DACC becomes a model of evidence-based programming

Staff members at the Drug Abuse Correctional Center (DACC) have been engaged in an exciting evidence-based program redesign process since March of 2013 and their progress to date is highly impressive.

The project has been a collaborative effort involving DACC staff teams, the Division of Adult Institutions (DAI), the Wisconsin Correctional Center System (WCCS), the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute (UCCI), and the Reentry Unit.

This ground-breaking initiative reflects the DOC’s commitment to the design and implementation of programs and strategies grounded in the principles of effective intervention. The department's Mission, Vision, and Core Values statements, as well as the Reentry Business Plan, reflect this prioritized focus on implementation of evidence-based practice (EBP).

EBP is defined as the progressive, organizational use of direct, current scientific evidence to guide and inform efficient and effective correctional program service provision. Validated assessment of criminogenic risk and need, followed by application of research-driven intervention strategies will ultimately result in reduced recidivism and improved public safety for all citizens of Wisconsin. The redesign project at DACC represents a unique opportunity to take a phased approach to realignment with the research on effective correctional interventions.

UCCI Consultants introduced the redesign project during a "kick-off" meeting in March of 2013. Following this session, subcommittees dedicated to the areas of Assessment and Programming, Scheduling, Behavior Management Systems, and Quality Assurance were convened. A Multidisciplinary Implementation Team was also created involving representatives from all subcommittees, UCCI consultants, and local and central office administrative staff members. These committees have actively examined existing programming and operations and have worked towards implementing the redesign deliverables as outlined by UCCI. Technical assistance, training, and support have been provided by UCCI consultants throughout this process. DACC personnel have been open, honest, innovative, passionate, and incredibly creative in their approaches to program redesign activities.

"I speak for myself and all DACC staff members when I share that we are honored to have been chosen as the pilot site for evidence-based practices as applied to treatment programming," said DACC Superintendent Jeff Jaeger. "We are very excited that our work in this project will become the future treatment model for the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. Project results thus far have exceeded all expectations! These accomplishments would not have been realized without the hard work, dedication, and initiative of all DACC staff."

Training and professional development opportunities have been central to project successes. All DACC staff members have been involved in the following in-service sessions to date: Core Correctional Practices/Cognitive Behavioral Interventions, Thinking for a Change, Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Substance Abuse, Impaired Driving Assessment Administration, and COMPAS Advanced Interpretation Training. Training for Trainers has also been provided in a number of the aforementioned content areas to allow for sustainability of program redesign efforts. Additionally, a number of clarifying responsibility assessments, pre- and post- measures, and progress reporting mechanisms have been added to the assessment protocols at DACC—allowing staff to design effective case plans and to deliver responsive group interventions.

Facilitator observation and coaching sessions have been introduced into the redesign framework. Direct feedback to group facilitators and process enhancement through goal-setting and support services will allow for continuous quality improvement. DACC staff have been trained on the effective use of group facilitator observation tools and these have been piloted in recent weeks with very positive results. Kelly Pitocco, UCCI consultant/coach stated, "The staff at DACC are incredibly talented—highly skilled in their effective use of group facilitation strategies and sensitive to diverse learning needs of group participants—a pleasure to work with."

Quala Champagne, WCCS warden and Chris Krueger, WCCS deputy warden, recently shared their impressions of the DACC redesign process: "We knew that if given the opportunity and the necessary supports, the staff at the WI-DOC Drug Abuse Correctional Center could meet this daunting redesign challenge and set an incredibly positive example for their peers across the agency. We are so proud of their outstanding accomplishments!"

Lessons learned through the DACC EBP Redesign Project will be shared throughout department as a whole.

Stay tuned to MyDoc for additional updates as the project unfolds!