

Description of the Evidence-Based Correctional Program Checklist-Community Supervision Agency

Despite the overwhelming evidence on “what works” in reducing recidivism (see Andrews & Bonta, 2006 for a review), community supervision has focused more on monitoring compliance with court conditions and less on addressing the criminogenic needs of offenders (see Bonta, et al., 2008). However, there is reason to believe that probation and parole officers can influence change in their offenders when certain core correctional practices are used within the context of an integrated practice model. Preliminary evidence from training initiatives in Canada (see Bonta et al., 2011), Australia (see Trotter, 2006), and the U.S. (Robinson, et al., 2011) demonstrate that when community supervision agencies apply the “what works” literature to probation and parole, reductions in recidivism are attainable.

The Evidence-Based Correctional Program Checklist-Community Supervision Agency (CPC-CSA) is based on the Correctional Program Checklist (CPC) and the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory-2000.¹ These tools were developed to assess correctional programs and are used to ascertain how closely programs meet known principles of effective intervention. Several recent studies conducted by the University of Cincinnati (UC) on both adult and juvenile programs were used to develop and validate the indicators on the CPC.² These studies found strong correlations with outcome between overall scores, domain areas and individual items, (Holsinger, 1999; Lowenkamp and Latessa, 2003, Lowenkamp, 2003; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2005a; Lowenkamp and Latessa, 2005b) and were used in formulating the CPC. The CPC-CSA incorporates important findings of recent research on the effectiveness of supervision agencies (e.g., Lowenkamp, et al., 2010 and Lowenkamp, et al., 2006).

The CPC-CSA utilizes several tools, with the primary one used to examine the community supervision agency. This tool is divided into two basic areas: content and capacity. The capacity area is designed to measure whether a community supervision agency has the capability to deliver evidence-based interventions and services for offenders. There are three domains in the capacity area including: Leadership, Agency Management and Support; Staff; and Quality Assurance. The content area focuses on the substantive domains of Offender Assessment and Evidence-Based Practices, and the extent to which the program meets the principles of risk, need, responsivity, and treatment. There are a total of fifty-six indicators, worth up to 62 total points. Each area and all domains are scored and rated as either “highly effective” (65% to 100%); “effective” (55% to 64%); “needs improvement” (46% to 54%); or “ineffective” (45% or less). The scores in all five domains are totaled, and the same scale is used for the overall assessment score. It should be noted that not all of the five domains are given equal weight, and some items may be

¹ The Core Correctional Practices component from the CPAI-2000 has been adapted for use in the CPC-CSA.

² These studies involved over 40,000 offenders (both adult and juvenile), and over 400 correctional programs, ranging from institutional to community based. All of the studies are available on our web site (www.uc.edu/criminaljustice). A large part of this research involved the identification of program characteristics that were correlated with outcome.

considered "not applicable," in which case they are not included in the scoring. As part of the CPC-CSA, major referral programs or services are assessed using the CPC-CSA: Referral Agency (CPC-CSA: RA).³ This tool examines four domains including: Leadership, Staff and Support and Quality Assurance in the capacity area and Offender Assessment and Treatment Characteristics in the content area. A similar scoring pattern is used for this tool.

There are a number of advantages to using this process to assess correctional programs. First, the criteria are based on empirically derived principles of effective programs. Second, all of the indicators included in the CPC-CSA have been found to be correlated with reductions in recidivism. Third, the process provides measures of integrity and quality; it provides insight into the "black box" of an agency and its programs, something that an outcome study alone does not provide. Fourth, the results can be obtained relatively quickly. Fifth, it identifies both the strengths and weaknesses of an agency; it provides the agency with an idea of what it is doing that is consistent with the research on effective interventions, as well as those areas that need improvement. Sixth, it provides recommendations for agency improvement. Finally, it allows for benchmarking. Comparisons with other agencies that have been assessed using the same criteria are provided, and since program integrity and quality can change over time, it allows an agency to reassess its progress.

³ In some instances, the CPC-Group Assessment (CPC-GA) or the CPC-Drug Court (CPC-DC) tools may be used.

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