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INSIGHTS

Offender Preparation & Education Network, Inc.

The Community Model The Facility Administrator's Best Friend

Policy makers in America are reviewing and revising their approach to correctional programming as a result of a host of issues: litigation, budgetary constraints, legislative and judicial concerns, and political initiatives. Furthermore, there is a critical need for "a value-added product" (Rollo). The Center for Therapeutic Justice's Community Model (CM) provides workable solutions to the familiar issues facing corrections.

Could a program model be the best approach to facility management? Absolutely. CM works, but it does challenge the traditional security-staff mindset. The CM approach increases public safety, reduces costs, and serves large numbers. The model is at home in jails or prisons, in probation or parole. It constitutes a most effective re-entry recovery continuum approach. Furthermore, CM philosophy can be an umbrella for the content or service of existing programs. The timing is right for this truly "win-win" paradigm shift in correctional programming.

CM is a proven model, now applied to corrections

Community Model incorporates some of the most effective, evidence-based elements of other program approaches, while moving to a new level of culture-changing *habilitation* services. It provides an alternative solution to the typical expensive, de-habilitating, American correctional culture that can collaterally damage both inmates and staff. CM is a simple yet far-reaching concept that:

- ◆ Provides facility administration with a means to improving the quality of work-life for its staff;
- ◆ Affirms that *the participant has critical expertise and that people learn behavior and attitude from the community they live in;*
- ◆ Regards the concept of recovery as reducing or removing any block that hinders a person's realization of their full potential and ability to contribute to society;
- ◆ Creates a natural and harmonious link to the free-world community;
- ◆ Is based on the social learning/recovery model/whole system theory tailored to the correctional setting.

Administrators and security staff praise CM:

"It is the best kept secret in correctional facility management."

"CM is the most significant improvement I've seen in my years in corrections."

"This is changing the face of incarceration."

"CM has raised my status as an administrator."

"It makes my job easier."

"Inmate participants bring issues to our attention before they blow up in our faces."

"These housing units are virtually problem free."

"Facility rules violations are significantly reduced."

"CM is the heart of our public relations campaign."

"These folks are less likely to come back."

CM produces tangible, community culture change

It has been well documented that traditional community cultures are difficult, at best, for staff to control and are based on the worst "codes of ethics" designed for an upside down society. Therefore, it is not a question of whether there will be a culture or environment that controls the internal functioning of a correctional facility. Rather, the question is, *what kind of culture will reign?*

Why not challenge a community of inmates to come forth with what is best within them rather than calling forth what is worst? After a short adjustment period, the staff and the entire facility experience positive inmate change and the emergence of a

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**For Additional Information
on the
Community Model**

please go to www.openinc.org/cm.html

community culture of pro-social values, norms, and traditions. With this comes a host of benefits to the staff, including the fact that the community can, for the most part, support, manage, and help itself.

CM incorporates a volunteer philosophy

Tangible community change occurs when a culture is in harmony with the needs and wants of its *volunteer* participants (i.e., indigenous resources), bringing about a sense of empowerment and ownership. The culture or environment itself is what brings about either positive or negative change in participants. When an inmate housing community has a pro-social environment (rules, values, traditions, language) that is consistent and is easily assimilated by members, it immediately reinforces improved morale and safety with very minimal reliance on correctional or program staff. This “less is more” approach by the staff turns the responsibility for the hard work over to the participants (who are the only people that can make it work anyway). Furthermore, this is done without the security staff giving up any control.

Participants operate under the mandate to take a good, hard, and honest look at themselves. They come to realize that there is expertise to be found in their own experiences and that “what affects one does affect all” (Martin Luther King). Power, control, threats, intimidation, domination, shame, and humiliation – the methods of forcing compliance in the old-style culture are not at home in CM. Instead, the community communicates, cooperates, and collaborates in a respectful environment of mutual aid and self-help support based on the principles of honesty, responsibility, and respect for staff.

CM optimizes safe and orderly operation

Community Model recognizes and complements the correctional staff’s concern for the safe and orderly operation of the facility. *Inmates in Community Model police themselves at levels of prosocial compliance and self-governance without ever challenging security staff* who are accustomed to inmates pushing the minimal-rule standard. Not only is the threat of violence, suicide, and property damage all but eliminated, but inmates also develop and enforce adherence to civil living standards of cleanliness, quiet, interaction, participation, hard work, and good citizenship. Security staff is then free to simply monitor or audit the environment, fulfill reporting requirements, become role models, and enjoy a healthy work environment in which they find significant personal growth and a sense of purpose and contribution. CM has actually been shown to reduce the need for correctional staffing in the designated housing units.

CM promotes responsibility

The model promotes a tightly structured, weekly inmate schedule with purpose, discipline, and the opportunity for positive change. When people are treated with dignity and respect, they become capable of being responsible, making a contribution, and living civilly with high self-governance and pro-social results. Attempts at forcing compliance to low behavioral standards cause people to naturally challenge and resent authority. Offering inmates intentional choices within facility security parameters activates inmate community-imposed

responsibility. This sets in motion community emergence and unexpected positive outcomes such as creative solutions and contributions to the environment and the institution as a whole. CM is egalitarian and self-leveling, rather than hierarchical and punitive. Furthermore, it is in greater harmony with the outside, 12-step support community and with practical life skills and relationship needs in society. CM is the best in-house foundation for re-entry (new-entry) preparation.

CM benefits both participants and staff

Community Model participants are volunteers and must be housed separately from nonparticipants. From the beginning, inmates view the housing unit as their community and feel a sense of ownership and empowerment. There are a small percentage of anti-social, narcissistic, predatory inmates who are not yet ready for CM. These inmates are weeded out by the community discipline, structure, and hard work. Volunteering as a recognized choice for change is a vital element. *(Please note that this is very similar to the best management*

practices of organizations that flourish by using just such an interdependent, relational, practical, and operational approach.)

The program staff models essential community-building characteristics, *tends the culture*

rather than tends the inmates, and takes on a support role while retaining veto power. Staff provides inmate participants with a variety of selected CM process and program (content) materials critical to establishing and maintaining the evolving environment. If there is a job harder than asking the security staff to trust this new, more “hands off” approach, it is getting the program staff not to act as the *answer person* – i.e., the fixer, the doctor. Answers and solutions come from within the community itself.

CM focuses on wellness and strength, calling forth competence in choice-making, not compliance, from its participants. Incorporating numerous best-practice approaches, this model is based on the most tried and true means of positive human development and interaction in order to benefit participants, staff and the constituent community. The focus is on all addictive behaviors, not substance abuse alone, and Community Model is equally applicable to educational, life-skills, or co-occurring disorders programs. Program components include *Life Without A Crutch, Houses of Healing, Back to Basics, Recovery Dynamics, and Men’s (or Women’s) Work*, in addition to anger management, 12-step work, community meetings, videos, motion pictures, books, exercise, meditation, and numerous other activities under the guidance of senior members and specially trained CM staff.

Both participants and staff intentionally create a more efficient, humane, and solution-focused, environment that benefits everyone and changes the culture in the facility. There appears to be a ripple effect (cultural transplantation) that transforms one housing unit, then another and another, through self-replication and the spread of the concept of respect. The culture becomes quieter, more peaceful, cleaner, safer, and more human friendly for everyone – not just in the program housing units, but eventually in the entire facility. Even facility administrators find their job satisfaction improving without having to compromise their authority. CM allows administrators to

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turn the facility into a human service organization and enjoy positive media attention.

Cost of implementation

Community Model – an intense, multidimensional, multi-interventional approach – involves significantly less cost than other program approaches used in correctional settings. It begins with a contract with the Center for Therapeutic Justice for Community Model consultation to help the facility get started and to then provide ongoing support to preserve the integrity and essence of the model. Initial implementation requires that the model's basic concepts be followed *without exception*. CM allows for the masses to receive more intensive services, the key to the public safety or facility impact that cannot be realized from a few participants. Facilities will find that it actually saves more money than it costs, and that virtually any facility is a candidate for this approach.

Conclusion

Community Model provides the best chance for community integration and for second order, lasting change to be carried over into the "free-world" community. The result is a **new-entry** lifestyle that is in harmony with the recovery support network *available* in society. Rewards for administrators and policy makers are significant because citizens are ready to see an improved return on their correctional investment.

About the Authors

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Licensed professional counselors, licensed marriage and family therapists, and clinically certified forensics counselors, Penny and Morgan founded the Center for **Therapeutic Justice** in 1999. With decades of experience in addictions and the criminal justice system they have developed, implemented and directed programs in the criminal justice system (CJS). Treating the CJS from a systems approach they have developed program materials, provided groups, briefings, and conferences working with deputies, correctional officers, probation officers, substance abuse counselors, lawyers and judges, incarcerated men and women, families of those serving time, victims, and community agencies. Penny and Morgan are the national experts on social model recovery programs in correctional settings and co-founded the **Community Model** approach. They have established and direct Community Model jail programs and direct addictions, anger management, and stop the violence programs for local probation agencies from this same model approach. Penny has produced an extensive "Recovery Plan" booklet for offender preparation for new-entry. For two years they hosted "Recovery Radio" out of Richmond, Virginia – a talk show with prominent national guests discussing addictions and the criminal justice system.

Their Community Model approach has now been implemented in five jails. Though extensive research is yet to be completed and data is being gathered, much observational and anecdotal information has been gathered from various sources. This information documents the benefits stated in **The Community Model: The Facility Administrator's Best Friend**. For additional information, you may contact either the Center for Therapeutic Justice at centerforjustice@aol.com, www.therapeuticjustice.com, 757-561-8907, or Col. Lance Forsythe, Superintendent, Southside Regional Jail, Emporia, Virginia, 434-634-0670.



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