Outpatient Mental Health Program for parolees: a grant proposal

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May 2014
Introduction

- Attitudes of harsher punishments and longer prison terms found in prison policy over the past two decades, in the state of California, has resulted in some of the highest incarceration rates in the country, prisoner overcrowding, increased costs to taxpayers, overburdened communities, and high chances of recidivism (Cnaan et. al., 2008; Wood 2011, James & Glaze, 2006)

- In 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that prison overcrowding in California is in violation of the United States Constitution, eighth amendment which prohibits the use of cruel and unusual punishment (Newman & Scott, 2013). The ruling required that California’s prison population be dramatically reduced over the next two years (Skelton, 2014).

- Approximately 600,000 men and women are released to parole each year. Research has shown that approximately half of the inmates in state and federal prisons have mental health issues. Parolees suffering from mental health disorders have an increased likelihood of returning to prison (NIH, n.d.; Feucht & Gfroerer, 2011). Providing mental health treatment for parolees reintegrating back into the communities will improve chances of success, and increase access to social support, another major factor that influences chances of recidivism (Cnaan et. al., 2008).

- The overall goal of the proposed program is to provide mental health support and treatment, through individual therapy and psychoeducational groups, to parolees to reduce chances of recidivism and increase the likelihood of successful reintegration.
Prison overcrowding has resulted in mandatory release of approximately 40,000 inmates over the next two years (Skelton, 2014).

Successful reentry into the community requires a variety of skills and areas of need often addressed in the social work profession (Cnaan et. al., 2008;).

- i.e. improving mental health and substance use disorders. Increasing access to transportation, housing, employment, and social support

Social workers can also advocate to change legislation and policies currently in place to improve process of reintegration (Lutze et. al., 2011).
## Multicultural Relevance

### California Parolees, 2013

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*(Adult male parolees in Orange County: 3,096)

*(Atkinson, Coder & Weishahn, 2013)*
Methods

Target Population: Adult, male parolees residing in Orange County, Ca that present with mental health needs, that are reintegrating back into society after being incarcerated for a minimum of 3 years. Eligible participants must also have been released within 3 months prior to the start of the program.

- Excludes: Sex offenders and individuals with severe mental illness and/or disability

Strategies to identify a funding source:

- Research past student grant proposal projects
- Google search engine

Funding source: Pilot Intervention and Services Research Grant (R34) presented by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) under National Institute of Health (NIH). The NIH is funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

The funding opportunity being provided by the agency is focused on “the development and/or pilot testing of new or adapted interventions” and providing “resources for evaluating the feasibility, tolerability, acceptability, and safety of novel approaches to improving mental health and modifying health risk behavior.” (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.).
Sources used for needs assessment:

- Government websites
- Interviews with a local parole officer and the host agency’s Director of Social Services
- Peer reviewed journals and Scholarly articles
- Google search engine

Projected Total Program Budget: $218,130

- Salaries & Benefits: $147,500
- Direct Program Costs: $8,000
- Indirect Program Costs: $42,800
The proposed program provides mental health services for adult, male parolees that are in the process of reintegrating back into society after serving time in prison.

Individual therapy and group therapy, with a strong psychoeducational component will be used to improve interpersonal and life skills for its participants.

- Individual sessions will focus treatment on improving coping skills, identification of feelings, reducing mental health symptoms, anger management, relationship skills, social skills, etc. and are tailored to each individual’s specific needs.

- The proposed topics for the group sessions include (but are not limited to): anger management, child development, relationship building skills, finance related issues, health and nutrition, and job skills.

The design of the program requires two social workers, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and an individual with a Master’s degree in Social Work, to provide services over a one year period.

Overall, the program aims to aid in the successful reentry of parolees and reduce the chances of recidivism.
Sustainability: The proposed program falls under the guidelines of AB-109 or the Public Safety Realignment Act of 2011. Research conducted on reintegration has concluded that the current system for incarceration and supervision is not working and needs to be adjusted. Awareness of the importance of mental health by the general public, as well as by all involved in the criminal justice system, has increased the amount support and reduced stigma regarding mental health treatment. Lastly, the proposed treatments and intervention have proven effective in a variety of settings, especially with high-risk populations like parolees.

Program Objectives:

- To provide mental health support to ex offenders
- To increase available social support for parolees
- Staff will collect and evaluate qualitative and quantitative about program participants, services provided, and overall results.
- The program director will provide opportunities for staff trainings

Program Evaluation: Surveys will be administered at the beginning, middle, and end of program. Follow up interviews will be conducted three, six, nine, and twelve months after program completion. Providers will be responsible for maintaining progress notes for each individual and group session throughout the program.
Lessons Learned

- Needs and challenges of male prisoners and parolees.
- Research skills
- How to identify funding sources
- Implications for social work practice
- Grant writing process
References


