

Eight Evidence-Based Principles For Effective Interventions

- 1. Assess Actuarial Risk/Need.** Sound assessment that identifies dynamic (those that change) and static risk factors (those that cannot change) is the cornerstone of effective correctional intervention. If risks and needs are not properly identified and prioritized, appropriate interventions and services cannot be delivered. Additional risk tools are needed to provide information about specialized populations such as substance abuse, domestic violence etc.
- 2. Enhance Intrinsic Motivation.** Using motivational enhancement techniques, as opposed to direct persuasion or nondirective counseling, can help build intrinsic motivation in offenders. This is instrumental in initiating and maintaining behavior change.
- 3. Target Interventions.** Prioritize supervision and treatment resources for higher risk offenders. Target interventions that address criminogenic needs. Be responsive to temperament, learning style, motivation, gender and culture when assigning an offender to a program. Structure 40-70% of the high risk offenders' time for a 3-9 month period of time. Integrate treatment into the sentence requirements and create an individualized approach for each offender.
- 4. Skill Train with Directed Practice.** Provide evidence-based programming that emphasizes cognitive-behavioral strategies and is delivered by well trained staff. To successfully deliver this treatment to offenders, agencies must understand antisocial thinking, social learning, and appropriate communication techniques. Skills are not just **taught** to the offender, but are practiced or role-played and the resulting pro-social attitudes and behaviors are positively reinforced by staff.
- 5. Increase Positive Reinforcement.** When learning new skills and behaviors, people respond better to positive rather than negative reinforcement. Research suggests a ratio of 4 positive reinforcements for each negative. It is also important to note that even when applied sporadically, positive reinforcements are more effective than negative reinforcements.
- 6. Engage Ongoing Support in Natural Communities.** Realigning offenders with pro-social support systems in their communities is critical for sustained behavior change. Attitudes and behaviors are strongly reinforced in one's daily living situation. Therefore, involvement of significant others, spouses, friends, employers, any one who is pro-social will increase the chance of long term positive effects.
- 7. Measure Relevant Process and Practice.** Accurate and detailed documentation of outcomes is the foundation of evidence-based practice. Agencies must routinely assess offender change in cognitive and skill development and evaluate offender recidivism, if services are to remain effective.
- 8. Provide Measurement Feedback.** An overarching quality assurance system is necessary to monitor delivery of services and maintain and enhance fidelity and integrity. Providing feedback builds accountability and is associated with enhanced motivation for change, lower treatment attrition and greater outcomes (e.g. reduced drink/drug days; treatment engagement; goal achievement)