MORAL RECONATION THERAPY™

The Honorable John R. Roach, Jr.
296th Judicial District Court

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We Need a Change

- High Recidivism Rates
- High Jail Population
- Overcrowded Courts
- Increase in MI and ID Inmates
How it Came to our Attention

- MRT™ was initially mentioned in medical contract negotiations
- We found out that probation had simultaneously discovered MRT™ as well
- Discussed the concept
- Visited MRT™ program in Pueblo
What is MRT™?

- MRT™: Moral Reconation Therapy™ – the name
  - Conation was a word used in the ‘30s before ego, meaning the conscious process of decision making - a purposeful behavior
  - Moral Reasoning – represents how a person makes decisions about what he or she should or should not do in a given situation
  - Underlying Goal with MRT™ was to change conscious decision-making to higher levels of moral reasoning = Moral Reconation
Developed in 1985 by Gregory Little, Ed.D and Kenneth Robinson, Ed.D

More than 120 published reports documenting significantly lower recidivism for MRT™ treated offenders for periods as long as 20 years after

Used in 49 States and 7 Countries
Cognitive Behavioral Approach

Combines:

- Education
- Group and individual counseling
- Structured exercises designed to foster moral development in treatment-resistant clients
Initially developed in the prison-based therapeutic community, it was then tested and widely implemented in general inmate population

- Juvenile Offenders
- Parole and probation settings
- In community corrections
- In hospital and OP programs
- Educational settings
- Drug Courts
- Used with both genders
- Persons with Mental Illness Diagnosis
- Persons with TBI
Why We Were Interested

- Impact on Recidivism
- Low Cost
- Potential to help the MI population
- High Recidivism
Pueblo, Colorado Program

- Pueblo, CO has established MRT™ in the jails
- Use Assessment Tools to screen for eligible participants
- Low to medium risk - inmates with at least 30-day stay
- Groups facilitated by deputies
- Part of inmate Behavior Modification
- Meeting with participants
- Meetings with Deputy Facilitators and Jail Administration
- Program information
Requests for class admission
Requests to stay in jail to complete
Requests to Return to jail for classes
Attributes

- Targets issues specific to offender population
- Designed to address issues of treatment-resistant population
- Reduce recidivism 30%-50% for periods up to 20 years after release
- Effectively used in different programs at many sites
- Improves offender compliance to rules in custody and while under supervision in the community
- Open-ended groups
- Increase moral reasoning
- Decrease dropout rates
- Increase sense of purpose
- Reduce antisocial thinking and behavior
- Continuum of care when implemented in a variety of settings
- Does not require a high reading level
Difference from Other Programs

- Peer Driven
  - Participants own the group
- Accountability
  - The group members hold each other accountable
Objectively-defined steps focusing on seven basic treatment issues

- Confrontation of beliefs, attitudes and behaviors
- Assessment of current relationships
- Reinforcement of positive behavior and habits
- Positive identity formation
- Enhancement of self-concept
- Decrease in hedonism and development of frustration tolerance
- Development of higher stages of moral reasoning
The Basics

- The classes are open-ended
- Learning from Others
- Peer Driven
- Groups usually have 12-15 participants
- Basic MRT™ has 12 steps
  - Each step has a general written discussion and homework exercises and requirements
  - Additional steps to 16
- Classes are 1-2 times per week
- Facilitators are all trained the exact way allowing facilitators to step easily into a group
- Sense of pride develops
Phase 1 Training

- Multi-department Training
  - Sheriff’s Office Detention Staff, Juvenile Detention Staff, Community Treatment Providers and Counseling Providers for Court Programs, Probation
- Demand for Additional Training
Phase 2-Identification and Implementation of Jail-based classes

- MH Population: Males
- Expanded to Females
  - General Population Classes
- Added additional classes
- Began with counselor-facilitated classes - added detention officer facilitators
Step 3 - Implementation of Classes

- Probation/Courts
  - SCORE
- Community
- Juvenile
Initial Startup

• Deciding on the criteria
  ▫ Jail Population/Community
    • Who will you target
    • How will you identify
    • Will they be housed together
    • Books
    • $$
Issues (continued)

- Buy In
  - Develop a plan
  - General education meeting
  - Meet with community providers
  - Meetings with the Judges
  - Everyone should agree to keep data

- The Numbers

- Training
Just as predicted by Pueblo:
- We have had inmates ask to stay in jail to complete
- Ask to enter the program
- Ask to return to the jail for classes
Cost Analysis
Continued expansion of the classes
Final step presented to the Court
Questions?