



INNOVATIONS IN MENTAL HEALTH DIVERSION:

Life Skills Groups for Mental Health and Justice Clients


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The Agenda

- ▶ History: the why and the how (rationale and partnership with Corrections)
 - ▶ Recovery model
 - ▶ Program design (issues and descriptions)
 - ▶ Evaluation thus far
 - ▶ Strengths and areas that need further investigation
 - ▶ Open discussion: give us your suggestions, comments, concerns and questions
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Educational Objectives



- ▶ **Inform** participants about the new life skills group
- ▶ **Encourage** innovation and creativity in programming for individuals with mental health and justice challenges
- ▶ **Increase awareness** of the benefits of cross-sectoral collaboration
- ▶ **Explore** the challenges posed by a variety of stakeholders to culture change and innovative programming as well as begin to **problem solve** solutions



The Rationale

- ▶ Frustration is a motivator for innovation
 - ▶ Exclusion of clients of the Mental Health Court from psychoeducational or peer support experiences
 - ▶ Rethinking recidivism and the court's revolving door
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Research Provides Inspiration

- ▶ Lack of empirical evidence sparks the need for expanding programming to do more with the same or less
- ▶ Innovation encourages a shift in criminal thinking patterns
- ▶ Recidivism is addressed through enhancement of social skills
 - Changing thinking and behaviour patterns
 - Improving problem solving and decision making
 - Expanding responses to socio-cultural and economic environment
- ▶ Recovery is promoted through group work
- ▶ Research suggests 'Criminal justice involvement [is] not a direct product of mental illnesses but rather [a] product of a set of person-level and socio-environmental risk factors'




Rationale Continued

- ▶ Expand services for clients of diversion
 - ▶ Expand responses for diversion workers to facilitate success for a wider variety of clients
 - ▶ Provide an opportunity for professional development within Diversion Program
 - ▶ Facilitate a change in attitude in the criminal justice system
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The Seeds of a Partnership

- ▶ Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS) announces Core Programming at the new Toronto South Detention Centre
 - ▶ These programs are “[M]inistry accredited, evidence based programs intended to produce offender change, reduce recidivism and hold offenders responsible for their behaviour, thus promoting community safety”
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Partnership is Mutually Beneficial

► Benefits for Fred Victor

- Pre-developed Life Skills Training Manual (content)
- Training provided at MCSCS training facility

► Benefits for MCSCS

- Strong mental health background from Fred Victor
- Increased focus on mental health approach (language, case examples)



Introducing Recovery Paradigm

- ▶ “A deeply personal, unique process of changing one’s attitudes, values, feelings, goals, skills, and/or roles. It is a way of living a satisfying, hopeful, and contributing life even with limitations caused by illness.” (William Anthony, 1993)
- ▶ “Living well in the presence or absence of illness.” (Mental Health Commission, 1998, New Zealand)

Recovery Paradigm versus “Old Think”

Unique identity, whole person	Diagnosis
Hope, realistic optimism, brain plasticity	Broken Brain, Very Poor Diagnosis
Strengths, resilience, capacity	Pathology, deficits, vulnerabilities
Empowerment	Coercion
Self-Management	Helplessness, passivity, adaptive dependence
Community integration, access, accommodation	Social segregation, deviancy amplified, artificial settings
Active growth	Stabilization, maintenance
Asset building	Resource limitations, poverty




Key Concepts of Recovery

- ▶ Hope
- ▶ Personal Responsibility
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Self-Advocacy
- ▶ Support




Important Factors that Lead to Recovery?

- ▶ Good relationships
 - ▶ Financial security
 - ▶ Satisfying work
 - ▶ Personal growth
 - ▶ The right living environment
 - ▶ Developing a cultural and/or spiritual perspective
 - ▶ Developing resilience to stress and adversity
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Other Important Elements of Recovery

- ▶ Being believed in
 - ▶ Being listened to and understood
 - ▶ Getting explanations for problems and experiences
 - ▶ Having the opportunity to temporarily resign from responsibilities when in crisis
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Recovery and Social Inclusion

- ▶ A key role for services is to support people to regain their place in communities where they live and take part in mainstream activities and opportunities along with everyone else



Program Design

- Incorporates recovery thinking and language into MCSCS training material
- Provides an antidote to the reinforcement of offending attitudes and behaviours experienced during incarceration (*positive* peer influence)
- Challenges pre-conceived attitudes and explores hope as an agent of change
- Introduces the concepts of choice and internalization of locus of control
- Serves as an introduction to life skills topics as well as participation in therapeutic groups
- Can be a gateway to other programs (WRAP, CBT, Peer Support Groups)
- Serves as means of 'mobilizing the community for systems change'



Program Description

- ▶ Eight stand-alone psychoeducational lessons
- ▶ Certificate provided for every session attended
- ▶ Referral from court diversion worker, bail program, other agencies working with mental health and criminal justice clients or by Crown
- ▶ Course selection can be a collaborative approach between worker, client and possibly crown
- ▶ Only criteria is mental health and justice involvement



Life Skills Series Topics

- ▶ Understanding Feelings
 - ▶ Thoughts to Action
 - ▶ Supportive Relationships
 - ▶ Changing Habits
 - ▶ Goal Setting
 - ▶ Substance Use
 - ▶ Anger Management
 - ▶ Managing Stress
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Expected Outcomes

- ▶ Facilitates learning, self-reflection and change
- ▶ Enables the contemplation of changing attitudes, thoughts and behaviour patterns associated with criminal justice involvement
- ▶ Encourages the pursuit of alternative approaches to recovery
- ▶ Allows for positive peer learning
- ▶ Changes *clients* into *participants*



Feedback

- ▶ Very engaging
- ▶ Would like a follow up group that goes into more detail
- ▶ Having an opportunity to open up and engage in conversation
- ▶ It was helpful just being there and reframing my thoughts
- ▶ Learning new ways of coping, thinking
- ▶ I liked the scenarios
- ▶ I liked the visual and auditory style of the presentations that worked for different learning styles
- ▶ The snacks




Our Observations

- ▶ Participants taking on a sense of responsibility
- ▶ Taking initiative to help set up and clean up room
- ▶ Helping peers to understand the material
- ▶ Discussing the experience with their workers
- ▶ Experiencing pride when Crown acknowledges certificate of completion




Strengths

- ▶ Screening
 - ▶ Logistics
 - ▶ Structure
 - ▶ Group Dynamics
 - ▶ Outcomes
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Areas for Further Discussion

- ▶ Screening limitations
 - ▶ Recruitment and the challenges of culture change
 - ▶ Group Dynamics
 - ▶ Follow Up
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Case Example



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A Work in Progress

- ▶ Facilitators
 - Ongoing development and optimization of the program
- ▶ Clients
 - To continue on their journeys of recovery in mental health and to break away from criminal justice involvement
- ▶ System
 - Expansion of services to mental health and justice clients
 - To further enhance multi-sectoral collaboration
 - To continue working toward reducing the stigmatization of this population and facilitate ongoing change in the systems that serve our clients



And now over to you...

► What are your:

- Thoughts?
- Suggestions?
- Concerns?
- Questions?