



The 8 Evidence-Based Principles

Principle 3A: Targeting Risk And Needs

Central to our transformation effort is using a validated risk and needs instrument, the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI), to inform decision-making at multiple key decision points (court recommendations, probation supervision level assignment, case planning, service brokerage, and direct care placement).

Because we use risk to drive so many important decisions, it has never been more important that we score our assessment tool accurately and use the tool with fidelity. To that end, we conducted 22 two-day training sessions across the state through the end of September.

The third of the eight evidence-based principles is targeting interventions. That principle is further broken down into the



Lesley Hull, left, and co-facilitator Jercreta Woodson, CSU 13-Richmond Senior P.O., at Virginia Public Safety Training Center.

risk, need, and responsivity (RNR) principles, dosage and the treatment principle. In this issue of the *CSUnity* we will address the risk and need principles.

Once completed, the YASI identifies a youth's overall risk to

reoffend, criminogenic (or crime producing) needs, and protective factors that might buffer or mitigate his or her risk.

The risk principle teaches us that not all youth have the same risk to reoffend and that we should triage cases and align and prioritize our supervision, intervention and treatment resources to higher risk offenders. We also know that over-involvement with lower-risk offenders can be counterproductive and we can inadvertently increase their risk and disconnect them from pro-social connections and other protective factors that make them low risk. So prioritizing high-risk offenders promotes both harm reduction and public safety. For this reason we seek to limit probation supervision for

QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED

- How do we manage offenders assessed as low risk to reoffend?
- Does our assessment tool assess for criminogenic need?
- How are criminogenic risk and need information incorporated into offender case plans?
- How are offenders matched to treatment resources?



low-risk cases. We also use the overall risk score to assign youth to probation supervision levels which establishes frequency and “dosage” of monthly contacts (low risk = 1 contact, moderate risk = 2 contacts, high risk = 3 or more contacts).

As important as how often we meet with youth is the content and focus of those interactions. The need principle teaches us that while youth have many needs, to impact recidivism we must target their criminogenic needs. That is, to break the cycle of offending, we must target the risk factors and needs that are most directly linked to the continuation of the behavior. Some examples of criminogenic needs are: anti-social/pro-criminal attitudes, values and beliefs, pro-criminal/delinquent peers, and substance abuse. These needs and corresponding interventions and services should be incorporated into the goals and action steps of our comprehensive case plans.

In addition to providing opportunities for contracted services, the action steps in our case plans also provide us with an opportunity to plan the contents of our probation, parole and direct care contacts. Probation/parole officers throughout the state have been



Co-presenter *Shelby Hinkins*, CSU 12–Chesterfield Senior Probation Officer, addresses YASI workshop at Cedar Lodge.

trained to use the EPICS model to deliver brief, cognitive behavioral interventions that are designed to target risky thinking and skill deficits. Those interventions should be incorporated into case plans and delivered during probation contacts. Examples include cognitive restructuring and structured skill building.

The formal evidence-based practices training our agency has been receiving is important, but even more important is how we use the information we learn to enhance our day-to-day practices and improve our outcomes.

For that reason, our recent trainings, including the YASI trainings delivered by Practice Improvement Coaches Katherine Farmer, Angie Hiatt, Lesley Hull, Emily Thomas, former PIC Teresa Moore and six additional certified YASI trainers (listed below), will have an intentional transfer of learning component and will be followed by quality improvement reviews, coaching and feedback. This feedback is part of an overall plan of continuous quality improvement designed to build skills, increase model fidelity and improve outcomes.

OUR PRACTICE IMPROVEMENT COACHES



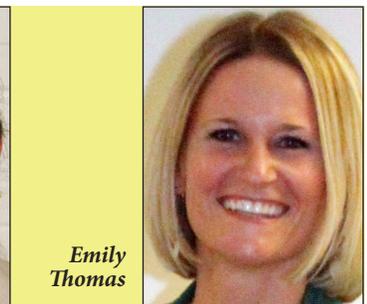
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