

Cognitive Behavioral Interventions Subcommittee
Report to the DOC Community Services Advisory Council
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I. Goal

To create a structure and funding mechanism in Minnesota that will promote and support the implementation, maintenance and growth of quality cognitive behavioral programming for offenders. To make this system flexible, fluid, and accessible.

Justification:

- 1) There are hundreds of cognitive behavioral programs for correctional clients. Many target very specific populations and programming needs. There is not a single program (or even several programs) that will fit all needs.
- 2) Each jurisdiction in the state will need to assess which program(s) will work for them given their specific and unique populations and program settings.
- 3) Cognitive behavioral programs and approaches continue to develop, evolve and improve. We need a fluid system that will allow for flexibility, change and growth within the field and will attend to responsivity issues (for clients and jurisdictions) to ensure integrity.

II. Important Considerations:

Scope: Cognitive behavioral interventions must be implemented as part of a total programming approach, rather than viewed as a “magic bullet” or a singular solution to reducing recidivism.

Jurisdictional Autonomy: It will be important for jurisdictions to retain their autonomy in implementation. For example, the *DOC must emphasize that jurisdictions may use any cognitive behavioral program or curriculum they choose, whether or not training is offered by the state in that particular program. However, the state should also emphasize the critical importance of understanding the fundamentals of cognitive behavioral program application in corrections and how to implement and maintain a quality program. Training and consultation in these areas must be available and offered as a high priority. The state should also strongly encourage jurisdictions to use the services of the Cognitive Behavioral Program Review Committee to review any cognitive behavioral curricula they are considering for implementation (details follow).*

Neutrality and Equal Access: The three delivery systems in Minnesota can create barriers in terms of consistency and equal access to resources. It will be important for the DOC to design the coordination of this plan to make the allocation of resources, services and materials equally accessible to all jurisdictions across the state that wish to participate. This approach will also help reduce resistance and regulatory complications, and will promote growth of the program statewide.

III. Brief response to the three assumptions provided to the committee

1. Sufficient funding will be available for all jurisdictions for training of cog.

While the state may be in a position to provide some funding, it is doubtful that resources will be available to fully fund this plan. It will be important that, as a supplement to the resources provided by the state, jurisdictions be supported in their efforts to obtain funding through other sources.

2. The state will have available an on-going pool of trainers on specific cog curriculum.

It will be recommended that training on specific curriculum be offered by a central pool of trainers / consultants as part of the total plan outlined below. The plan should also make training and consultation available in such critical areas as implementation, program selection and quality assurance.

3. Cog will be supported by a central technical assistance pool only when the curriculum is “certified” as meeting core principles.

The committee will be recommending that an independent Cognitive Behavioral Program Review Committee be established to review programs and determine whether they meet basic core principles. This committee will also assist in determining whether a program meets the criteria and the demand necessary to support the training of in-state trainers. It will be suggested that programs that meet this criteria be considered a “core curriculum” for training purposes, but that the term “certified” be avoided.

IV. Recommendations for implementing the plan

A. Training and technical assistance pool

Training topics: While it will be useful and necessary to offer training on specific cognitive behavioral curriculum as need dictates, it will be *even more critical* that agencies are offered “basic” cognitive approaches training and consultation (especially at the outset). Administrators, managers and line staff must have a solid foundation for understanding what constitutes cognitive behavioral approaches with offenders and a clear awareness of crucial issues around implementation, program selection and quality assurance.

Training should be made available in the following areas with the first priority being at the top of the list:

1) “*Basic*” *cognitive approaches training*. The committee recommends NIC’s videoconference: *Cognitive Approaches to Changing Offender Behavior* (or equivalent) with variations for different staffing levels – administration, management, direct service, etc.) The training should be offered on a continuous basis due to staff turnover and the importance of building and maintaining a solid foundation.

The material should include an overview of Best Practices in Corrections and how to tie in cognitive programming. It should introduce and provide skill practice in basic cognitive approaches (in both cognitive skill development and cognitive restructuring), and include an overview of individual stages of change, group process, learning styles and responsivity, and implementation issues.

- 2) Training and consultation regarding *implementation issues and program selection* (1 and 2 could be offered in a “package”).
- 3) Training and booster sessions on *specific cognitive behavioral programs* that have been identified as “core curricula” per the process outlined below.
- 4) Training, consultation, and on-going support regarding *quality assurance issues*.

Training organization/funding: The committee recommends that funding for training and consultation be provided through DOC with NIC assistance as follows: 1) coordination of the plan by qualified staff and 2) creation/maintenance of a statewide technical assistance pool of qualified trainers and consultants.

1) *Coordination*: With NIC assistance, DOC would fund sufficient, qualified staff to implement and coordinate the plan. The Coordinator(s) would be responsible for communication to jurisdictions across the state and would work closely with such resources as the MN Cognitive Network and the Cognitive Behavioral Program Review committee. The job description may include such duties as conducting training needs assessments, announcing requests for trainers and determining skill and appropriateness of potential trainers. Other duties may include working with program authors on cost and contract issues, setting up training for trainers, and organizing all details of the training sessions provided through the technical assistance training pool.

In order to address the neutrality and equal access issues, a possible strategy may be to “umbrella” the coordinator position(s) under an appropriate not-for profit agency or another neutral, statewide organization.

2) *Technical assistance pool of trainers/consultants*. Individuals with strong training skills and knowledge in a specifically identified topic or curriculum would be trained as trainers and / or consultants for that topic.

These individuals would maintain employment in their own agencies and provide training in various locations throughout the state based on need and trainer availability. A sufficient number of people would be trained to cover a broad representation of the state and keep the time demand reasonable.

To maintain skill, the trainers would deliver *at least two full trainings per year* (either for the state or their own region as appropriate) and attend at least one booster session for trainers. Support meetings and access to the author or “trainer of trainers” would also be made available.

Because compensation for trainers is an issue, it is recommended that all training related expenses be paid for by the state, and that a training fee be considered for those individuals training outside of their own jurisdictions. It is also recommended that a small fee be charged to agencies sending staff to the training sessions in order to cover some of these expenses.

B. Curricula review and core curricula selection:

It is recommended that a neutral Cognitive Behavioral Program Review Committee be created to review and rate programs based on core principles of effectiveness, and assist jurisdictions in selecting programs.

This committee should be independent, perhaps operating as a standing committee of the Minnesota Cognitive Network. Participants would be skilled cognitive program practitioners, coordinator(s) of the state plan and other qualified representatives. Membership may rotate on an annual or bi-annual basis.

The charge of the committee would be threefold:

- 1) Curriculum Evaluation Tool: The committee will spearhead the development or adoption of a professional evaluation tool that will assess curricula based on solid, research-based criteria for effective programming. It is recommended that an independent researcher be commissioned to assist the committee in this task. A list of criteria similar to that drafted by this committee should be used as a basis for this tool (see pages 6-7: *Cognitive Behavioral Program Criteria*).
- 2) Curricula Review: The committee would assist jurisdictions in reviewing and selecting cognitive behavioral curricula through the use of the professional evaluation tool. It would also provide consultation for determining the potential “fit” of a program to the needs of the jurisdiction.

It would ultimately be up to the individual jurisdiction to determine whether the program’s score and particular attributes meet their individual requirements for quality programming and implementation.

Any jurisdiction or agency would be welcome to submit a curriculum to the committee for review.

- 3) State Funding of Trainers: The committee would assist with determining whether a particular program should be selected as a “core curriculum” on which the DOC will fund training for trainers by using the following (or similar) criteria.
- a) Acceptable score or rating per professional evaluation tool.
 - b) Significant interest and need for the curriculum based on quality, statewide needs assessment.
 - c) Authors willing to train trainers for in-state training pool and negotiate acceptable pricing package (consultation, materials, training, boosters, workbook reproduction, manual reproduction, author accessibility, etc.).

Access to training: It is recommended that jurisdictions wishing to utilize the curriculum training provided by the state must do the following to qualify:

- a) Complete core training in Cognitive Approaches to Changing Offender Behavior with adequate representation at all levels of the organization: administration, management and direct service.
- b) After completing the core training, submit a brief, but justifiable Implementation Plan (indicating which curriculum(s) will be used, who will deliver, which population will be targeted, quality assurance measures, etc.). As outlined above, jurisdictions would have access to DOC technical assistance to help develop the plan if so desired.

Cognitive Behavioral Program Review Criteria

1) Research-based program development

Was the program developed based upon Social Learning Theory and Cognitive Behavioral Principles (as supported by the research on effective intervention for criminal offenders)?

*Note: Programs based upon psychoanalytic, psychotherapeutic or confrontational (shame-based) approaches are not supported by research as being effective with criminal offenders.

2) Multi-Modal Design

Is the program multi-modal in its design?

A multi-modal cognitive behavioral program will combine cognitive behavioral techniques. It will also utilize the following principles:

Restructuring Principle -Teach thinking skills used to understand how we perceive the world, others, and ourselves and how that affects our behavior.

Examples: Thinking logs / thinking reports, identification of problematic beliefs and thought patterns, identification and use of “new” or replacement thinking

Skill Principle – Teach thinking skills used to cope with life situations

Examples: Negotiation, problem solving, anger control, emotions management, moral reasoning, assertiveness, active listening.

Behavioral Principle –Utilize behavioral techniques to teach and reinforce specific, targeted behavior change, effective disapproval.

Examples: Positive Reinforcement, modeling, prompting (concrete verbal suggestions), role-playing, extinction, graduated practice, behavioral contracting.

3) Targeted areas for change supported by research

Does the program target offender change in the criminogenic risk areas that have major influence on the likelihood of criminal behavior?

- Changing anti-social attitudes, beliefs and thinking patterns.
- Changing anti-social behaviors (ex: replacing skills of lying, aggression, acting out, chemical use with more pro-social alternatives).
- Changing anti-social personality patterns (ex: increasing self-control, self-management, social perspective-taking, victim empathy).
- Promoting identification / association with anti-criminal role models. Reducing anti-social peer associations.

4) Outcome evaluation and program inclusion

Have longitudinal outcome studies been conducted regarding effectiveness of the program? If not, is there a research design currently in place?

Note: If the program is newly developed, consider whether it meets criteria # 1. If so, consider whether data is currently being collected and outcome studies are in the planning/implementation stages.

Does the program include a pre test and/or clear, entrance criteria (considering offender suitability and responsivity issues)? Does the program include clear exit or completion criteria? If not, does the author recommend using specific pre and/or post program tools that are available on public domain?

Have the included or recommended tools been tested for accuracy and effectiveness?

Does the program specify the target population(s) for which it was designed?

5) Practicality and effectiveness of implementation

Is the program designed for relative ease of use and effectiveness in correctional settings that match the target population?

- Is there a structured, well-organized instructor's manual with lesson plans?
- Is there a student workbook/manual?
- Is there any flexibility in how the program may be implemented?
- How many hours of instruction are involved?
- Is there a follow-up or aftercare component or recommendation?
- Are consultants available to help with implementation questions?
- Is the program open or close-ended?

C. Plan Implementation

It is recommended that the following (or similar) tasks be targeted for implementation, and that a **specific work plan be developed to include timetables.**

This work plan should coordinate with and compliment the work plans that address the other Best Practices areas emphasized by the 8-point plan.

TASKS:

- ✓ Disseminate information statewide regarding the plan, the importance of basic training, what will be made available to agencies, and how to access it.
- ✓ Identify and train qualified and skilled trainers in the basic cognitive approaches curriculum and make training available statewide for all levels of staff.
- ✓ Engage *Minnesota Cognitive Network* as an advisory group.
- ✓ Create the Program Review Committee.
- ✓ Hire qualified Coordinator(s) and determine where position should be “housed”.
(The person should have extensive experience with cognitive behavioral interventions for offenders and a thorough understanding of Best Practices.)
- ✓ Begin development of the professional evaluation tool.
- ✓ Implement a thorough needs assessment statewide (to be repeated on an annual basis thereafter).
- ✓ Program Review Committee begin to review programs per interest and need and select appropriate programs as core curricula.
- ✓ Identify and train qualified and skilled trainers on the selected core curricula.
- ✓ Publicize, organize and conduct initial training and booster training sessions statewide per need and interest.
- ✓ Provide on-going consultation services for implementation and quality assurance needs.

D. Recommended roles of the counties, the state, and the Minnesota Cognitive Network

- Minnesota Cognitive Network:

Serve in an advisory or consulting capacity to assist with
determining and identifying training needs
reviewing and/or selecting programs
recommending standards for trainings and boosters.
recommending trainers
recommending quality control measures and techniques

- Department of Corrections:

With NIC assistance as available, provide funding for coordinator staffing, training for trainers, and state-coordinated training, consultation and booster sessions.

Provide incentives for jurisdictions and trainers to participate in the training pool and other aspects of the program.

Use this report and other 8-point plan reports to develop and carry out a specific work plan with timelines.

Set standards for implementation, trainings and booster sessions.

- Individual jurisdictions:

Assess organizational training needs and develop a training and implementation plan.

With assistance as needed, implement appropriate plan and build in adequate quality control measures including on-going training and boosters.

Contribute qualified trainers to program as available and deemed appropriate.

V. Recommendations for remaining policy questions

A. How can we get cog courses that address gender, cultural specific, and other issues?

This committee recognizes the need for gender and culturally specific programming. It will be important to include in the “core” cognitive approaches training, the importance of addressing such responsivity issues as gender, age, and culture/ethnicity for program implementation planning.

As part of the overall plan and needs assessments, the program should continue to identify deficits and address the issues by utilizing the resources outlined above. For example, the Coordinator and/or Program Review Committee may do a search for a curriculum that will meet a specific, identified need. If it is determined that such a quality program does not exist, a qualified expert could be hired to create and field test a new curriculum.

We believe that, to effectively work with specific populations, we will also need to draw on the expertise of such bodies as the Advisory Task Force on Female Offenders and community cultural leaders.

Finally, it will be important to realize that training should be made available on gender or culturally specific programs per need, *despite* the fact that the number of participants attending will not be as high as for mainstream programs.

B. How can responsivity factors be identified (for offenders, programs, and facilitators) and a screening process developed?

The following is a list of some of the responsivity factors identified by research that should be taken into consideration for implementation planning. Each jurisdiction will need to identify or develop and utilize tools and techniques to ensure quality assurance in these areas.

Specific tools for assessing and planning in each of these areas are available for review from this sub-committee. Jurisdictions could also request consultation in these areas as part of their implementation plan.

Offenders:

Target high-risk clients with needs in such areas as:

- Impulsivity,
- Lack of social perspective and victim empathy,
- Poor interpersonal problem-solving skills,
- Insufficiently concrete thinking,
- Inadequate planning skills and
- Inability to set goals.

Also target clients who have demonstrated some motivation for change.

Other factors that must be considered are:

- Denial or minimization
- Interpersonal anxiety
- Cultural/ethnicity issues
- Gender issues
- Sexual orientation issues
- Communication barriers
- Low intelligence
- Learning disabled or brain injured

Suggested screening tools and techniques: Risk/need assessment tools to identify overall level of risk and specific criminogenic need areas; semi-structured interviews to screen for cognitive deficits; cognitive readiness tools; pre-tests designed for specific curricula; use of motivational interviewing techniques (William Miller) and assessment of “readiness for change” (Prochaska and diClemente) to determine offender’s motivation.

Programs:

Assuming target population meets description above, cognitive behavioral methods are most effective with criminal offenders. Cognitive Behavioral programs use such strategies as:

- Modeling
- Graduated Skill Practice
- Role Playing
- Positive Reinforcement
- Aftercare (Continuing Education and Support)
- Resource Provision
- Concrete Verbal Suggestions (giving reasons, prompting, cognitive restructuring, demonstrating pay-off, symbolic modeling of skills, etc.)
- Self-reward / Self-Talk
- Cost/Reward Balance Inventories
- Reframing Techniques
- Extrinsic and Intrinsic rewards
- Homework

Suggested screening tools/techniques: Professional curriculum evaluation tool to be developed as a part of this plan; “program quality” inventories.

Facilitators: Facilitator skills and attributes are critical to a successful program. Facilitators should be carefully assessed and selected, and their teaching styles should match the offender learning styles as much as possible. They should go through intensive training and take part in ongoing booster training and support.

Important *Relationship Factors* for facilitators:

Warmth	Genuineness
Energy	Sincerity
Positivity	Honesty
Humor	Self-confidence
Empathy	Intelligence
Maturity	Consistency

Important *Skill Factors* for facilitators:

- Directive and solution-focused
- Consistent in structure and curriculum delivery
- Flexible per situational need
- Contingency-based
- Effective at modeling, reinforcement and respectful disapproval
- Good interpersonal communication and verbal skills
- Understanding of, and sensitivity to, group dynamics
- Effective at self-management / self-awareness
- Skilled in motivational techniques

Suggested screening tools/techniques: Facilitator selection criteria checklists; thorough skills and knowledge testing (pre-assignment); quality of instruction inventories; on-going quality assurance measures/tools.

C. How should jurisdictions ensure quality control around cog? Should there be a clinical consultant?

This is a list of techniques that committee members have implemented or have reviewed in the literature:

- Develop an infrastructure that will support cognitive behavioral programming (i.e., mission statements, values, comprehensive plans, job descriptions, performance reviews, broad-based training, etc.)
- Use tools such as those suggested on page 11 to appropriately target offenders for groups.
- Use “quality of program” inventory tools and knowledge of targeted population to select appropriate curriculum(s).
- Use specialized programs for specific needs (gender, age, ethnicity, etc.).
- Use “facilitator (or coach) selection criteria” tools to select skilled facilitators.
- Ensure that facilitators are committed to the selected program and curriculum and that their teaching style matches that of the population they will serve (as closely as possible).
- Do not “force” agents to become facilitators.
- Provide quality curriculum training, materials and booster sessions for facilitators. Also train facilitators in basic cognitive approaches and Best Practices, motivational techniques, stages of change and group process.
- Provide training to Probation Officers and support staff on the content of the curriculum and the connection to Best Practices, so they may support and expand on the work done in group.
- Ensure that facilitators have ample time to prepare for groups and are not overwhelmed with group schedule or other duties.
- Consistently implement co-facilitation. Always partner new facilitators with a strong, experienced facilitator.
- Set up a support network between those who oversee the program and the facilitators. Meet regularly to discuss curriculum and group issues/concerns. Deal with difficult issues quickly in order to keep the program safe and functioning well.
- Develop a **Quality Assurance plan** and follow through. Suggested techniques:
 - Use “quality of instruction” inventories to assess on-going facilitation skills. Consider developing a facilitator certification process.

- Have facilitators and program supervisors attend and observe each other's groups and give positive feedback and constructive suggestions.
- Videotape facilitators in groups and have them evaluate each other's skills using a "quality of instruction" inventory (or similar). Give constructive feedback and support for suggested improvements. Have them evaluate themselves with the same tool.
- Develop an evaluation and **outcome measures strategy** and follow through. Suggested evaluation techniques:
 - Use pre and post-testing (if available) for curriculum.
 - Have offenders complete a satisfaction evaluation or semi-structured interview at the end of the program. Include questions about their perception of whether their skills have changed in specific areas: problem solving, impulsivity, etc.
 - Administer a survey to Probation Officers, family members, significant others, etc. to assess other's perception of changes in targeted skill areas.
 - Collect and evaluate data on such things as program completion rates, program and aftercare attendance, recidivism, pre and post-test scores, etc.
- Revise implementation as necessary to ensure on-going quality in all areas listed above.

Clinical Consultation: Cognitive Behavioral programs for offenders are *not* therapy groups, but educational groups. Therefore, it is the committee's opinion that clinical consultation is not necessary. However, to maintain quality standards, it *is* necessary to implement and consistently administer quality assurance measures such as those listed above.

D. What suggestions or guidelines might local jurisdictions consider around issues such as co-facilitation, mixed gender facilitation, avoiding staff burnout, etc.

Committee members who have extensive experience managing cognitive behavioral programs and facilitating groups made the following recommendations. However, every jurisdiction is different and will need to address these issues based on their own realities.

The committee recommends that these issues be addressed as a part of the basic cognitive approaches training as they can present significant barriers without proper consideration and planning.

1) Co-Facilitation

Committee members unanimously recommend that all groups be co-facilitated for the following reasons:

- ✓ Allows flexibility in scheduling for the facilitators.
- ✓ If one facilitator is unable to be at group, the other can run the group without having to cancel.
- ✓ Facilitators are able to give each other feedback and support.
- ✓ Allows for a variety in delivery styles (which benefits both the facilitators and the participants).
- ✓ If one facilitator gets “stuck”, s/he can look to the other for direction.
- ✓ It is important to team new facilitators with experienced facilitators who are familiar with the curriculum.
- ✓ Safety is a concern for solo facilitation especially because we are targeting high-risk offenders.

2) Mixed Gender Facilitation

Participants - The research and literature indicate that participants in a cognitive behavioral group for offenders should not be of mixed gender. Females and males should be separated.

Facilitators - Female Groups: Professional experience has indicated that females best facilitate female specific programs. Further, the authors of such programs generally specify that the facilitators should be female. Local experience with mixed gender facilitation for female groups has been *unfavorable*.

Male Groups: Professional experience has indicated that mixed gender facilitation works very well with male groups. It provides for good modeling of respectful, mixed gender interactions

and demonstrates a healthy balance. Additionally, local experience indicates that two females or two males may also lead male groups successfully.

3) Avoiding Staff Burnout

There are several things that can be done to help prevent staff burnout:

- Train staff at *all levels* on the basics of cognitive approaches for offenders and how it fits into Best Practices. Management and agency “buy-in” is critical for supporting program and facilitators.
- Do not force agents to facilitate groups – select people who are interested and possess the necessary skills and personal/professional characteristics.
- Make offender participation and completion in program mandatory.
- Reduce caseload for staff who facilitate groups and support other agents who are taking on extra caseload due to facilitator relief.
- Rotate staff through the position (this also expands expertise and use of cognitive approaches in the agency).
- Make co-facilitation a standard practice. (Professional experience indicates that stress level is significantly higher for facilitators working alone.)
- Support facilitators and encourage their involvement in related, multi-jurisdictional organizations such as the MN Cognitive Network.
- Make participation in cog program (as facilitator and/or referral agent) part of performance review and tied to compensation.
- Keep staff at all levels informed of outcome measures throughout the state.
- Have referring agent come along to intake session (whenever possible) to increase level of “buy-in” and decrease offender resistance.
- Budget adequately for training, boosters and supplies such as markers, pens, flip charts, work books, treats for positive reinforcement.
- Support training and quality assurance measures. Provide caseload coverage for agents attending multi-day training sessions.
- Consider extra compensation / vacation time or extra pay for facilitators while running groups.

4) Mandatory vs. voluntary offender participation

It is important to make offender participation and completion of cognitive behavioral programs mandatory. Research is becoming quite clear that mandatory participation in treatment and programming is showing good results. Local experience indicates a tremendous difference in completion rates for those clients who are required to complete the program and those that are given an option to decide for themselves.

Note, however that it can be problematic to have the court *order* the program directly without proper assessment of client appropriateness and a recommendation from probation. When implementing the program, it is important to ask the bench to order cognitive programming “as deemed appropriate” by probation. Some jurisdictions have implemented cognitive behavioral programming as a “reporting condition” based on level of risk and level of supervision, which still makes the program mandatory, but leaves the court out of the assessment process.