



Implementing Evidence-Based Policy and Practice in Community Corrections, 2nd Edition

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

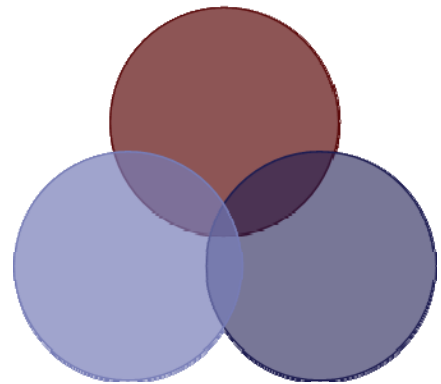
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This paper was developed as part of a set of papers focused on the role of system stakeholders in reducing offender recidivism through the use of evidence-based practices in corrections.



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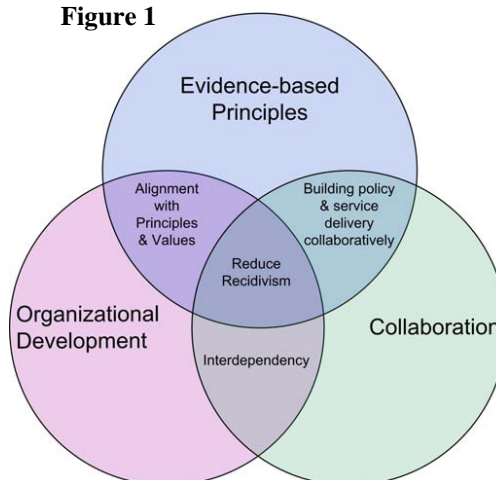
Introduction

Across the country, community corrections agencies are struggling to do more with less. Offender populations continue to grow, and policymakers and corrections officials look to community corrections to alleviate overcrowding in prisons and jails. In the face of shrinking budgets, community corrections agencies as well as elected and appointed government officials are looking for innovative solutions to reduce new crimes and new victimization. Fortunately, a substantial body of literature exists on cost-efficient practices that are proven to reduce offender risk.

Unfortunately, knowledge of these evidence-based practices is not sufficient to implement and sustain this new way of doing business. Agencies and systems must have the capacity to undergo a significant shift in their business practices and organizational culture; they require a framework to guide this change. Through a cooperative agreement with the National Institute of Corrections, the Crime and Justice Institute and its partners developed the Integrated Model for the implementation of evidence-based policy and practice (Figure 1). The Model

incorporates both research on effective corrections practice and practical approaches needed to create and sustain an evidence-based organization. The Model has three components: Evidence-Based Practice, Organizational Development, and Collaboration. The purpose of this paper is to outline the theoretical and empirical support for the model, as well as practical strategies for its implementation in community corrections settings.

Figure 1



What is Evidence-Based Practice?

Evidence-based practice (EBP) is the objective, balanced, and responsible use of current research and the best available data to guide policy and practice decisions, such that outcomes for consumers are improved. In the case of corrections, consumers include offenders, victims and survivors, communities, and other key stakeholders. Used originally in the health care and social science fields, evidence-based practice focuses on approaches demonstrated to be effective through empirical research rather than through anecdote or professional experience alone.

An evidence-based approach involves an ongoing, critical review of research literature to determine what information is credible, and what policies and practices would be most effective given the best available evidence. It also involves rigorous quality assurance

and evaluation to ensure that evidence-based practices are replicated with fidelity, and that new practices are evaluated to determine their effectiveness.

The Integrated Model

To facilitate the implementation of effective interventions in corrections, the *Integrated Model* emphasizes the importance of focusing equally on evidence-based practices, organizational development, and collaboration to achieve successful and lasting reform. It acknowledges the fact that scientific evidence is not sufficient to support the development of evidence-based organizations. The model incorporates best practices from corrections, social sciences, business, and other disciplines, and it provides a framework for sustaining effective interventions across the criminal justice system.

Each of the three components of the integrated model is essential. Evidence-based principles form the basis of effective supervision and service provision. Organizational development is required to successfully move from traditional supervision to evidence-based practice. Organizations must rethink their missions and values; gain new knowledge and skills; adjust their infrastructure to support this new way of doing business; and transform their organizational culture. Collaboration with system stakeholders enhances internal and external buy-in and creates more holistic system change.

Investment in the Integrated Model offers many benefits. The model is clearly evidence-based, having been developed from empirically tried and tested practices. It also provides for an efficient use of resources, fosters responsible practices, promotes accountability, and creates a learning organization of informed policymakers, practitioners, and consumers. Ultimately, implementation of the model should result in improved functioning within agencies and across systems, as well as improved public safety outcomes for offenders and communities.

The Principles of Effective Intervention

Current research points to eight principles that, when taken together, increase the likelihood of offender risk reduction. Though not all of the principles are supported by the same weight of evidence, each has a sound empirical or theoretical basis. In addition, new evidence is always emerging, so the state of the art in risk reduction is likely to evolve over time.

The eight principles are:

1. Assess Actuarial Risk/Needs
2. Enhance Intrinsic Motivation
3. Target Interventions
 - *Risk Principle*: Prioritize supervision and treatment resources for higher risk offenders.
 - *Need Principle*: Target interventions to criminogenic (correlated to crime) needs.

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- *Responsivity Principle*: Be responsive to temperament, learning style, motivation, culture, and gender when assigning programs.
 - *Dosage*: Structure 40-70% of high-risk offenders' time for three to nine months.
 - *Treatment Principle*: Integrate treatment into the full sentence/sanction requirements.
4. Skill Train with Directed Practice (e.g., use cognitive behavioral treatment methods)
 5. Increase Positive Reinforcement
 6. Engage Ongoing Support in Natural Communities
 7. Measure Relevant Processes/Practices
 8. Provide Measurement Feedback

To be effective, these principles must be reflected in the policies, procedures, and day-to-day work of community corrections agencies. In addition, the success of offenders is highly dependent on the rapport developed between officers and clients. Officers are most successful when they: strike a balance between an enforcement and intervention role; clarify their role with the client; model pro-social behaviors, show empathy without diminishing accountability; and focus interactions on problem solving and addressing criminogenic needs.

Implementing the Principles

Aligning the eight evidence-based principles with the core business practices of an organization is an ongoing challenge requiring careful planning. Correctional interventions are composed of dozens of interlocking parts that have the ability to impact recidivism, including employee skills, case management strategies, community linkages, and the policy environment. Depending on how well the processes are aligned and managed, they can enhance or diminish successful outcomes. Any organization interested in understanding and improving outcomes must manage the operation as a set of highly interdependent systems, and must have the data needed to monitor and improve processes.

Minimally, EBP involves:

- Developing employees' knowledge, skills, and attitudes congruent with current research-supported practice;
- Implementing offender programming consistent with research recommendations;
- Sufficiently monitoring employee actions and offender programming to identify discrepancies or fidelity issues; and
- Routinely obtaining verifiable outcome evidence associated with employee performance and offender programming.

Two fundamentally different approaches are necessary for such an alteration in priorities. One, the *outside/in* approach, brings insights gleaned from external research evidence to bear on internal organizational practices. The other, the *inside-out* approach, increases organizational capacity to internally measure performance and outcomes for current practice. When these two interdependent strategies are employed, an organization

acquires the ability to understand what is necessary and practicable to improve its outcomes.

All of these elements cannot be put in place overnight. It is up to each organization to determine a pace of implementation that is appropriate to its level of readiness and the resources available. Implementation requires an investment of time and people, but it pays dividends by through improved outcomes.

“ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS” FOR EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS

- **Incorporate Policy and Practice:** consider evidence-based changes to external statutes and regulations as well as internal policy and procedure.
- **Develop an Organizational Case Plan:** assess organizational needs, create a strategic plan, and implement the plan. Align all business practices with the evidence, not just supervision strategies.
- **Build on Risk, Need, Treatment, and Fidelity:** The pillars of evidence-based practice are effective assessment, case plans focused on criminogenic needs, effective treatment, and a quality assurance process that ensures all facets are being implemented according to research.
- **Prioritize the Workforce:** Focus on employee development, including awareness of research, skill development, and management of behavioral and organizational change processes, within the context of a complete training program and supportive human resources practice. Develop leaders at all levels of the organization.
- **Measure for Accountability and Improvement:** Assess baseline and subsequent progress using quantifiable data. Routinely measure employee practices (attitudes, knowledge, and skills) that are related to outcomes.
- **Use Data:** Provide employees timely, relevant, and accurate feedback regarding performance related to outcomes. Utilize extensive data-driven advocacy and brokerage to enable appropriate community justice/correctional services.
- **Engage and Communicate:** Internal and external stakeholders require constant communication on the process of EBP implementation, their role in it, the vision for the future, and the outcomes that are realized. You can never have too much effective communication!

Leading Organizational Change and Development

In order to successfully move towards effective evidence-based supervision and service provision, significant organizational change and development is required. Organizations must critically examine their missions and values; gain new knowledge and skills; adjust their infrastructure to support new ways of doing business and transform their organizational culture. Shifting to an evidence-based organizational management approach may require significant changes in the way business is conducted.

The three steps of assessment, intervention and monitoring/measurement are critical to organizational change and development in the same way they are integral to client

intervention. Assessment determines the existing status of an individual, organization, and/or practice by providing information on the potential and options for change. Intervention activities are designed to respond to the needs/issues identified in the assessment/diagnosis process. Monitoring and measuring performance on both a short and long-term basis provide data on changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior.

Strong and flexible organizational leadership is fundamental to the success or failure of any change effort. It is especially true when implementing evidence-based practices due to the complexity of initiating change in the public safety system. The nature of the system requires that leaders identify, create, and show value to internal and external stakeholders. Leaders must also be willing to accept the challenges of changing organizational culture in order to achieve the full benefits of increased public safety and reduced recidivism made possible by implementing evidence-based principles in community corrections.

It is also important to recognize that different styles of leadership are required to achieve successful change. *Coercive leaders* demand immediate compliance. *Authoritative leaders* mobilize people toward a vision. *Affiliative leaders* create emotional bonds and harmony. *Democratic leaders* build consensus through participation. *Pacesetter leaders* expect excellence and self-direction. And *coaching leaders* develop people for the future. The research indicates that leaders who get the best results don't rely on just one leadership style; they use most of the styles regularly.

The Role of Leadership	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create the vision ▪ Identify partnerships ▪ Develop strategies for achieving the vision ▪ Utilize process improvement strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify and collect outcome data ▪ Review and refine processes and outcomes ▪ Seek agreement with partners regarding vision & strategies

Advancing the implementation of evidence-based principles in the supervision of offenders requires the realignment of organizational infrastructure, and contemporaneous changes in the structure of human resource management systems, policies and procedures, and operational standards. All systems and policies, particularly those pertaining to the workforce, must be consistent with and supportive of the new way of doing business.

Combining this fundamental organizational change with the philosophy and policy shift of evidence-based principles enhances the potential to more effectively institutionalize changes. Managing this type of transition involves relentless attention to detail, as well as an understanding of how individuals and groups experience change to advance implementation and prevent individuals and entire systems from sliding back into the old ways.

Collaboration for Systemic Change

Collaboration is defined as *coming together to work toward a common vision*. This results in greater achievements than would be attained by one organization working alone. Since no public safety agency operates in a vacuum, engaging system stakeholders in change efforts helps eliminate barriers, increase opportunities for success, enrich the change process, educate stakeholders about the organizational's work, and create a shared vision that supports the systemic change efforts.

Collaboration and system change are very time consuming and resource intensive processes. They require constant attention and nurturing to maintain momentum. Collaborative endeavors must develop a balance between broad participation and consensus-building and the need to make decisions and take action. In addition, all affected stakeholders need a voice at the table. Any process should ensure that the number of participants is small enough to allow for productivity, but broad enough to hear diverse perspectives and get widespread support.

An effective collaboration requires structure. Methods of developing structure, such as charters, memoranda of understanding, and partnering agreements fulfill multiple purposes. These tools should clarify decision-making responsibility and emphasize the concept that no single organizational or individual is in charge in the familiar sense. Instead, professionals from each center of expertise are empowered to do what they do best to the enhancement of the collective goal.

Essential Ingredients of Collaboration	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Common Vision▪ Purpose▪ Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities▪ Healthy Communication Pathways▪ Membership▪ Respect and Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Accountability▪ Data-Driven Process▪ Effective Problem Solving▪ Resources▪ Environment

A successful collaborative often meets the following criteria: the group is efficient and reliable; it adapts to changing circumstances; it is viewed as legitimate among members and stakeholders; it is accountable for its work; and its efforts are sustainable. Successful collaboration requires a thoughtful, sustained effort among partner organizations. Maintaining a productive collaboration that supports a shared vision is often challenging, but it yields great benefit when member organizations are collectively engaged in the change process.

Conclusion

To improve supervision effectiveness and enhance the safety of our communities, evidence-based approaches are sorely needed. Organizational budgets can no longer support programs and practices that are not proven effective in reducing new crime: practices proven effective must be replicated, and new practices must be evaluated for efficacy.

This report provides a guide for agencies to transform themselves into evidence-based organizations. By providing an integrated model, it maps out the essential ingredients for a successful transition: evidence-based practice, organizational development, and collaboration. It is vital that each component is given equal weight and importance. Simply implementing one without the others is not sufficient to achieve positive results.

Implementing evidence-based policy and practice is not a simple task; it requires a fundamental change in the way community corrections does business, and a shift in the philosophies of those doing this work. However, the benefits are substantial. Evidence-based approaches create safer communities, while often offering cost savings to communities in the long term. The Integrated Model can allow jurisdictions to make significant strides toward improving public safety, holding offenders accountable, and wisely investing public resources.