 offenders to one parole officer. These caseloads require a minimum of three face-to-face contacts a month with at least one of those contacts being in the offender's home. Additional collateral contacts are also required and these may be with anyone in the offender's immediate circle of support. There are approximately 48 parole officers supervising caseloads in ten DRCs throughout Texas—with more than 1200 offenders supervised monthly.

A distinguishing feature of the DRC is the emphasis placed on heightened offender accountability for overall supervision compliance and program participation. Compliance is monitored through a Rapid Response System and DRC officers are assigned to attempt face-to-face contact with the offender within 24 hours of an alleged problem or reported program non-compliance. Once contacted the offender is counseled, verbally reprimanded and/or scheduled for a case conference with a Unit Supervisor. Depending on the severity and frequency of the situation appropriate interventions are utilized.

After assessing the offenders' needs, referrals

are made for appropriate programming at the DRC. With the focus on Cognitive Intervention, four basic core areas are addressed: Substance Abuse, Employment, Education and Life Skills. Services are provided by trained Parole staff, highly valued volunteers, community agencies and contracted vendors.

Cognitive restructuring and cognitive skill development

Our main cognitive program, Turning Point for Parole, has been adapted for parole by Program Specialist Dr. Virginia Ross. "It is based on research regarding the effectiveness of various programs designed to reduce recidivism through cognitive restructuring and cognitive skill development. Cognitive restructuring helps offenders examine and change the thinking that leads to criminal behavior. Cognitive skill development is necessary to help offenders learn pro-social thinking skills in order to cope with and reduce anger and anxiety and to increase communication and problem solving skills." (*Windham School District (1997)*,

(continued on page 2)

***The new edition of
99 Days is here!!!***

**And please note that our prices and
discounts have changed.
See Back Page for details.**

Turning Point Facilitators Manual, Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Unpublished).

Since developing skill in anything takes time and practice, homework assignments are an essential component of the TPP program. Students are only considered to have completed the course if they have: actively participated in and attended 90% of the total hours of the course; received facilitator acknowledgement of successful program completion; and completed the pre- and post-tests.

Substance Abuse Education and Support Groups

These are the most highly utilized programs in the DRCs. The education groups provide the basics on relapse prevention, chemical dependency, the disease concept, defense mechanisms, triggers, the importance of maintaining contact with sponsors, alternative ways to deal with stress, nutrition, and other related issues. Support groups vary in topic, content and leadership. Faith-based programs, led by dedicated volunteers, continue to grow in popularity. These scripture-based educational groups center on understanding and overcoming addiction. Topics range from personal development, managing emotions, goal setting and forsaking bad habits. Attendance in faith-based programs is voluntary and family members are often invited to participate. Verification for compliance is the same as for all other DRC substance abuse programs.

Project for Reintegration of Offenders

The DRC is fortunate to have Project RIO presenters at orientations for new arrivals or at separately scheduled presentations. Project RIO is the acronym for Project for Reintegration of Offenders. A Memorandum of Understanding is in place

RECOMMENDED READING

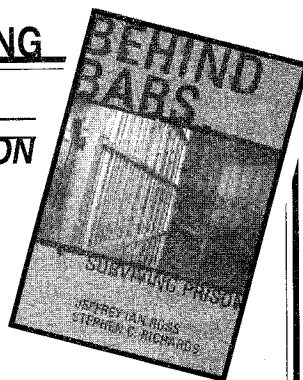
BEHIND BARS:

SURVIVING PRISON

by Dr. Stephen C. Richards and Jeffrey Ian Ross, is written for the general public. The writers discuss what to do if arrested, convicted of a crime, and sent to jail or prison.

The authors know their business. Jeffrey Ian Ross is a criminal justice professor and former correctional worker. Stephen C. Richards is a criminology professor and exconvict.

Their book should be read by every person involved with courts, jail and prisons. The book is available at book stores and through www.amazon.com or www.barnes&noble.com. For more information, contact Dr. Richards at richardsnku@cinci.rr.com.



between the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), TDCJ and the Texas Youth Commission "to effect a reduction in recidivism by facilitating the transition of targeted offenders into employment." Designated staff in TWC Workforce Development centers serve as Project RIO contacts to provide planning for program development, job search facilitation and interviewing preparation. Additional programs are offered by community agencies and parole staff with training in employment search.

Educational Services

Another Memorandum of Understanding exists between the TDCJ and the Texas Education Agency "to provide educational services to released offenders and to identify resources that assist adult education cooperatives in expanding services for these offenders." Education programs in the DRCs consist of GED classes, Adult Basic Education classes to reduce illiteracy, English as a Second Language and Individual Tutoring.

Life Skills Classes

These classes are focused on enabling offenders to make informed decisions, gain confidence, and become more aware of the implications their actions have on themselves and others. They teach positive alternatives in parenting, anger management, nutrition and budgeting. They help build on each person's self-esteem and assertiveness while developing an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of every citizen. Facilitators provide role models and give information on organizations to which offenders can turn for additional guidance and support. The most significant life skills class is the Victim Impact Panel Class for Offenders. This program is adapted from one written by Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the California Youth Authority. Resource Operations Managers in Houston have written lesson plans and adapted the program to fit parole specifications.

Family and Children Enhancement Services

This latest Specialized Programs initiative is closely patterned after Michigan's Project Seek and our previous Family Support Program. Titled F.A.C.E.S. (Family and Children Enhancement Services), it has been designed to promote social competency, cognitive development, emotional well-being, physical well-being, and family stability for children of Institutional Division offenders with a sentence of two years or less and children of offenders released on Parole or Mandatory Supervision. Participation in the F.A.C.E.S. program is voluntary. Children may be included if the offender claims parenthood whether or not the offender normally resides with the family.

Vendors have been contracted to provide counseling and referral services designed to reduce the probability that the

(continued on page 3)

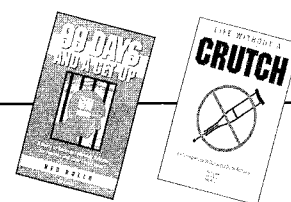
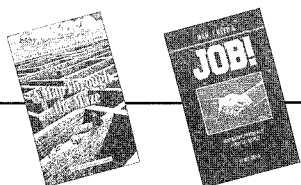
children of offenders will participate in delinquent or criminal activities and to break the intergenerational cycle of criminal behavior. The F.A.C.E.S. program vendors will assess the needs of the offender, caregivers and children and make placements to appropriate groups based on those needs. Vendors must be flexible to meet the needs of the families. They will facilitate groups and individual sessions, conduct home counseling as needed and act as advocates to promote family stability for children.

The F.A.C.E.S. Program does not replace DRC programming. It is an additional service for offenders who need even more than the DRC can offer, and it involves their family members on a more intimate level.

Once the designated programs are completed satisfactorily,

offenders are recognized with a graduation ceremony. DRC staff plan ceremonies and/or receptions to which offenders may invite family members. Refreshments are served and city officials, DRC program facilitators, parole officers and Community Participatory Council members are invited to speak. Offenders receive certificates of completion and the much-needed recognition they deserve. They may receive other positive rewards, such as verbal praise, bus tokens, a letter of recognition and reassessment to a lesser level of supervision. For some offenders, this is the first positive recognition they have ever received.

For more information you may contact Program Administrator Desiree Hernandez, Parole Division-Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Specialized Programs (512) 406-5750.



Information Series

Life Without a Crutch (Overcoming Dependency)

Positive encouragement on every page! Provides compelling reasons to confront dependency and overcome self-surrender. An ideal introduction to any recovery or reentry program, no matter what the addiction or treatment method. Motivates the reader to accept and confront the influence of dependency in his or her life. (69 pages)

Handbook....\$7.95 single copy

Man, I Need a Job! (Employment)

Designed specifically for people with a criminal record! Reaches beyond traditional job search techniques, helping offenders successfully disclose their legal history and conquer fear of rejection. A strong motivational tool covering traditional job search procedures along with coping skills needed to overcome stigma in the workplace. The most focused and cost-effective employment guide in the industry! (74 pages)

Handbook....\$7.95 single copy

Spanish: ¡Necesito Empleo! (Trabajo)

The same practical advice offered in the English edition, professionally translated into Spanish. This book will help Hispanic offenders find a job and develop a successful role in community life. (75pages)

Handbook....\$7.95 single copy

Man, I Need a Job!

Full length audio version of *Man, I Need a Job!* handbook. 2-tape set runs 3 hours. Ideal reinforced learning for non-readers and for use in classroom discussion.

Audio (2-tape set)....\$19.95

Life Without a Crutch

Full length audio version of *Life Without a Crutch* handbook. 2-tape set runs 3 hours. Ideal reinforced learning for non-readers and for use in classroom discussion.

Audio (2-tape set)....\$19.95

99 Days and A Get Up (Reentry)

New edition of the most widely used reentry handbook in America. A powerful guide to successful social and emotional transition from prison into the community. This candid but compassionate handbook leads offenders and their loved ones through the turbulent period before and after release, helping establish a sense of perspective and control, thus reducing stress, fear, and "short pains." Revised and expanded to cover the last six months pre-release and the first six months post-release, *99 Days* gives honest, direct advice for dealing with the major barriers ex-offenders must overcome to achieve long-term success. (3rd edition, 88 pages)

Handbook....\$9.95 single copy

A Map Through the Maze (Orientation)

Nothing empowers like the big picture! This psycho-social map of the correctional experience documents predictable social and emotional stages for positive use of incarceration, overcoming alienation and rage, and encouraging personal growth. Includes compassionate advice for families and loved ones. Ideal for inmate orientation as well as a wide range of life skills and social development programming. (119 pages)

Handbook....\$9.95 single copy

Preparing for Success

An introduction to the issues affecting success following release - ideal attention-getter for pre-release programming and a prelude to the book *99 Days and A Get Up*. Looks at real people discussing real feelings.

Video....\$79.95