

**Washington State Institute for Criminal Justice Research:**

Research in Brief



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# **EVIDENCE-BASED CORRECTIONS PROGRAM PILOT**

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**Background:** In response to the passage of Senate Bill 6204, the Washington State Department of Corrections (WADOC) embraced a new focus on increasing compliance and reducing recidivism of offenders by adopting *risk-needs-responsivity* principles and utilizing *evidence-based programs* aimed at offender change. Early in 2012, the WADOC contracted with various researchers to train staff at Airway Heights Correctional Center (AHCC) and Coyote Ridge Correctional Center (CRCC) in evidence-based treatment modalities. The intent of the “bundled” training, referred to as evidence-based correctional programming (EBCP), was to provide a comprehensive, cost-effective management program that would allow AHCC and CRCC to implement evidence-based interventions to select offenders. The interventions were adopted in the winter of 2012/2013 in the two above facilities as pilot programs.

**Evaluation:** WADOC contracted with WSU researchers to provide an independent outcome and process evaluation of the EBCP. WSU researchers spent a total of three days observing classroom (CCP/TFC) sessions, conducting inmate focus groups and interviewing staff. Researchers also interviewed staff about administrative process, reviewed policies and practices and staff, and participated in meetings regarding data collection. Researchers then returned to both facilities in December 2013 in order to conduct follow-up interviews with various staff members, including

Sergeants and those staff that could not be reached during the first wave of interviews.

*Process evaluation:*

1. Identify EBCP procedures and policies of each facility
2. Review of program administration and operations
3. Multiple on-site visits to both AHCC and CRCC to achieve the following goals:
  - a. Observe facilitators implementing the EBCP and assessing for the following:
    - i. Discrepancy with Handbook (administrative)
    - ii. Internal consistency (administrative)
    - iii. Consistency with other facility (administrative)
    - iv. Facilitator monitors Group Effectiveness
    - v. Focus on the Task
    - vi. Program Acceptance
    - vii. Reflective Listening
    - viii. Reframing
    - ix. Reinforcement/ Punishment
  - b. Conduct interview sessions with facilitators
  - c. Conduct focus group sessions with offenders
  - d. Compare procedures within and between each facility
  - e. Develop a set of recommendations for further program development.

There are several current available findings worth noting:

- Facilitators are fully trained in the “bundled” treatment modalities and display great passion and



commitment to the ideals of the EBCP.

- The two EBCP teams at AHCC and CRCC have strong leadership support and communication among and across the sites, allowing for increasing standardization.
- Program facilitators are carefully following the assigned curriculums.
- Staff is open and receptive to program/process improvements that have been suggested to them by stakeholders.
- Inmates report learning important skills that they are using outside of the classroom.
- Inmates report that the majority of facilitators are well trained, and appear invested in their change process.
- Programs have been plagued by employee turnover, which has undoubtedly impacted ability to properly execute and experience the intended program benefits.

*Outcome evaluation:*

Quantitative analyses were conducted on 260 program participants and 267 control group participants, who were matched on numerous variables.

The first analysis of the data examined change over time for the cohort one program participants vs. the comparison group from 6 months prior to the start of EBCP to 6 months following the start date. The latter data collection point included participants who had and who had not completed the program. The

average time spent in the program was 71.08 hours for this group.

Findings indicate a positive trend for program participants. At 6-month post-program start date, program participants had a more stable level of infractions and a trend towards decreases in grievances, compared to the comparison group

The second analysis examined change over time for the cohort one program participants vs. the comparison group from 6 months prior to the start of EBCP to the completion or graduation date from the program. Therefore, all participants in this analysis completed the program. The average time spent in the program was 84.30 hours for this group. At program completion, program participants had a decrease in infractions, a slower rate of an increase of serious infractions and a trend towards decreases in grievances, compared to the comparison group.

**Future:** Outcome evaluation analyses for cohort two are scheduled for 2014 when data becomes available. Continued process evaluation is essential to program fidelity, and responsibilities will be fully handed over to the WADOC in 2014.