

General Overview

This plenary session was designed to provide correctional organizations practical suggestions on implementing research concepts into day to day operations. Presenters from Grant County, Indiana and the State of Iowa provided examples and practical applications of implementing evidence-based practices. A discussion was generated surrounding topic areas of case load size, contact standards, and suggestions for overcoming barriers.

Major Themes

Patience and Perseverance

Organizations often feel overwhelmed with the complex and rigorous tasks involved in implementing evidence based practices. A key theme during the presentations was to remind organizations that change is hard and takes time. Part of the process is to deal with the resistance to system change. It takes time to identify and work through the barriers that are causing the resistance. Examples were given to for upper management to model behavior to help bring supervisors/mid-management on board with the process and act as a cheerleader for those staff that are engaged in the process and assisting with change.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

For organizations to implement evidence-based practices effectively they must be able to identify staff that have the appropriate skills for implementation. Examples were given surrounding training specific skills and following up with booster sessions; training of non-treatment staff to support the utilization of cognitive behavioral and motivational interviewing techniques; providing trainings specifically for supervisors that allowed for more coaching and mentoring abilities; and identifying the gaps in the skills of staff so that training can be enhanced and more specific.

Seamless Case Management

An important theme during this session was how essential seamless case management is to implementing evidence-based practices. Offenders can go through various services that are provided by community corrections (e.g. probation, treatment) and have numerous case workers following treatment and behavior changes. It is important to not over assess offenders and to monitor behavior change through seamless or comprehensive case management. To do this means to consider consistent assessment tools throughout all levels of service delivery and system wide web-based databases to collect case planning tools and case notes, current information available to end users, and data/ information available for analysis, research and the service delivery enhancement process.

Conclusion

Taking research and applying it to real world practices can be a very daunting task; not knowing where to start and if you are doing it correctly. Organizations that have been trying to put research into practice have determined that assessing your organization on where you are in the process first is an essential part to implementing EBP. This allows organizations to take real look at the readiness level to change and build a work plan of tasks that makes sense the organization. Many organizations jump right into training and then come to a standstill when they are not sure what to do with the skills they have learned. First keep in mind the big picture and then prioritize the task through strategic planning; don't bite off more than you can chew.