

An Evaluation of Selected Juvenile Justice Programs in Ohio Using the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory[©]

Final Report

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INTRODUCTION

In 1997, the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services provided funding to the Division of Criminal Justice at the University of Cincinnati to assess juvenile justice programs across the State. Specifically, this project had one primary objective: to assess the “quality” of selected juvenile justice programs using the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI).

In order to examine the “program quality” of juvenile justice programs in Ohio, a total of 28 programs were selected for assessment with the CPAI. All of the programs were funded by either the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services or the Ohio Department of Youth Services. A wide range of programs were assessed including those operated by both government and private agencies, institutional and community-based programs (both residential and non-residential),¹ programs serving specific offender populations, such as sex offenders, as well as those serving a more general cross section of delinquent. The programs ranged in size from a group home with eight beds to a diversion program serving over 350 youth at one time. The programs also covered a wide geographic area and included those located in small towns, as well as urban and rural areas. The 28 programs also offered a wide array of services including, but not limited to: drug and alcohol, mental health, school and education, sexual behavior, family counseling, individual counseling, anger management, domestic violence, life skills, and antisocial thinking/attitudes.

¹ The breakdown of programs by type is as follows: 8 residential, 3 day treatment, 2 school based, 3 boot camps, 4 intensive supervision probation, 4 diversion, 2 institutions, and 2 group homes.

THE PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION

Over the past decade there has been renewed interest in examining correctional research. These efforts have been lead by researchers such as Gendreau, Andrews, Cullen, Lipsey, and others.² Much evidence has been generated reaching the conclusion that many rehabilitation programs have in fact produced significant reductions in recidivism. The next critical issue became the identification of those characteristics most commonly associated with effective programs. Through the work of scholars such as Andrews, et al. (1990), and Gendreau (1996), several “principles of effective intervention” have been identified. The following statements summarize these principles of effective intervention:

- Services should be intensive and behavioral in nature, and focused on higher risk offenders.
- Behavioral strategies enforced in a firm but fair manner by qualified staff.
- Programs should target criminogenic needs (e.g. antisocial attitudes, value and beliefs supportive of criminal behavior, negative peer associations, substance abuse, etc.).
- Responsivity should occur between staff, offenders, and programs.
- Programs should disrupt criminal networks.
- Programs should provide relapse prevention in the community.
- High levels of advocacy and brokerage should be provided.

² For a thorough review of this research see: Cullen, F. T. and B. K. Applegate (1998) *Offender Rehabilitation: Effective Correctional Intervention*, Brookfield: Ashgate Dartmouth.

EXAMINING PROGRAM QUALITY

Few would argue that the quality of a correctional intervention program has no effect on outcome. Nonetheless, correctional researchers have largely ignored the measurement of program quality. Traditionally, quality has been measured through process evaluations. This approach can provide useful information about a program's operations; however, these types of evaluations often lack the "quantifiability" of outcome studies. Previously, researchers' primary issue has been the development of criteria or indicators by which a treatment program can be measured. While traditional audits and accreditation processes are one step in this direction, thus far they have proven to be inadequate. For example, audits can be an important means to ensure if a program is meeting contractual obligations or a set of prescribed standards, however, these conditions may not have any relationship to reductions in recidivism. It is also important to note that outcome studies and assessment of program quality are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Combining outcome indicators with assessments of program quality can provide a more complete picture of an intervention's effectiveness (Latessa and Holsinger, 1998). Fortunately, there has been considerable progress in identifying the characteristics of effective programs.

THE CORRECTIONAL PROGRAM ASSESSMENT INVENTORY

The Correctional Program Assessment Inventory was developed by Gendreau and Andrews, 1989, and is a tool used to ascertain how closely a correctional treatment program meets the principles of effective correctional treatment (Gendreau, 1996). There are six primary sections of the CPAI including:

- 1) **Program Implementation:** The first area of the CPAI examines how much influence the current program director³ had in designing and implementing the program, his or her qualifications and experience, their current involvement with the staff and the clients, and the overall implementation of the program.
- 2) **Client Pre-Service Assessment:** The second section of the instrument looks at Client Pre-Service Assessment. Here we examine three areas regarding pre-service assessment: selection of clients, the assessment of risk, need, and personal characteristics of the client; and the manner in which these characteristics are assessed.
- 3) **Program Characteristics:** This section of the CPAI covers almost one-third of the items on the instrument. This area examines whether or not the program targets criminogenic⁴ behaviors and attitudes, the types of treatment used to target these behaviors and attitudes, specific treatment procedures, the use of positive reinforcement and punishment, and methods used to prepare offenders for return to the community. Other important elements of effective intervention include the ratio of rewards to punishment; matching the client's risk, needs, and personal characteristics with the appropriate treatment programs, treatment intensity, and staff; and relapse prevention strategies designed to assist the client anticipating and coping with problem situations.
- 4) **Staff Characteristics:** This staff area of the CPAI concerns the qualifications, experience, stability, training, and involvement of the program staff.

³ Program director refers to the individual responsible for service or treatment delivery. This is not necessarily the administrator of the program.

⁴ Criminogenic needs refer to those areas that are found to be strong predictors of criminal behavior, such as antisocial attitudes, criminal values and beliefs, negative peer associations, etc.

5) Evaluation: The evaluation area centers on the types of quality assurance mechanisms in place, and whether the program has conducted outcome evaluations to monitor how well offenders are performing after they complete the program.

6) Other Items: The final section in the CPAI includes miscellaneous items pertaining to the program such as ethical guidelines, the comprehensiveness of the clients' files, and stability in funding and community support

Each section of the CPAI is scored as either "very satisfactory" (70% to 100%); "satisfactory" (60% to 69%); "satisfactory, but needs improvement" (50% to 59%); or "unsatisfactory" (less than 50%).⁵ The scores from all six areas are totaled and the same scale is used for the overall assessment score. It should be noted that not all of the six areas are given equal weight, and some items may be considered "not applicable," in which case they are not included in the scoring.

Data for the CPAI were collected through structured interviews with selected program staff. Other sources of information included the examination of representative case files and other selected program materials (e.g., assessment tools, treatment curricula). Once the information was collected, each program was scored and a report was generated for each program. For each of the six areas the CPAI report identified the program's strengths, areas that needed improvement, recommendations, ratings and scores. The program also received a total score and a comparison to average scores from other CPAIs.⁶

⁵ The "satisfactory, but needs improvement" category was created because of what we felt were substantial differences between a program that scored in the sixties, and one that scored in the fifties. In actuality, all scores in these ranges need improvement.

⁶ Each of the 28 programs received an individual report. At the time these CPAIs were conducted the average scores were based on 83 CPAIs conducted throughout the United States, and across a wide range of programs.

RESULTS FROM THE OHIO JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAMS

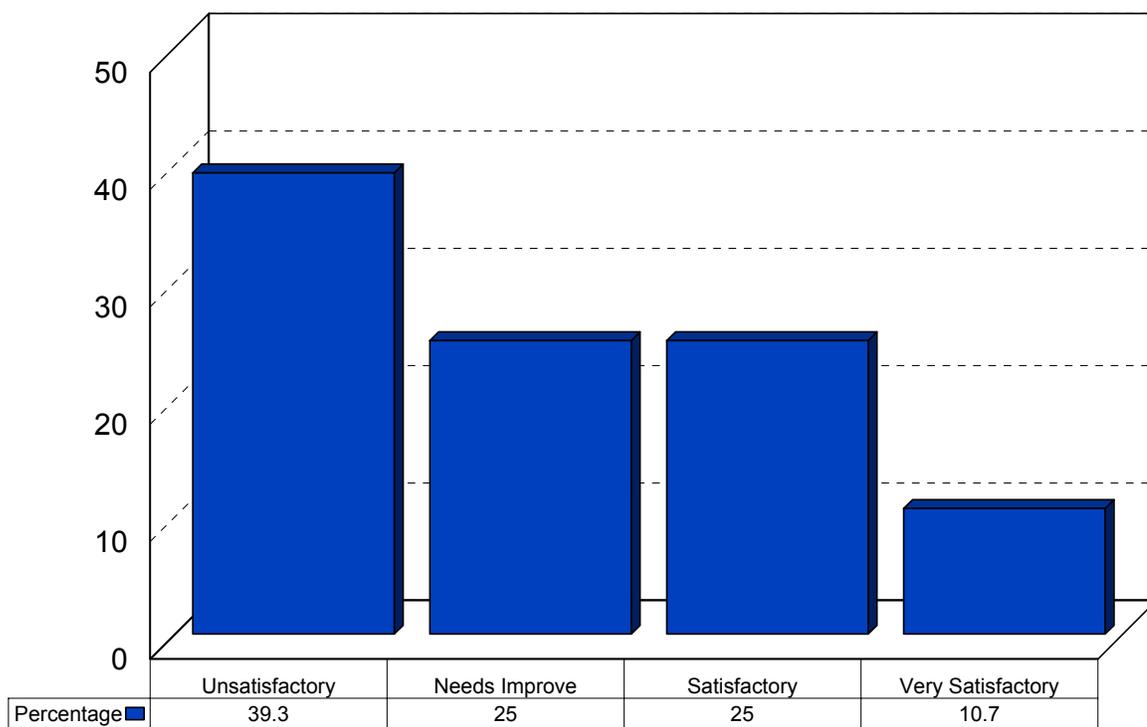
Figure 1 illustrates the Ohio juvenile justice programs by CPAI category. Approximately 39 percent of the programs scored in the “unsatisfactory” range, 25 percent scored “satisfactory but needs improvement”, 25 percent scored “satisfactory”, and 10.7 percent scored in the “very satisfactory” range.⁷ The Ohio juvenile justice programs were also compared to other programs that have been assessed across the country. Figure 2 indicates that when compared to other programs that have been assessed by the CPAI Ohio’s juvenile justice programs are similar. There were slightly more programs in the “unsatisfactory” range for the Ohio programs, and almost identical percentages in the “satisfactory” and “very satisfactory” categories.

Next, the average scores across the six areas and the overall total for the 28 Ohio juvenile justice programs are presented in Figure 3. These results reveal that on average the Ohio programs scored “very satisfactory” in two CPAI areas: program implementation and other. The programs were rated as “satisfactory but needs improvement” in the area of staff and in the overall score. Finally, the programs scored “unsatisfactory” in the areas of assessment, treatment (program characteristics) and evaluation. A comparison of the Ohio and national averages in each of the six areas

⁷ One of the programs that scored in the “very satisfactory” category had been assessed one year earlier and had scored “satisfactory” at that time. Changes in the program resulted in an improvement in the score and moved the program to the next level on the CPAI.

Figure 1

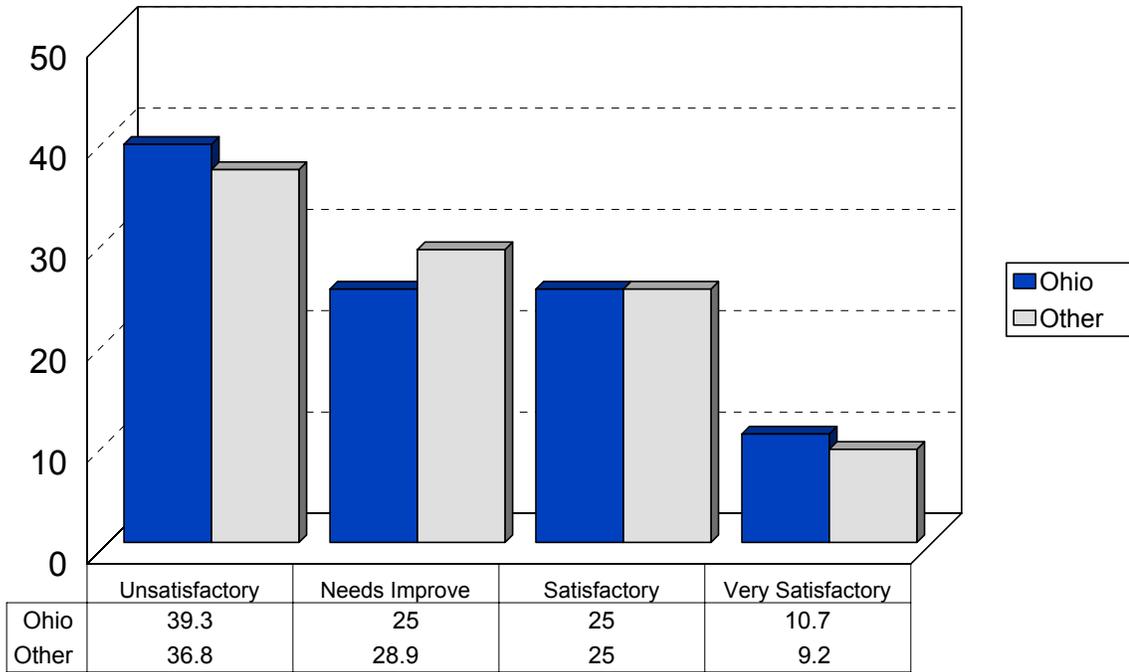
OHIO JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAMS BY CPAI CATEGORY



Based on 28 CPAI assessments across a wide range of programs. Unsatisfactory= less than 50%; Needs Improvement= 50-59%; Satisfactory= 60-69%; Very Satisfactory= 70% or higher.

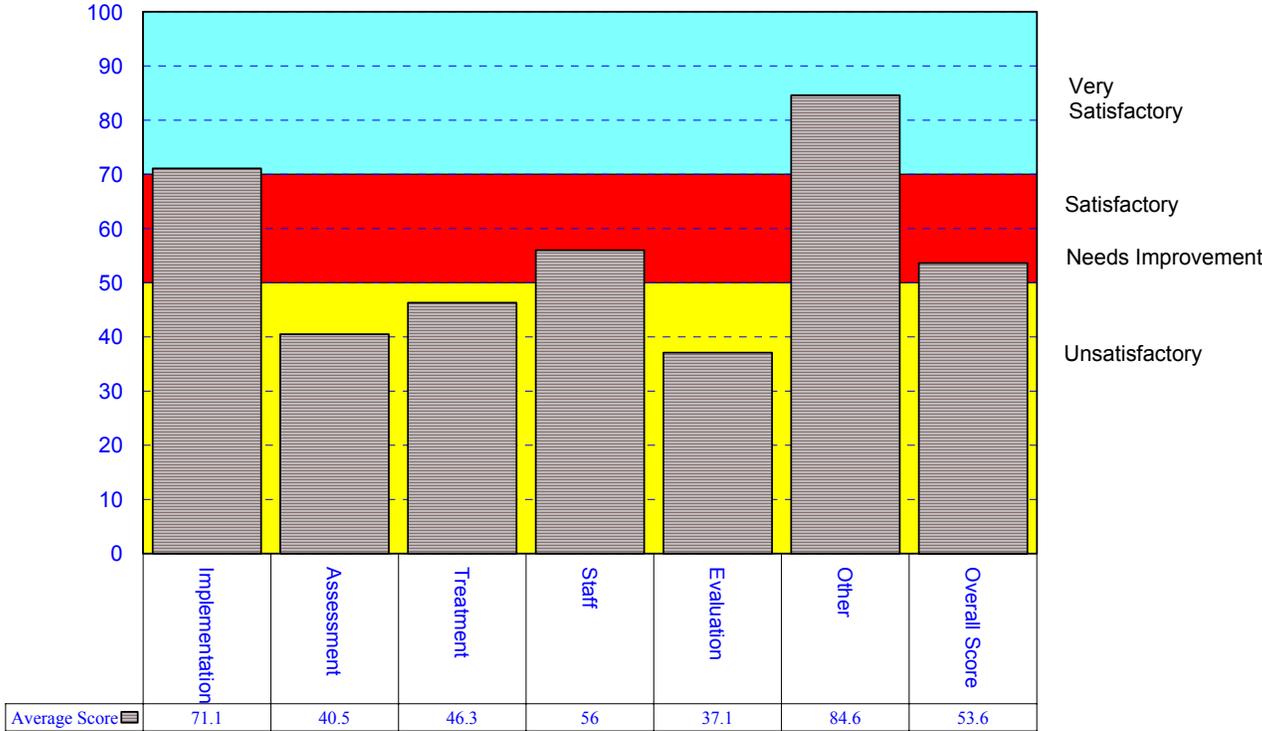
Figure 2

OHIO JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAMS COMPARED TO OTHER PROGRAMS BY CATEGORY



N for Ohio juvenile justice =28 CPAI assessments. N for other program =48 CPAI assessments.

Figure 3
AVERAGE CPAI SCORE IN EACH CATEGORY FOR 28 OHIO JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAMS



The average scores are based on 28 CPAI results across a wide range of programs. Unsatisfactory=less than 50%; Needs Improvement=51-59%; Satisfactory=60-69%; Very Satisfactory=70% or higher.

revealed that the Ohio programs scored slightly lower in the areas of implementation, assessment, and staff, and slightly higher in the area of treatment (Figure 4). Overall, the Ohio scores were very similar to the national average.

The highest and lowest scoring programs are presented in Figures 5 and 6. The highest scoring program was a residential community-based treatment program that serves approximately 20 male youthful offenders who have been adjudicated on a felony offense. The results from the assessment of this program are presented in Figure 5. This program scored 77 percent in the CPAI, which was 23 percent higher than the average Ohio juvenile justice program score. This program was above average in all six areas, and was deemed “very satisfactory” in program implementation, assessment, treatment, and other.

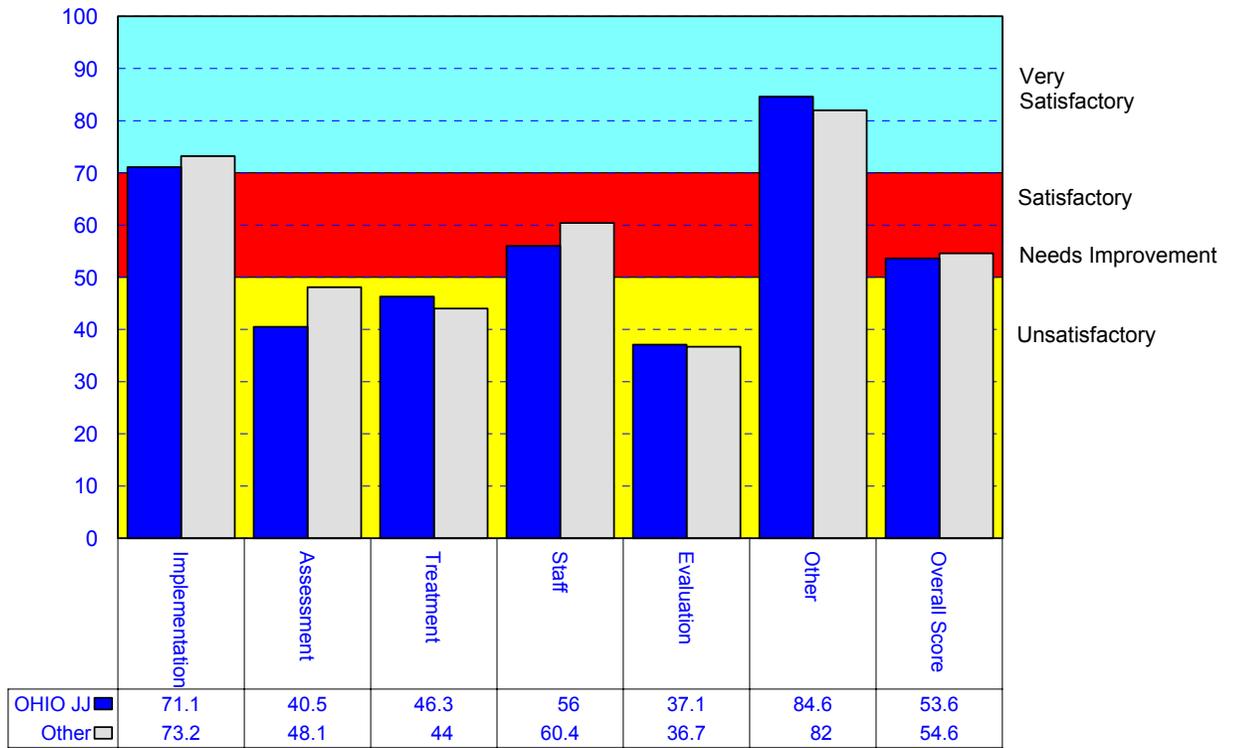
The lowest scoring program was a non-residential boot camp that served both male and female youthful offenders. This program was funded by a local juvenile court. As can be seen in Figure 6, this program scored over 20 percent below average. Furthermore, it was deemed “unsatisfactory” in four of the six areas and barely “satisfactory but needs improvement” in the program implementation area. Overall, this program represents a very low quality of program integrity, and is among the lowest scoring programs found across all programs assessed in the country.

Most Common Shortcomings

The most common shortcomings of the Ohio juvenile justice programs were as follows:

Figure 4

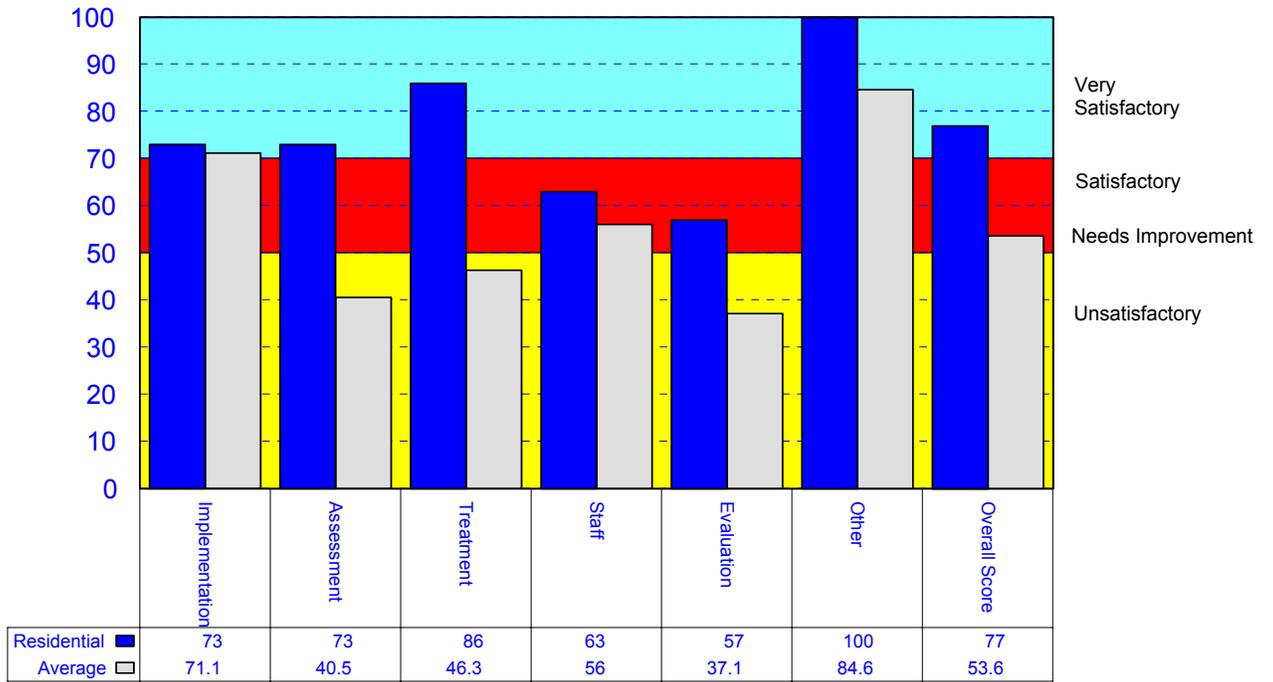
OHIO JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAMS COMPARED TO AVERAGE CPAI SCORES ACROSS OTHER PROGRAMS



The average scores are based on 82 CPAI results across a wide range of programs.

Figure 5

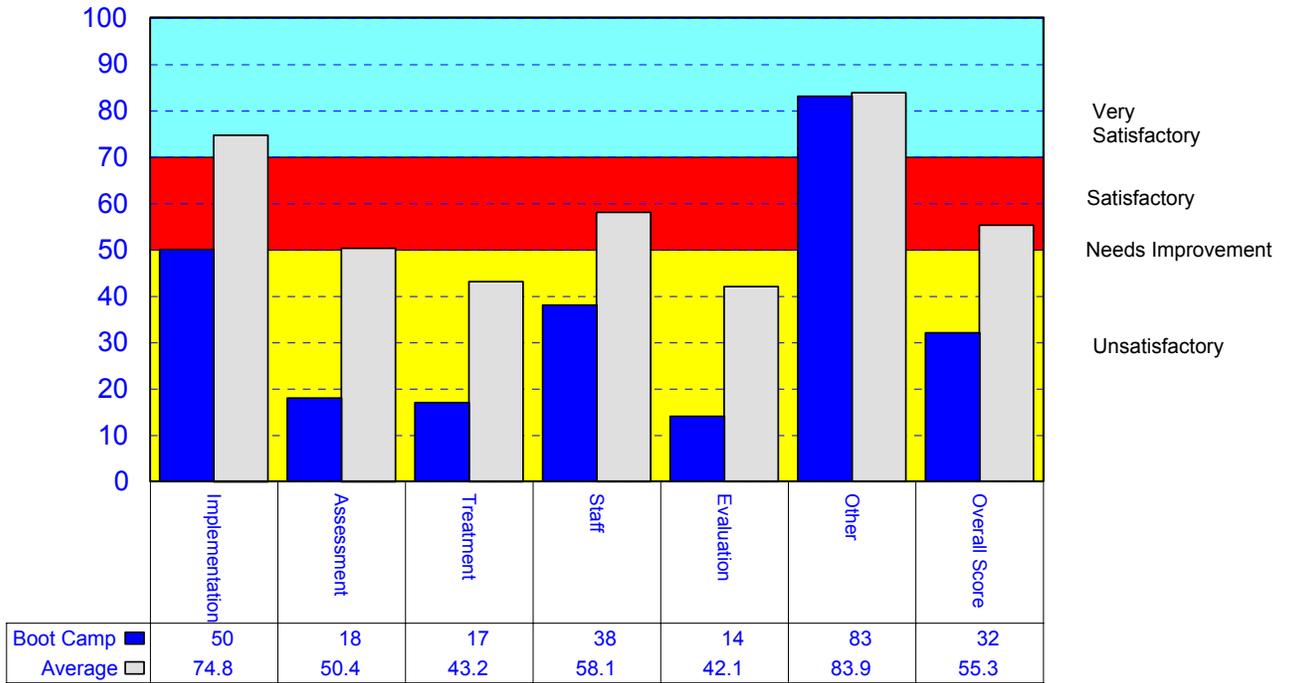
Highest Scoring Program: Residential Community-Based Program Compared to Average Scores from Ohio Juvenile Justice Programs



The average scores are based on the 28 Ohio Juvenile Justice Programs assessed.

Figure 6

Lowest Scoring Program: Non-residential Boot Camp Program Compared to Average Scores from Ohio Juvenile Justice Programs



The average scores are based on 48 CPAI results across a wide range of programs

Many programs tended to be atheoretical. That is, they were designed and implemented without much consideration to the empirical research on what works with the types of offenders the programs were serving.

- There was a general lack of standardized, objective assessment of youth on risk, need, and responsivity characteristics related to delinquent behaviors.
- In some instances we found that while assessments were conducted, essentially everyone received the same treatment.
- There was little attention to responsivity (in assessment or service delivery). In other words, there was little evidence that programs considered those characteristics of youth that might impede their ability to learn or engage in treatment (e.g. motivation, intelligence, anxiety, etc.) Furthermore, little consideration was given to matching staff and youth, staff and programs, or youth to programs.
- In general staff training was inadequate. The quality of staff varied greatly from program to program.
- Programs utilized too few rewards, but there were plenty of punishers. It was unusual for us to find a program that used rewards and punishers effectively.
- We found few measures of program performance. Most programs have no idea as to how well youth are acquiring prosocial skills and behaviors.
- Family were generally not involved in the treatment process.
- Booster sessions and aftercare were usually lacking.
- There were few formal evaluations conducted. It was rare to find a program that had tracked youth performance after program completion.

Best Practices

Some of the best practices that were among the Ohio juvenile justice programs are examined below. Selected programs that scored well above average in the areas of program implementation, assessment, treatment, staff, and evaluation are illustrated.

Program Implementation: Riverview Sex Offender Program

- Program director – 12 years experience working with sex offenders, degree in relevant area of study, actively involved in program – sits in on therapy/education groups, works with youth one-on-one, conducts assessments.
- Developed program from ground up, hired and trained staff.
- Program is based on networking with national experts, ongoing training, extensive literature review, and work with a local university.
- Program developed in response to increasing number of sex offenders and high violation rates.
- Program enjoys community support – conducts open houses and has an advisory board.

Offender Assessment: Responsible Living Day Treatment Program for Sex Offenders

- Appropriate clients with criteria for exclusions.
- Assess risk using Risk Determination Checklist and Juvenile Sexual Offender Decision Criteria – both provide a summary score.
- Assess responsivity characteristics using Jesness (personality) and MMPI (psychological).
- Assess needs using a prognostic assessment.

Program Characteristics: Lucas County Youth Treatment Center

- Cognitive based program.
- Family involvement – systemic approach.
- Level system – peers in highest levels model for other peers; each level has higher expectations and offers more privileges.
- Punishment – theory to change behavior; set procedures for administering punishers; set procedures for monitoring negative effects.
- Completion criteria – meet treatment goals, move through levels.
- Monitor and rehearse prosocial behavior.

- Refer to other services upon release.
- Booster sessions.

Staff Characteristics: Diversion Alternative for Youth Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment Program

- 100% of staff have a baccalaureate degree.
- 70% have a master's degree or higher.
- 70% have relevant job experience of two years or more.
- 82% have been with the program for two years or longer.
- Hiring criteria include personal characteristics (firm but fair, empathy, life experience, motivated).
- Assessed yearly, receive clinical supervision through clinical psychologist every six weeks.
- Staff have a great deal of input into the program.

Evaluation: Lucas County Youth Treatment Center

- Quality Assurance – videotape group sessions; meet weekly to observe and see how youth react and to improve service delivery.

Paint Creek Youth Center:

- Outcome Evaluation – outcome studies that include comparison group, long-term follow-up of youth on recidivism measures.

CONCLUSIONS

What do we know from the correctional research? First, we know that the public continues to support rehabilitation efforts, yet they still want offenders to be held

accountable.⁸ They also want programs that work at achieving both the goals of public protection and rehabilitation. Contrary to what people think, these two goals are not mutually exclusive. Second, when we review the body of literature on program effectiveness there are several important points that can be made. We know that some programs are more effective at reducing recidivism than others. We also know that the more effective programs meet the principles of effective intervention. Furthermore, the most effective programs have certain characteristics that can be measured. Unfortunately, it also appears that relatively few correctional programs are providing services and treatment consistent with the principles of effective intervention.

The results from our assessment of 28 Ohio juvenile justice programs indicate that Ohio is consistent with what we have found in other states. Over 39 percent of the of the programs we assessed met less than half of the principles of effective intervention as measured by the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory. On a more positive side, we did find that over 35 percent of the programs we assessed met over 60 percent of the principles in the CPAI. Furthermore, several of the programs we reviewed for this project had been previously assessed, and had demonstrated marked improvement in program integrity as a result of changes made to the program. This demonstrates that programs can improve the quality of the treatment and services they offer.

⁸ For a thorough review of the research on public opinion in the area of correctional treatment see: Applegate, B. K., F. T. Cullen, and B.S. Fisher (1997) Public Support for

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this study there are a number of recommendations that can be made.

Several are directed toward juvenile justice providers, while others are geared toward

State of Ohio policy makers:

1. Make evaluation part of the program, not simply an afterthought. Empirical evidence shows that programs that involve a researcher or evaluator are more effective in reducing recidivism than programs that do not (Lipsey and Wilson, 1997).
2. Evaluations should include both measures of recidivism and program integrity. Examining the performance of the offenders served by the program as well as the quality of the program should not be mutually exclusive.
3. Do not ignore established programs. Often it is the newer programs that undergo evaluation scrutiny. Rarely are older programs subjected to evaluation. This is a mistake for several reasons. First, all programs can be improved, and data from evaluations can provide useful information for program change. Second, just because a program has been in operation for a long time does not mean that it is effectively reducing recidivism.
4. Use data to improve programs. Programs that are data driven tend to be more effective than programs that are not data driven.
5. Design programs around the principles of effective intervention. It is easier to design a program correctly from the beginning than try to change it once it has been established.
6. The State of Ohio should incorporate the principles of effective intervention into funding processes. RFPs and other solicitations to fund juvenile justice programs should require applicants to address how they will meet these principles.
7. The State of Ohio should provide technical assistance to juvenile justice service providers to help them address program deficiencies and improve program integrity.
8. The State of Ohio should develop a quality assurance and evaluation process that monitors the delivery of services by contractors according to how well they deliver high quality programming.

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