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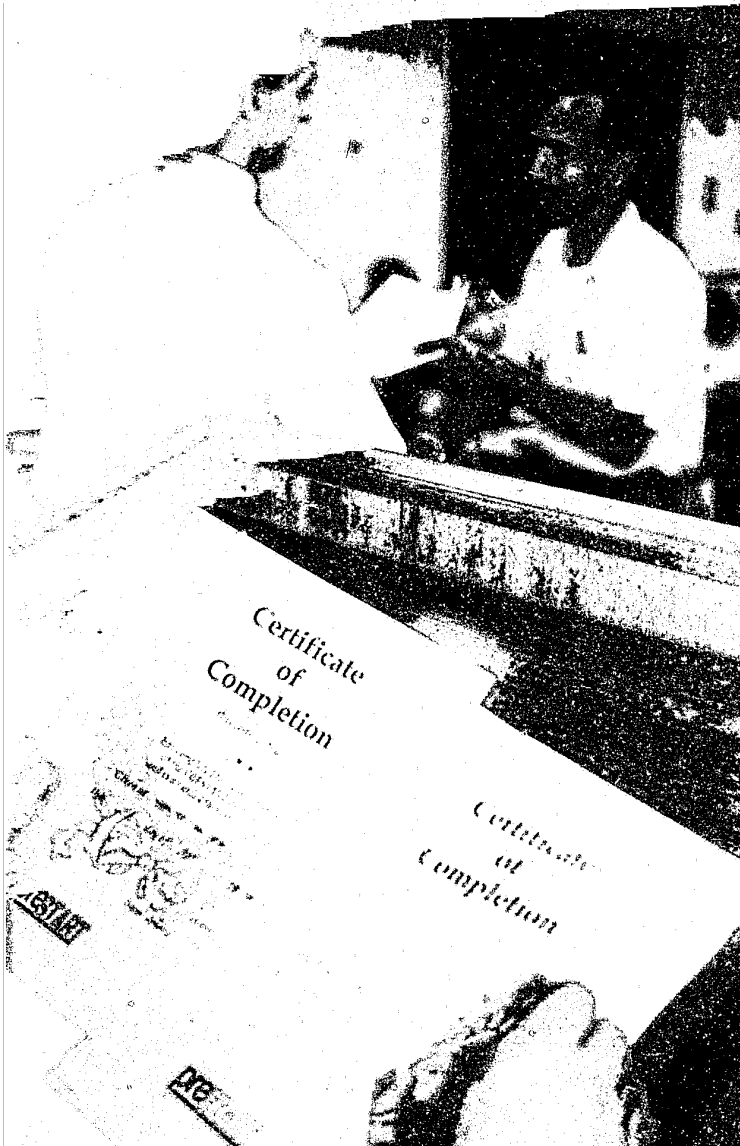
into corrections

PreStart

offering inmates
training to stay
out of prison
after release



Logan Correctional Center
Assistant Warden Greg Firkus
hands out Certificates of
Completion to inmates who have
completed the PreStart program at
the prison. The two-week program
is a mandatory assignment present-
ed within three months of an
inmates' release date.



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Quarterly News Notes

Gov. Edgar announces fast-track for Tamms work camp

Gov. Jim Edgar announced on Dec. 27 that a 200-bed work camp at the site of the new closed maximum security prison will open more than a year earlier than planned because of an expedited construction schedule.

"Southern Illinois will begin to reap the benefits of siting the super max prison at Tamms more than a year ahead of schedule," the Governor said. "The 200 inmates assigned to the work camp will provide support services for the new prison when it is occupied. Meanwhile, they will be able to perform work in nearby communities," Edgar added.

The area's economy will benefit from the employment of 95 people to staff the camp.

Bids for construction are expected to be awarded in April, 1994, and construction is scheduled to begin in May. The camp will cost about \$5 million to build and should be completed by April, 1995. The camp will house minimum security inmates who will provide support to the new prison including dietary services, laundry, maintenance and grounds keeping. □

Prison AIDS education program targets behavior change

How do you provide effective education about AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases to inmates? Particularly, inmates who rely on peer groups on the street for information and who may need straight answers to sensitive, personal questions about risk behaviors?

One answer is peer education. In September, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Department of Corrections identified the need and started a pilot program at Stateville Correctional Center in Joliet. In consultation with the facility's medical director, an inmate was selected and trained to become a peer educator on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STD). He attended a two-day training session consisting of information on HIV and STD transmission, symptoms, treatment and counseling techniques.

Stateville's Health Care Unit provides on-going assistance to the peer educator, and IDPH's AIDS Activity Section staff provide monthly support and guidance.

"Because of the success of the AIDS pre-release program, which teams an AIDS educator with an ex-offender, the Department of Corrections gave quick approval for the peer education pilot," said Judith Coe, Department of Corrections Public Health Coordinator. □

Castillo named 1994 Correctional Officer of the Year

Dixon Correctional Center's Hector Castillo was named Correctional Officer of The Year by Director Howard A. Peters III and Governor Edgar at a ceremony in the Governor's Office on May 5. Correctional Officer Castillo was chosen for the award based on his outstanding work as an inner patrol officer at the prison. He has received numerous commendations for his professionalism and alertness in uncovering contraband and quelling disturbances.

Officer Castillo was recognized as a part of Correctional Officer Week in Illinois which was designated May 1-7 by proclamation of the Governor.

"The courage and compassion shown by these professional men and women is the driving force behind the outstanding correctional system operating in Illinois today," said Edgar. □

Inmate health costs cut again with bidding strategy

Gov. Jim Edgar announced the state has entered into a \$12.3 million contract with a minority-owned firm to provide health care to inmates at three downstate correctional centers.

The contract is the first for inmate health care services between the Department of Corrections and a minority-owned firm.

"We are particularly pleased to have a minority-owned firm successfully bid on this medical services contract," the Governor said. "Over the last three years the Department of Corrections reduced costs \$5 million by competitively bidding medical services contracts."

The three-year contract with Correctional Healthcare Solutions, Inc. of Chalfont, PA, will provide for medical, dental, mental health and nursing care for more than 3,100 inmates at the Lincoln, Logan and Taylorville Correctional Centers.

"The courts have decided that inmates have a constitutional right to health care services while in prison, but the state makes every effort to hold down the medical costs for those men and women," said Corrections Director Howard A. Peters III. "Through competitive bidding we have actually reduced costs." □

INSIGHT

into corrections

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HAS PRESTART LIVED UP TO EXPECTATIONS FOR PAROLE SYSTEM REFORM?



The switch to service centers for parolees and self-help classes for inmates locked-up in prison raises questions if you view parole as an extension of prison rather than a bridge to society. But, prison staff say releasees who want to change their ways after release now have a better chance.

While important police functions continue at the agency, PreStart aims to stop criminal thinking and acts before they occur in the community. Survival skills and planning can help free inmates from doing life in prison on the installment plan.

To really gauge the effect of reform on Illinois' parole system, you must decide for yourself what parole should be. What is the most important aspect of returning former inmates to communities they came from? Is it intensive staff supervision? Or, as simple as a change in behavior of the releasee? Is it public aid support, training and a job? Or, do released inmates need all these things

in order to protect you and your family from these people proven to be a threat to your safety and society?

Public safety is more than an underlying priority for programs at the Illinois Department of Corrections. It is the central tenet in the mission statement of the agency. Providing safety in a cost-effective approach is equally important.

by **Brian Fairchild**

Each of these aspects listed here about what prison releasees need to achieve a successful reintegration into society are important. But, lately, the definition of what protects the public is undergoing some reevaluation. The linkage is being made in many newspapers across Illinois between the criminal mugging a taxpayer gets from smash-and-grab gangbangers and some "lock-em-all-up at any cost" proposals championed at the expense of the public treasury. Getting tough on crime has a cost. Where does that cost reach a reasonable rate of return in controlling killers and punks? When is the issue being used as a campaign slogan that plays well at the polls with the financial landmines deftly hidden?

What is the price of protection?

As with most political conundrums, the answer most likely lies in the middle. Simply stated, "do what you can pay for."

Any plan that says you can "buy low and 'cell' high" in financing public safety reforms should be scrutinized cautiously. Do these plans call for us to raise and spend hundreds of millions more tax dollars on a legion of parole agents to monitor releasees and send them back to prison for the slightest of infractions?

It may not be smart to buy into these ideas when alternative measures like the PreStart program are in operation and available for study.

Six years ago....

The PreStart program that replaced traditional parole in Illinois nearly three years ago is a good example of balancing the competition for funding government responsibilities, according to corrections officials. PreStart proponents argue that the program delivers more for the money spent than the previous system ever could.

It's helpful to take a look farther back in time to the report of the Task Force on Released Inmates issued in January, 1990. The findings of this group offer some of the real background in what the Illinois Department of Corrections is doing with the PreStart program today.



Lincoln CC PreStart Coordinator Margaret Conner, standing, wraps up a module 10 class with brief questions to each inmate about what they have learned in the course of their PreStart training.



A joint resolution of the Illinois Senate and House filed in July, 1988, created the Task Force on Released Inmates. More than a year later, one of the 14 recommendations in the task force report to lawmakers talked about Release School. PreStart program roots can be traced to issues covered in this analysis and recommendation.

The issues, discussion and recommendation contained in this section of the task force report read as follows:

While virtually all prison releasees now participate in some pre-release orientation, many inmates return to the community unprepared or ill-equipped for independent living. The pre-release programs at each adult correctional center should be high priority and consist of a standardized, comprehensive, educational module which is meaningful to prison releasees.

It is recommended that the Department of Corrections (DOC) Community Services Division coordinate and develop a comprehensive release school program. The goal of the program should be to successfully prepare inmates for reintegration into independent

living. Whenever possible, family members should be involved in the program. A community resource directory should be provided to the inmate. In order to maximize the meaning of this program for inmates, it is suggested that the release school program be a school assignment.

Preparation for release should begin soon after incarceration. DOC recidivism data indicate that 43% of all inmates released from adult correctional centers will return within three years. Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) data indicate a 32% re-incarceration rate within the first 20 months of release. Even more detailed data from ICJIA indicate peak recidivism, as defined by arrest, occurs in the second and third months following release, with a gradual decrease from that point.

The assumption is that a key contributing factor to early recidivism is inadequate preparation of inmates for the transition from prison to community life. DOC Administrative Directive 01.07.930 A-C, Release School, sets forth procedures and topics to be covered in the release school program. In practice the intensity of this class varies considerably from one institution to another, and in no case does it exceed a few hours in length.

SIU-Carbondale evaluates PreStart with federal grant

The PreStart Evaluation Project staff expressed their thanks to staff at both the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority and the Illinois Department of Corrections for the support provided to their research efforts. In particular, they expressed gratitude for the support provided by the many individuals working for the Department of Corrections that were willing to talk with them and point them in the right direction when they weren't really sure what to ask or to look for.

"The support of Deputy Director Marjorie Brown, PreStart Administrator Barry Bass, and Research Scientist Robert Jones was especially helpful," states the introduction to the report.

The introduction also dedicates the study to the individuals working within the PreStart program citing their commitment and energy.

"Especially noteworthy have been the efforts of Barry Bass, an individual whose humanity and caring spirit is reflected in the best that PreStart has to offer," the study concludes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The PreStart Evaluation Project being conducted by a number of faculty and students of the Center for the Study of Crime, Delinquency, and Corrections at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale is in the process of examining the implementation and impact of the PreStart program. Representing a significant departure from

traditional pre-release and post-release offender structures and programming, the program was implemented in the summer of 1991 by the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). With the introduction of the PreStart program, Illinois introduced a bifurcated system into its mandatory supervised release program for persons recently released from prison. Radically different from most parole supervision structures, PreStart separates the surveillance and supervision functions of parole from integrative social service provision functions. After mandated specialized institutional preparation for release (termed Phase I programming), the vast majority of releasees are allowed to voluntarily utilize community resources brokered through a system of newly developed Community Service Centers. The Service Centers are designed to be information and resource brokerage facilities, intended to promote the abilities of releasees to develop and implement effective employment, residential living, and treatment plans.

For releasees who present specific needs, Illinois has planned the implementation of specialized service delivery mechanisms:

(a) four Community Drug Intervention Programs, which will provide services and drug testing for releasees posing manifest substance abuse needs;

(b) contracted services for specialized interventions with selected sex offenders will be available under the PreStart program; and

(c) development of a Special Intensive Supervision Unit to which certain releasees who are thought to pose enhanced risks to public safety, and those released from the Dixon Springs and Greene County Impact Incarceration Programs, will be assigned.

The Intensive Supervision Unit is the only component of the PreStart program that retains the traditional surveillance function of parole supervision. The total package of services and programs available for releasees in the community is termed Phase II programming.

This brief description of the PreStart program clearly suggests that what the State of Illinois is attempting to do with inmates recently released from prison represents a significant departure from traditional parole supervision models. This change effort involves a significant transformation in the philosophy, structure, and practice by which inmates in the State of Illinois are conditionally allowed to reenter the community.

This interim report focuses on issues of policy development and Phase I program implementation. The policy context in which the program was conceived and the process by which it was formulated and developed is examined in the initial section of the report. A variety of data sources were utilized to discover that PreStart was developed in a turbulent policy environment, that the reform was the

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Because most inmates leave the institution without even basic identification such as a social security card, it is apparent that the release school program should be strengthened.

In addition to covering the topics currently identified in the release school directive, this program should assist inmates in acquiring certified copies of documents such as social security cards, birth and insurance records, military records, school and training transcripts and certificates which may be needed upon release.

The release school program should be a vehicle for developing inmate employment histories, training inmates in the proper completion of job and/or public assistance applications, training them in the use of resources such as the Job Services' automated Job Search System, and other private, non-profit, and public agency resources. Special pro-

gramming should be provided for non-English speaking inmates.

Independent living skills and practical information for obtaining employment and assistance are important components to the success of an inmate released to his or her community. Therefore, the release school curriculum should be expanded and given higher priority.

This analysis provided the genesis of the PreStart curriculum in use at prisons across Illinois today. However, the program is more than the early ideas suggested in the report. Corrections staff have taken many of the good ideas in this early evaluation and added some of their own to create the PreStart program introduced by the agency in April, 1991.

Supervision of violent offenders, sexually dangerous releasees and those with chronic substance abuse problems is a more intensive form of supervision handled by special units of the Community Services Division. But, most releasees pose less of a threat to public safety than these groups, and getting them out of prison and into a job or training program is going to soak up fewer tax dollars in the end.

Targeting the expensive monitoring programs to releasees who pose the greatest threat to society—and PreStart to any inmate who may benefit—is a short definition of the logic driving the policy.

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result of long-standing disenchantment with existing parole structures, and that a severe budget crisis was the precipitating factor which determined the timing of PreStart's birth. Pragmatic financial and organizational concerns drove much of the process which resulted in the PreStart program but the program does also reflect changing correctional philosophies within IDOC.

The timing of the restructuring of parole in terms of planning, staff morale, and available resources was unfortunate. The dash for funding necessitated an abrupt and abbreviated planning process. Staff morale sunk to an all time low. Even with the external funding available to subsidize Phase II programming, remaining IDOC budgetary constraints would limit the amount of staff and equipment accessible to implement PreStart smoothly and to facilitate the inherent link desired between Phase I and Phase II. Programs that were not yet clearly defined--i.e., lacking solid program parameters--had to be implemented on a time line corresponding with the start of a new fiscal year. Thus, the bulk of the program formulation process lasted only a few months.

The hasty process of program development made it difficult to identify and accommodate implementation contingencies that were likely to develop. Understandably, this meant that the program was formulated without having widespread legitimacy among groups that could shape its eventual implementation.

Coupled with an unstable policy environment, many barriers to successful program implementation were bred in the formulation process.

The present study also provides an overview of the organizational environment in which the program was implemented, highlighting the less than ideal context in which it was translated into action. A number of factors influential in shaping program outcomes, and often responsible for the level of implementation success, are discussed. Assessments are based on site visit observations, interviews with PreStart staff and inmates, and an analysis of questionnaires from PreStart Phase I and Phase II staff.

The study then looks at the implementation of Phase I programming and examines how a variety of system-wide and facility-based factors promoted an uneven level of implementation across facilities. In particular, the introduction of an inadequate program model and curriculum under fairly rigid implementation conditions established by Central Office aggravated existing morale and staffing patterns. Not feeling an "ownership" of the change, many staff are still hostile toward the PreStart program and how it was implemented.

The implementation process was plagued by inadequate resources in the form of staff, instructional materials, and physical space to deliver the program. Communication patterns were also quite weak within many facilities and between Central Office and facility staff. Many staff did not understand the goals of PreStart

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First steps toward the world

Phase I of the PreStart program is divided into 10 three-hour modules. These modules cover a two-week period of instruction about three months prior to an inmate's release from prison. The program is built on the concept of providing inmates with materials, resources and support services to help them change their lives after release from the prison system. The program also goes a long way in convincing the potential releasee that the need for a change in their life is in order. This probability is based on what they tried before and where it got them.

They need to take a look at themselves. How will they fit back into the community? What can they reasonably achieve to help them be successful after they're released?

"The initial modules of PreStart are a wake-up call to inmates. That message gains intensity during the two week program," said Willie Holton-Halbert, who was chairperson of the PreStart curriculum committee and is now executive assistant to the PreStart superintendent. She advanced to her current position after helping create one of the prison system's best PreStart programs at Pontiac.

The program focuses on personal issues at the beginning: Concepts like personal development, goal and decision making. These personal issues that reflect the make-up of an individual are examined and discussed.

"When PreStart first started there was some negativity and resentment to the program. What evolved after some months of struggle was the understanding on our part that an inmate's recogni-

tion of why he or she was incarcerated is only part of the equation. One issue we emphasize during the first module of the PreStart program is the fact they are going home now. How they come to terms with their past is important, but it's something they can't change. What they do today is something they can control. Let's help them avoid a return to prison," said Holton-Halbert.

The first class in the PreStart program puts the burden of change on the inmate. The rest of the modules are designed to make that burden easier to carry. This reinforces the need to start planning to stay out of prison. The life they choose to lead after release can either shape and control them, or they can control it.

"The second module of the program deals with what we call survival skills. It is linked directly to the personal development we talk about the day before. These inmates need skills and information to help carry out plans for personal growth discussed in the first module. The wrap-up to this idea comes on the next day in module three. Here's where we bring home the question to them about what brought them to prison this time -- whether it's the first, second or fifth bit they've done. We ask them why are they here? Why not use these specific skills or strategies in a positive manner to help you stay free?" she said.

"Personal development is the key. We try to get the inmates to focus on the way they have chosen to live this life. We want them to consider a different way of life because what they did before obviously didn't work. It either led them back to the prison system or brought them to the prison system for the first time," she said.

Self esteem is important in this program. The value an inmate puts on him or herself is often reflected in the value they place on others and the manner they use in dealing with others. The attitude they have toward life and themselves, how this situation has affected their families, and who is responsible for the acts that led to imprisonment are all part of group discussions in the initial PreStart meetings.

"It's interesting to me to see what happens in this classroom environment as these issues are discussed. Initially, most of the inmates will remain silent. Then, pretty soon, you have an intense discussion going on where the teacher is taught how tough it is to deal with the life these people have led. It is this interaction that makes PreStart what it is," added Holton-Halbert.

The first three classroom sessions of PreStart are a careful introduction to the program designed to show inmates how helpful the instruction can be to them if they make a commitment to use what they learn.

"It is a mandatory program and that turns some of the inmates off initially. But, I think we do a good job of showing inmates that the decision to stay free is in their hands. They have to make that decision for themselves and we encourage them in that direction during our intro-

duction to the program. Still, we can only provide the tools and plans that will help them to stay out. They must commit to the idea and do their best from there on," said Holton-Halbert.

"In the fourth module we talk about the need for each inmate to have a plan of action before they are released. If a person wants to eliminate the negative or destructive influences in their life, it helps if there is a plan in place to help them do that. It could be as simple as getting up at 7 a.m. and going to bed before midnight instead of hanging around the streets all night with the other people who do that," said Holton-Halbert.

"We call this an Individual Development Plan. It's important to know exactly what you are going to do every day for the first week after release. Specific goals are set in five areas. These areas involve your family and friends, financial and housing needs, job, school

or training programs you are interested in, any counseling or medical needs identified and personal goals that can be as simple as just getting up on time each morning to accomplish these goals," she said.

This same planning and goal setting strategy is charted in one month and six month timeframes. Specific goals are set for achievement during each timeframe in the same five areas outlined for the one week plan. In addition, releasees fill out a two year goal. It may be characterized as a single goal that they set for themselves. The two year goal identifies the most important things they will have achieved within two years of release.

"The two year goal could be as simple as staying out of prison. Some inmates list having a job that pays more than \$10 an hour. Others say the important goal is keeping their family together, or their children in school," said Holton-Halbert.

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and the necessity of its implementation. Orientation and meaningful staff training/development programs were lacking during the early stages of implementation.

Despite the many significant barriers to successful implementation, evaluation staff witnessed the existence of many bona fide Phase I programs. The key factors resulting in these outcomes were the acknowledged priority given PreStart by the Director and his immediate staff, the vigilance of certain Community Services Division staff to "keep things afloat," and strong administrative support for PreStart by high level facility administrators. Visible, active, and forceful support of PreStart was demonstrated in a variety of ways -- e.g., in the form of attending classes and graduation ceremonies, assigning committed and competent staff to key PreStart functions, lubricating relationships across organizational subunits, etc., -- and appeared to be the key factor distinguishing successful programs from unsuccessful programs. Notably, the degree of implementation success did not appear overly constrained by facility security level, inmate population composition, or resource levels. Only in one facility were resource levels so low that the integrity of the PreStart program was jeopardized.

Committed staff, who are more likely to remain vitalized if supported by team teaching and staff rotation patterns, were found at all site vis-

its, but at some facilities the staff as well as the inmates were disaffected and demoralized. This tended to reflect general organizational cultures more so than anything specific about PreStart.

The process by which inmates developed Individual Development Plans (IDPs) with the help of PreStart staff was also examined. IDPs were designed to serve as the link between Phase I and Phase II programming, and to guide both inmates and PreStart Phase II staff in the delivery and acquisition of needed community services. In general, and across all facilities, despite the centrality of the IDP to effective PreStart programming, IDPs play a limited role in Phase I efforts. They are not taken seriously by most staff and inmates, and are not tailored to reflect the unique needs of particular individuals.

Implementation of PreStart at Community Correctional Centers (CCCs) was generally much weaker than at correctional institutions. This tended to reflect the greater flexibility allowed CCCs by Central Office in the offering of PreStart than was allowed the institutions, as well as the common view of CCC staff that PreStart is redundant to current pre-release programming. This was not found to be true, however; the CCCs with the weakest PreStart programs also exerted questionable levels of effort to promote the reintegration of their residents. In particular, problems presented by Electronic Detention clients were noted.

Reactions of the PreStart's primary targets of

change, inmates, to Phase I PreStart programming were the subject of a separate analysis and generated some very interesting findings. In general, it was found that the Illinois Department of Corrections has put together a pre-release program that has been very well received by the vast majority of its consumers. The program is generally perceived by inmates to provide them with practical and meaningful skills, attitudes, and information that will help them make a smoother transition to the community. Over 70 percent of inmate respondents reported the overall quality of PreStart instruction as good or outstanding and over 65 percent of the inmates reported that PreStart has helped them in a variety of ways. Inmate reactions to PreStart, however, varied somewhat across facilities, with certain facilities consistently ranking quite low on a variety of indicators of program success.

A descriptive overview of program components associated with Phase II efforts was also presented. A preliminary implementation analysis with focus on particular issues presented by Community Service Center operations, Community Drug Intervention Units, and the Special Intensive Supervision Unit will be presented in a forthcoming report.

Finally, the responses of representatives from a statewide sampling of criminal justice and social service agencies to the PreStart program were examined. Unfortunately the response rate

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In the next class, inmates learn about resume writing and good techniques for presenting job skills to a prospective employer.

This module teaches inmates that there are different types of skills they may possess, even if they have never had a steady job or career prior to incarceration.

Inmates who have little to show in a chronological resume are encouraged to create a "functional" resume that lists skills like literacy, positive personality traits and other adaptive or transferable skills that would apply to a variety of positions.

"We discuss these issues in depth, and inmates leave the class with resumes that emphasize their good qualities," said Holton-Halbert.

The session winds up with a presentation on how to fill out job applications and what follow-up ideas work well in trying to nail down a job.

"Last but not least in this session is discussion of what to do when answering questions about felony convictions in a

job application," says Holton-Halbert.

"We talk about what can happen if you lie about your past. It could be grounds for dismissal. It nearly always comes back to haunt you if you lie, and the fact that you're stressed out wondering when your employer is going to discover your record is a difficult situation to work under. They must make this decision for themselves. But, I tell inmates it's better to be truthful and lose a few opportunities than force yourself into living a lie."

PreStart counselors suggest inmates make a notation next to the felony record question on an application that doesn't list the felony but indicates they would like the opportunity to discuss what happened in an interview.

"During the next module we have a workshop on how to conduct yourself during a job interview and answer these tough questions," said Holton-Halbert.

"Inmates have commented that one of the best things we do for them in this module is role playing. They get to practice interviews and deal with the ques-

tions about their prison record, and what they've done to improve job skills while in prison as far as vocational or educational training.

"This type of hands on experience gives them confidence and a framework to use in dealing with the tough questions a good job interview will cover," she adds.

Inmates receive scores which rate their performance during the interview. A standard review format is applied to the performance, then suggestions for improvement are provided to the inmates.

The next module is called a Community Resources Workshop. The program starts with a discussion of the social service agencies which provide help to releasees in education, health care, substance abuse counseling, housing assistance and job searches.

"In our world today a drivers license is a critical need, especially in non-metropolitan areas with little or no public transportation. You really need a license

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to the mailed survey was poor, since only about one-third of the surveys were returned. This factor, coupled with the finding that most of those who did respond were unaware of PreStart until they received the survey instrument, limits the value of this component of the study. Nevertheless, some tentative findings emerged. Even though many of the survey respondents had limited information about PreStart (that gleaned from the questionnaire itself), most seemed generally supportive of the notion that PreStart is a good idea.

Primarily for the criminal justice respondents, approval of the concept was matched by a concern that PreStart does not adequately provide for public protection. Criminal justice agency representatives had mixed to low expectations of PreStart in terms of its ability to reduce new crimes, or lower the return rate of releasees to prison. Slightly more than two out of five respondents saw no difference between PreStart and previous parole services in terms of helping ex-offenders reintegrate into their communities.

Probably because of their lack of knowledge of alternative correctional interventions, social service agencies were more ambivalent about

their expectations of PreStart. However, of the social service agencies who did respond to the survey, the overwhelming majority saw no significant regulatory, legal, or policy barriers, or any other obstacles, to service delivery for PreStart clients.

On the other hand, both criminal justice and social service agencies did identify gaps in services, primarily related to housing, employment and job training. Other needed services identified by respondents were in the areas of drug treatment and mental health.

Based on the above and other findings discussed in the interim report, the following recommendations are offered to the Department of Corrections for their consideration to enhance PreStart programming. They include:

- Improve Community Service Center/institutional linkages;
- Promote activities that are likely to promote the eventual successful reintegration of offenders throughout their period of incarceration and link these efforts with PreStart programming;
- Increase presentations by outside resource providers;
- Involve successful ex-offenders as PreStart

presenters as much as possible;

- Continue to develop relief strategies for classroom presenters;
- Establish an ongoing process to identify/evaluate and disseminate successful PreStart techniques;
- Continue attempts to have staff feel an "ownership" of the program;
- Enhance training programs for PreStart presenters and Phase II staff.
- Examine very closely the facilities in which inmates report negative attitudes toward PreStart and PreStart personnel. After assessing causes of these perceptions, take remedial actions.
- Allow inmates to provide systematic and meaningful feedback to facility and system personnel. Class evaluations should be routinized.
- IDOC should engage in efforts which promote the systematic and continuous exchange of information about the PreStart program between IDOC, criminal justice agency representatives, and allied social services agencies.
- A greater allocation of resources should be devoted to the Central Office to allow for an enhanced level of PreStart program development, administration, monitoring, and evaluation. □

to get and keep a job. We go over the study material and conduct mock testing on the material so each inmate who will need a license is prepared to take care of this immediately.

"There are other documents and things you also need before you start looking for a job. A birth certificate, social security card and Job Service application are all things we help the inmates obtain," said Holton-Halbert.

Help on the street

Groups and organizations providing assistance to releasees in the community send representatives to the class during the eighth module of the PreStart program. Lists of resource agencies for different areas of the state are available for easy reference when needed.

"Community-based resources such as the Job Training Partnership Act Program, Earnfare, Prisoner Release Ministries, The Safer Foundation, Project Jump Start and many others are examples of employment services introduced during module eight," said Holton-Halbert.

The next module is devoted to strategies for dealing with stress, managing anger and hostility, actions that put you at risk for substance abuse and managing family problems.

"That's a lot for one class. But, controlling your emotions instead of them controlling you is the central theme of this class. Many of us excuse ourselves from certain behaviors because we just got mad and couldn't help what happened. But getting stressed out and reacting with anger are two things that don't have to go hand-in-hand. We spend a lot of time in this class on simple things like thinking before you say something you might regret.

"It is important to identify whether or not you can control the things that make you angry. If a child's behavior makes you angry, then you can react to that behavior with a plan to correct it instead of just getting mad. On the other hand, when you get angry over not getting a job you really wanted, you are better off to

focus on your next interview opportunity as a way of dealing with the anger.

"We say to inmates it is normal for people to feel strong anger, but the exploding way of expressing anger hurts relationships. Anger is an all-out response to stress. It is an irrational, utterly gut-level reaction. It's not only an uncomfortable emotion, it can also be destructive and dangerous to the person experiencing it and those around him or her.

"The reality of anger is in the conse-

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"In the fourth module we talk about the need for each inmate to have a plan of action before they are released. If a person wants to eliminate the negative or destructive influences in their life, it helps if there is a plan in place to help them do that. It could be as simple as getting up at 7 a.m. and going to bed before midnight"

— Willie Holton-Halbert

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quences it generates. We teach inmates that anger can cloud your thinking and prevent you from solving the problem that created the anger in the first place," said Holton-Halbert.

"Usually anger makes a bad situation worse," she adds.

After discussion on this topic, most inmates agree that their anger has never been an asset to them, according to Holton-Halbert.

"It is a good introduction to the idea that anger is a learned behavior that can be controlled. You can choose not to react with anger to a situation," said Holton-Halbert.

"We have some good classroom examples of the message I'm trying to explain. For instance, we assume a parent is on the telephone and their child has continually interrupted the conversation. When the parent gets off the telephone, he or she might react with anger to the child's behavior.

"The PreStart leader suggests that we take a look at this situation. Were you on the phone for a long time? Are you, the parent, thinking thoughts that you never have time for yourself and this is just another example of the kid keeping me from having a life of my own?

"You can stop this train of thought that's leading you into anger and a terrible conclusion. Count to 10 and remember your plan to deal with your child's behavior. Then, carry out the plan. Tell your child that you've told him or her about being punished for interrupting during conversations and that means on the telephone, too," she said.

"We show that anger is a by-product of situations and interaction. It may spur you to a plan of action, but it should be a constructive plan."

In addition to dealing with anger and the situations it creates, this module of PreStart reinforces the substance abuse education and counseling that many inmates have received while imprisoned. A decision to return to using drugs is no different than a decision to give in to your anger when faced with a difficult decision. In addition, stress which causes anger in some can create the need for escape and substance abuse in the addict or alcoholic.

For those inmates who have overcome their denial of an alcohol or drug dependency, this final reminder of the real consequences of that type of lifestyle is important.

Graduation is the highlight in the final module of PreStart. But, before the graduation certificates are handed out, some

A PreStart class day-to-day outline

Here is a breakdown on what happens in the classroom during each of the ten days devoted to the PreStart program.

DAY 1 -- Students should gain confidence in the aims and conduct of the program. The group discusses the impact of their incarceration and the implications that await them on release.

DAY 2 -- Decision making is examined. Exercises like making a budget illustrate the choices and decisions soon to be at hand. The inmates begin to see direct connections between their decisions and survival. Decision making is identified as a tool they will use for survival in the community.

DAY 3 -- Change is presented as an integral idea for understanding success and failure. The session focuses on the impact of success and failure on self-esteem. Reasonable goals are discussed.

DAY 4 -- Setting goals based on acceptable values and outcomes is discussed. Each inmate uses the skills taught so far to craft an Individual Development Plan. Students study the relationship between their plans and how to use them at the service centers back in the community.

DAY 5 -- Personal employability skills are identified and evaluated. Resume types are explored and each student crafts a resume. The importance of employment is stressed.

DAY 6 -- The various methods of seeking work and processing job applications are discussed. Inmates confront their felony record as an issue in getting a job and discuss how to deal with this issue in a job interview.

DAY 7 -- The inmates prepare for a job interview with a prospective employer. Mock interviews are conducted. This role playing activity helps relieve stress and suggests actions to take during the interview process.

DAY 8 -- Outside agencies that serve as resources to releasees make presentations.

DAY 9 -- Discussions take place on everyday life, methods to cope with stress, potential for substance abuse and the destructive effect these influences may have on the individual. Resources and coping mechanisms for these problems are identified.

DAY 10 -- Graduation and presentation by service center staff on help available to releasees back in the community. □

final emphasis and focus is added to the key elements of the PreStart classwork.

"Family reunification and the impact that the releasee's return will have on the family and plans to deal with the issue are of critical importance," said Holton-Halbert.

Confronting anger, fear and the anxiety of returning to the same situation that resulted in a prison term and their plans to keep that from happening again are reviewed. Reporting procedures under the Mandatory Supervised Release rules of the Community Services Division are reviewed and each inmate's Individual Development Plan is checked.

"The last thing we do before graduation is ask the inmates to fill out an evaluation questionnaire. There are important observations offered in these evaluations that have been used to make the program better," said Holton-Halbert.

"When we give the inmates a certificate

of completion at the end of the day, it might sound a little corny, but there is a lot of emotion. Some of these people have never graduated from anything in their lives," said Holton-Halbert.

Phase II

"The next phase of PreStart is just as important as the classroom work in the prison," said Barry Bass, PreStart Superintendent and chief architect of the design for the entire program.

"All the research conducted in creating this program told us that even the most comprehensive release schools needed a community-based post-release component to be effective. The federal grant we received in Fiscal Year 1992 through the Criminal Justice Information Authority gave us the resources to open 18 full-time Community Service Centers and three satellite facilities to administer the reinte-

gration work back in the communities," said Bass.

Massive increases in the population of the prison system have also driven up parole numbers. For instance, in a one year period between July, 1991, and July, 1992, the number of releasees on mandatory supervised release (or parole) increased 30% from 17,245 to 22,343. This amount may increase to more than 26,000 by the end of calendar year 1994.

Faced with these growing numbers and limited resources, corrections officials are attempting to work harder and smarter while targeting scarce resources to a program that provides more effective management without massive cost increases.

Phases I and II of the PreStart program have four distinct functions, according to Bass. The first function of providing releasees with information, education and counseling is begun at classes in the prison. But, according to Bass, this assistance is carried over to help provided at the service centers in many cases. This crossover in services also occurs during delivery of the second function. Staff screen cases as an inmate comes close to release—and during supervision in the community—to identify those who warrant more-than-routine supervision.

The last two functions are carried out solely by the service center staff. They assist releasees in accomplishing the personal goals and reintegration plans developed prior to release. They also monitor post-release progress and adjust supervision intensity according to the progress in achieving a successful reintegration to the community.

"These four functions are tied together by the release plan investigation we conduct on the homesite, completion and execution of the Individual Development Plans, case assignments to specialized supervision or treatment units and recommendations for early discharge from supervision for those releasees who have done well," said Bass.

Closer supervision is reserved for several classes of releasees who may pose greater public safety problems. Chronic drug offenders, sex offenders and violent

"We have a good model of what needs to be done for the releasee who needs more supervision. Certainly, it could and maybe should be expanded. But, we're

First, they emphasize the importance of leadership from administrative staff. This emphasis confirms the importance placed on the PreStart program by the administration. Next, they observe that staff who are charged with carrying out the program must be trained, motivated and supplied with the resources they need for effective execution of the task. Finally, the

Bass is convinced that support for the PreStart program by wardens and other administrative staff is critical to inmate acceptance of the program. At first impression, it would seem that the war-

den's support of the program would mean little to an inmate. A cynic might say it would be reason enough for most inmates to reject or rebel over the classes just because the warden was pushing it.

Bass doesn't agree.

"It tells the inmate that this is part of the overall programming at the facility. It cuts through the notion that this is a two week program that takes place right before release and that's it. The warden's support shows that virtually all the programming in the prison is tied into what we are trying to accomplish with PreStart. The substance abuse counseling vocational school and GED programs in the institution also are in preparation for release," he said.

Enthusiastic, qualified staff

Next, the researchers claimed there must be a commitment by people who conduct the programs at the prisons. The PreStart presentation teams have to be composed of individuals who are interested in doing this type of work, who are motivated and can, in turn, motivate inmates to participate at a meaningful level in what the program is intended to provide.

"We have to be cautious of staff burnout in the program," Bass adds.

"At many facilities there were six to 12 employees responsible for all the PreStart modules. Most facilities now have presentation teams of 20 to 40 individuals. This allows people to have a breather between sessions. They can stay fresh and retain enthusiasm for the program. This is important from a couple of aspects because if somebody has to fill in for another employee for whatever reason, that extra duty isn't as troublesome if it is spread around among more people," he said.

Maybe equally important is the fact that the inmates attending the PreStart sessions are more likely to be enthusiastic about the program because they are being exposed to a motivated, positive staff person instead of someone who is just going through the motions in their presentation.

This increased enthusiasm and number of staff involved has had an added benefit of increasing communication between staff at the facility on a lot of levels.

"With more people involved, they talk a lot more about how the classes are going and what can be done to make them better at the debriefings they conduct. In addition, you see staff interacting

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"This (communication) is important because the service center staff must be comfortable with what is being taught in the prison. Likewise, the PreStart presenters at the prison must know service center staff are continuing the program and delivering the services...."

— Barry Bass

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with each other who normally would not. This really helps improve overall communication at the prison. You have a wider variety of staff involved. This creates better communication and has a positive impact in other areas of the prison," said Bass.

The SIU evaluation suggests the need for more communication and cooperation between staff conducting the prison component of the program and staff working at service centers out in the community.

"We are following that suggestion and getting more service center staff involved in classes at the prisons. We're trying to cut through the notion that there are two separate PreStart programs. The Phase I component in the prison is the beginning. Phase II out in the community at the service center is a continuation of the work

begun in prison. The two phases are linked together and each must work if we want to see good results.

"This is important because the service center staff must be comfortable with what is being taught in the prison. Likewise, the PreStart presenters at the prison must know service center staff are continuing the program in the community and delivering the services they have told inmates they should seek after release," Bass claims.

When service center employees travel to a prison to teach the last module of the PreStart program, they respond to inmate questions on a variety of issues. Inmates are reassured that questions about transitional housing needs, substance abuse counseling, job searches and other important questions will be answered.

Constant fine tuning

A third issue raised in the SIU review is the need for constant evaluation and re-evaluation of the PreStart program by presentation staff and inmates who receive the instruction.

"Inmates need the opportunity to give a formal evaluation of the program at the conclusion of the class. We emphasize strongly that their experience in the PreStart program has to be meaningful to them and hold their interest," Bass said.

Staff evaluations are equally important in the evaluation process. The real key to effective communication is action on suggestions from these groups. Both staff and inmates will view PreStart as a worthwhile program if improvements are made as a result of their suggestions, according to Bass.

"Not all recommended changes will be appropriate. But it's critical that the person who made the suggestion knows it was considered. When this consideration is provided, the process works because the person still learns where we want to go with PreStart," Bass said.

"This forum for inmate and staff evaluations at the end of the program is an 'ownership' issue. This is very important to the long term effectiveness of the pro-

gram. This feedback is happening," he said.

The presentation teams run suggestions by each other on a constant basis. The more interesting or innovative the suggestion, then the more widespread the discussion.

"Something that kind of runs through all three of these groups of recommendations is the idea that there needs to be recognition of the staff who have taken on this challenge. A number of facilities have conducted appreciation ceremonies for the presentation teams where staff are acknowledged and thanked for participation in the program. Some of the facilities have gone as far as having a banquet and giving out special awards or hats, coffee cups and other mementos that let everyone know what they do is important and appreciated," Bass said.

In another move to improve the program, the agency has expanded the practice of bringing service and support agency representatives to the prisons.

"We started with one module of the program devoted to the Department of Employment Security in the initial design. This has been expanded to include representatives from groups like the Safer Foundation, St. Leonard's House and others we work with every day on the outside.

"It's difficult to get all these people together for every class when you consider there are about 50 PreStart classes being conducted every month. We're committed to bringing in a wide variety of outside sources so PreStart students are exposed to the services available in the communities to which they'll return," Bass adds.

Who would you believe?

Another effective addition to the program has been the increased use of inmates who have been back in the community for a while. These releasees have a realistic point of view to which inmates still in prison will listen. It is more meaningful for an inmate to hear the experiences of someone who is going through

the struggle of returning to the community in a positive and constructive manner.

"When a former inmate discusses how the PreStart program has helped him or her find a job, get an apartment or discover a sense of self sufficiency or success, it's a lot more convincing. It's also a way of recognizing the success that releasee has achieved," said Bass.

"These former inmates who have done well volunteer to come back and talk about their success. We don't pay them for being presenters. We don't tell them what to say and what not to say. It is a straightforward, voluntary effort that has

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"When you bring in a person who has used the tools we teach in the PreStart class to make a good transition back into the community, then they (the other inmates) listen very carefully. It gets quiet in the room"

— Barry Bass

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immense credibility with the inmates who are getting ready to be released.

"We emphasize during the PreStart program that we will look for someone in the class to come back and talk about the success they have had on the outside. It's much more meaningful for an inmate to hear this from someone who has lived that experience instead of from some staff member who has never had to live that life," said Bass.

"I think this proves to the inmates that they can regain control of their lives and that the solutions to problems they might face on the outside are based on reality

and the experience of their peers," he added.

Another benefit provided by inmates who report back to the class is debunking the negative notions held by some inmates that this is a mandatory, worthless program assignment they must sit through that doesn't apply to them.

"When you bring in a person who has used the tools we teach in the PreStart class to make a good transition back into the community, then they listen very carefully. It gets quiet in the room and you know they aren't resentful about PreStart being a mandatory program at that moment," Bass said.

Bass believes that PreStart has always been about helping inmates. It isn't really a lecture to shape up or face the music like some of them think at first. It helps when inmates hear from one of their peers who tells them that they need to take advantage of what is being offered in the classes.

"Former inmates telling the class point-blank that they do need to listen to what's going on in the program, that they do need to prepare for release, that they do need to think about things because there are going to be problems when you get out that you didn't expect is very powerful.

"Thinking about ways to resolve the problems you will face out there while in prison gives you an advantage," Bass adds.

The involvement of the top prison administrators during this final chapter of incarceration shows support and linkage of PreStart goals to the overall programming at the prison and at the service centers in the free community.

The mission of keeping these inmates from coming back to prison for committing another crime is clearly in focus.

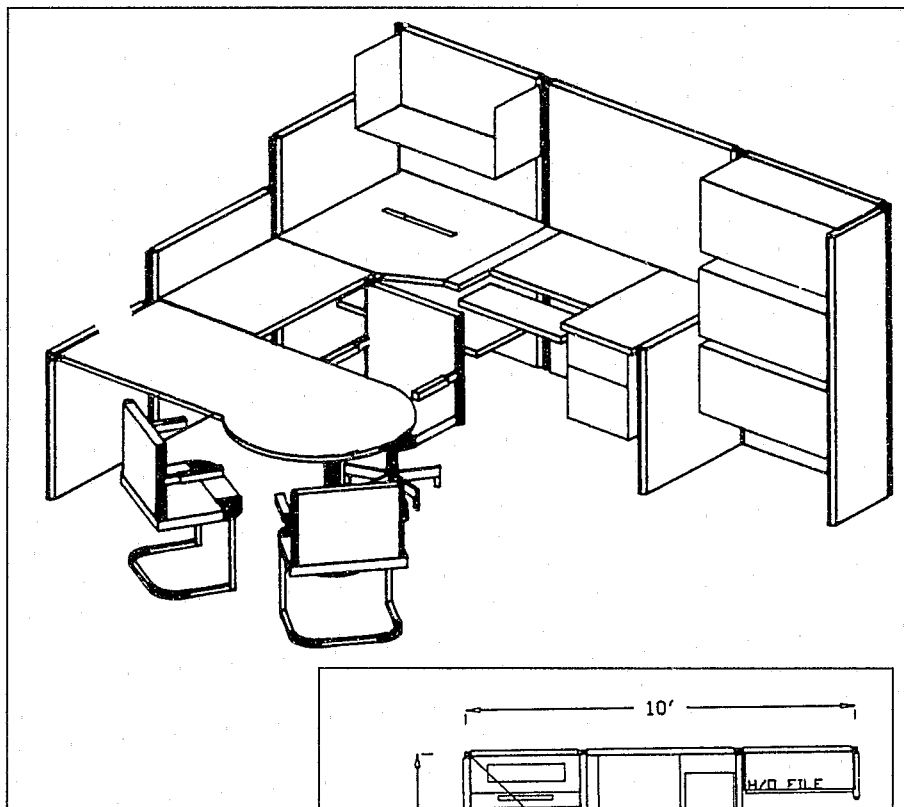
"All these efforts—in combination—get inmates thinking about the fact that they will eventually be leaving the system. It also reinforces the fact that how they've spent time in the system has an impact on how well they will do after they're released," said Bass. □

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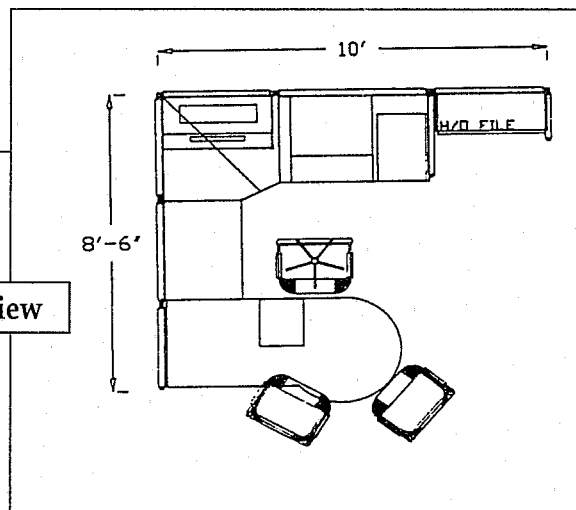
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