
Providing Tools for Risk Reduction Case Management in Parole and Community Corrections

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Kansas is committed to reducing entries and returns to prison, and also to using comprehensive risk reduction and reentry practices that will give offenders a better chance of returning and reintegrating safely and successfully. Reducing the numbers of offenders in the system and who re-offend—by applying the principles of risk, need, and responsibility—is a multi-faceted and complex undertaking.

The increasing national and state commitment to following the research and implementing system-wide and multi-system change is encouraging, and early returns on reentry and risk reduction programs and services are promising. This is resulting in more support among corrections professionals, lawmakers, policy-makers, service providers, and many other stakeholders for the Kansas Offender Risk Reduction & Reentry Plan (KOR³P).

The Kansas plan is supported by the Kansas Reentry Policy Council (KRPC), a multi-disciplinary group comprising elected officials, cabinet members from several state agencies (including those overseeing substance abuse, mental health, health, housing, and workforce development), a member of the Kansas Supreme Court, a victim representative, and a representative of the Kansas Sentencing Commission. The KRPC provides broad policy support, sets objectives and outcomes, shepherds law and policy change, facilitates and deploys resources, and through its executive director has convened a steering committee with task forces to identify system issues and recommend new practices for implementation.

The Basics

In reentry programs within the Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC), high-risk offenders are assessed for risk and need at 14 months prior to release from prison. Reentry case managers then work with offenders to develop comprehensive reentry plans, with specific pre- and post-release goals and activities.

Staff specialists in such areas as housing, mental health, employment, cognitive programs, and substance abuse play several roles. They teach classes, they develop resources, they bridge to other service systems, and they work with case managers to support the plans. Both unit team counselors in the facilities and parole officers in the field work with reentry case managers and ensure each offender's reentry case plan is consistent with security and supervision requirements and needs.

KOR³P seeks to expand the reentry model throughout the system. This means that at the time a person enters the corrections system, his or her risk level is assessed, areas of risk and need are identified, and a risk reduction case plan is developed. These plans are then carried out to help the offender exit the system and become law-abiding.

The details of the KOR³P center on 20 goals. Some goals address specific risk/need areas present in the offender population, such as housing, cognitive patterns, employment, substance abuse, and families. Other goals address system and organizational support needed to improve reentry outcomes, such as data system support, evaluation/research, and community capacity.

Because parole, community corrections, and probation services are delivered by three separate systems in Kansas, the plan's success also addresses engaging community corrections and probation in the planning and implementation. This article will focus further on skills development of case managers and extending risk reduction work into community corrections.

Skill Development Is Key

Case managers and their immediate supervisors are the most important group of corrections workers in risk reduction. All of our systems work to improve outcomes ultimately leads back to the ability of the case managers to engage in risk reduction with offenders.

Our specific goals have included:

- ◆ Development of policies and procedures that enable and support case management;
- ◆ Integration of systems so services such as substance abuse, mental health care, and housing are available to offenders;
- ◆ Development of community engagement, so that local residents are receptive to giving offenders a chance to succeed; and
- ◆ Achieving the right measure of guidelines and discretion to target interventions according to the offender's risk level and risk/need profile.

Above all, case managers need the skills and training to carry out this work. We are now developing an integrated case management training curriculum, to be reinforced and followed up by supervisors trained in supportive supervision, that ultimately will be delivered to all corrections case managers. This training will be a centerpiece to the success of the KOR³P, and roll-out of the full training is under way in the fall of 2007.

Following are some of the key features and lessons we have learned through our process of case management skills development.

- ◆ **New training content.** The overall training integrates pre-existing training modules with new sessions that tie the various curricula and skill-development elements into one comprehensive program.

For instance, existing courses on the risk/need instrument (the Level of Service Inventory–Revised, or LSI-R), cognitive reflective programming, and advanced communication and motivational skills will be joined with new material on case planning, treatment responsivity, cognitive-based strategies, and training in specific disciplines such as housing, mental health, and substance abuse. All of these skills will be tied together to increase the case managers’ knowledge, understanding, and comfort level in developing comprehensive case plans that target high-risk offenders and their individual risks and needs.

New courses will ensure that all case managers are well-versed in current research. Using many skills practice opportunities, case managers will learn such discrete skills as developing and sustaining partnerships with providers, networking with peers, and learning to effectively access and apply available resources within their facilities or offices and in the community.

- ◆ **Academic model for coursework.** The new training structure will use an academic model, with 100-, 200-, and 300-level classes. Current staff who already have completed some “courses” can round out their learning with the new classes, while the entire program will be available to new staff. This system also will aid supervisors and managers in identifying which courses or combinations of courses are required for specific positions, in the nature of a certificate or “degree” in case management. All case managers will be required to complete all level 100 and some measure of level 200 classes. Specialized case managers will be required to take more advanced classes.
- ◆ **Training follow-up.** Skills developers will deliver the classroom training and later follow up with case managers and their supervisors to gauge and reinforce use of the skills learned. Some classes will specifically target supervisors, with the aim of increasing their ability to support, coach, model, and mentor their staff in their pursuit of further case management skills.
- ◆ **Assessment and feedback.** Each class will include very specific measures of proficiency, with behavior-anchored measurements, including pre- and post-tests, trainer observation, and self-assessments. Each case manager will receive individual feedback about progress, both as part of the classes and in follow-up through collaboration between skills developers and supervisors. Standards regarding pass rates for given positions will be set by policy.

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- ◆ **Inclusion of service and program providers.** Staff from partner agencies in key service systems (such as mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and employment) will be invited to participate in corrections-delivered training, in order to broaden their awareness, knowledge, and skills in risk-reduction strategies.

 - ◆ **Training evaluation.** Data on the effectiveness of training will be collected in the classroom and by supervisors observing and capturing the performance of case managers in the field. This will allow us to measure the progress of skill development, identify areas needing further attention, and determine the overall impact of these new approaches to case management training.

This training plan will move into the field, beyond the classroom, to ensure, first, that case managers receive the information and tools they need and, second, that they have the necessary support to implement these practices comprehensively in managing their caseloads. Case managers will have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully and on an ongoing basis to the development of the curriculum to be sure the classroom work is meeting their needs.

This case management training supports the work being done in parole to safely reduce revocations. It will also support legislation for implementing risk reduction case management in community corrections—another significant source of revocations ending in incarceration. With time, case managers who are delivering traditional probation supervision through court services also will have an opportunity to receive this training. In this way, all corrections case managers will learn the same model, information, and approach, so that ultimately any offender involved in the corrections system in Kansas will be managed according to risk reduction principles.

Moving Risk Reduction into Community Corrections

The skills development case management training discussed above provides a resource for support as Kansas moves risk reduction into community corrections. The Kansas community corrections system is comprised of 31 county-operated Intensive Supervision Probation programs that provide services to all 105 counties in Kansas. These agencies have a legislatively defined target population that includes high-risk and -need probationers, and program design is specific to local offender needs and court procedures. The community corrections agencies operate in parallel with, and often in collaboration with, the judiciary system's court services officers, who deliver traditional probation services.

In the 2007 session, the legislature appropriated funding under the Senate Bill 14 Risk Reduction Initiative (SB14 RRI) specifically for risk reduction work in community corrections. Following an application process, KDOC awarded \$4 million of this appropriation as grant funds to community corrections agencies. SB14 RRI allowed for a competitive grant process under which these agencies

apply for funding to enhance risk reduction efforts and reduce revocation rates by at least 20%.

The three specific goals of the SB14 RRI are:

- ◆ To increase public safety;
- ◆ To reduce the risk level of probationers on community corrections supervision; and
- ◆ To increase the percentage of probationers who successfully complete community corrections supervision.

Agencies funded under this initiative commit to the philosophy of risk reduction and to building a system that will facilitate probationers' success by targeting the criminogenic needs of medium- and high-risk offenders using evidence-based practices and community supervision methods.

KDOC received technical assistance from the Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP) in the development of the SB14 RRI grant application and review process. Funding awards were prioritized for distribution to:

- ◆ Agencies whose rates of condition revocations have been significantly higher than the statewide average;
- ◆ Agencies striving to reduce their rate of revocation by a percentage greater than the 20% required reduction; and/or
- ◆ Agencies that target the successful reentry of probationers who are considered medium- to high-risk for revocation.

The application procedure itself constituted a risk reduction planning process. As a part of developing their applications for funding, agencies addressed the following key areas.

- ◆ **RRI narrative.** These narratives discussed current agency needs. They typically included a description of problems in probationers' successful completion of supervision as viewed through the lens of LSI-R data, an examination of current practice and current resources, an examination of the agency's application of the principles of risk reduction, and an identification of gaps between current and evidence-based practices.
- ◆ **Service plan.** Agencies presented their plan to close the identified gaps, establish a strategy to reduce revocation rates by at least 20%, target services to medium- to high-risk probationers, and reduce probationer risk and promote effective functioning in the community through the use of evidence-based practices. Agencies also presented evidence of community support for their initiative and indicated willingness to participate in the planning and

implementation of a consistent set of statewide policies for community corrections supervision and revocation.

- ◆ **Local teams and oversight mechanism.** Agencies established local teams to support the planning, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability of the local RRI. They also presented a strategy for monitoring the planning, implementation, and success of the local RRI.

Collaboration for Progress

An essential element of the risk reduction work under way in Kansas is the collaboration between KDOC, national partners (such as the JEHT Foundation, CEPP, and the National Institute of Corrections [NIC]), and local community corrections agencies.

Local agency planning. One form of this collaboration has been evident in assistance to local community corrections agencies as they developed their risk reduction plans and grant applications for SB14 RRI funding.

- ◆ Support included 2-day training sessions in July 2007 presented by KDOC and CEPP for community corrections agency directors and representatives.
- ◆ KDOC also held five “Office Hours Sessions” at locations across the state. Team members from KDOC’s community corrections division were available to answer questions and provide clarification on the SB14 RRI application process.
- ◆ KDOC hosted two resource workshops for community corrections agencies to acquaint them with information on a variety of topics. Participants learned about available mental health services, KDOC contracting practices, new managed care practices in Kansas for community mental health and substance abuse services, and recruiting and working with volunteers. Presentations on implementing evidence-based practices were delivered by KDOC parole managers and community corrections directors who have previously implemented risk reduction work, to share their experiences and lessons learned.

“Growing” a will for change. A core focus of this collaboration is to build an infrastructure for change by providing education on the science of risk reduction to community corrections agencies, their case managers, and their key partners and stakeholders.

- ◆ This was addressed by holding stakeholder conferences in November 2007. Agency directors, judges, county commissioners, advisory board members, and other key community partners came together at these conferences to learn evidence-based practices. Local teams also worked with a facilitator to address local issues and strategies for change.

- ◆ Follow-up to these conferences will include regional skills-building training workshops for supervisors and case managers, which will continue to enhance the proficiency of staff statewide in evidence-based practices.

Developing advanced skills for offender management. Once the infrastructure for change is in place, targeted skill development will begin. New training initiatives will focus on skills that improve offenders' chances of success in the community, consistent with the skills-building and case management training being delivered in the KDOC.

- ◆ **Advanced Communication and Motivational Strategies training.** This program explains the stages of behavior change and gives officers tools for assessing probationers' motivation to change and either reducing their resistance to change or reinforcing their commitment to change.

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- ◆ **Cognitive behavioral tool training.** This material provides officers with a working knowledge of the Thinking for a Change curriculum so that they can support the treatment experiences of probationers.

- ◆ **Case plan training.** In these sessions, officers acquire training and practice in working with probationers to collaboratively develop a case plan based on LSI-R® data that will be used as a case management tool.

In addition, NIC will support work done in KDOC and community corrections to develop ongoing supervisory training and development. This technical assistance will aid Kansas corrections managers in identifying training needs and designing and developing training. KDOC, in conjunction with NIC, will strive to put forth training in supportive staff supervision, providing field supervisors with education in coaching and mentoring staff and assessing critical knowledge and skill bases.

The ultimate goal of the KOR3P is a 50% reduction in revocations in parole, and a decrease in revocations of at least 20% is required by the legislation that funds community corrections services in Kansas. Developing the specialized skills of risk reduction management for all corrections case managers is a critical ingredient for this success. A strong and sustained partnership between KDOC and community corrections will bring these skills to the case managers who work with the highest-risk offenders in Kansas, and to those whose offender caseloads present with the most need. This comprehensive approach to risk reduction will enable Kansas to safely reduce entries and returns to prison—benefiting the community, enhancing public safety, and allowing wise use of corrections resources. ◆

NIC has developed material supporting delivery of the Thinking for a Change cognitive-behavioral program. Key items include:

- Offender/participant lesson plans, <http://nicic.org/library/016672>
- Facilitator training manual, <http://nicic.org/library/017124>
- Facilitator training program on DVD, <http://nicic.org/library/018311>