CHAPTER 16

Program Evaluation, Evidence-Based Practices, and Future Trends in Community Corrections

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the process of evaluative research and distinguish between process and outcome measures.
2. Understand the basics of cost-effectiveness studies.
3. Know and apply the assessment-evaluative cycle.
4. Be able to explain how evaluative research contributes to public safety.
5. Identify and discuss the use of evidence-based practices.

Introduction

One of the first questions asked by politicians, policy makers, program administrators, and government officials is “Is the program working?” That is, they want to know “Is the money that we are spending on a particular program yielding positive results and accomplishing the goals set forth?” As will be illuminated in this chapter, the question of whether a program is effective is often a very difficult issue to decide. The number of variables impacting such results is legion. When one considers the enormous complexity of human beings and the various motivations driving behavior, it becomes clear that researchers need a framework from which to operate.
Effective research and evaluation of community corrections programs is critical if we are to begin to understand what treatments are capable of producing lasting change in offenders. Failing to effectively research and evaluate such programs is, in essence, resigning our efforts to chance. Chance is not acceptable, however, when huge amounts of money and many individuals’ lives are at stake. Therefore, the question becomes, how do we effectively evaluate community corrections programs charged with administering habilitating or rehabilitating services to offenders? How do we know what is working? How do we know which treatments are most effective? Finally, how do we know if the treatment is flawed, or if the method in which the treatment is administered is flawed?

These important questions provide the foundation on which this chapter is constructed. The most effective way to begin to identify successful outcomes in community corrections is through research and evaluation. This chapter explains the processes involved in conducting evaluative research and highlights various research designs and identifies those most capable of producing results that are valid and reliable. In addition, the specific function of evaluation research will be presented as a form of explanatory research. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical principles related to conducting research.

Scientific Inquiry

When considering the evaluation of programs and the development of evidence-based practices, we should first be sure that our results are based on accepted practices of scientific inquiry. Only through the process of scientific research can we be reasonably confident that our findings accurately depict the phenomenon under scrutiny. Scientific inquiry can be described through the following steps, which should be viewed as a cycle:

1. We formulate a theory to explain phenomena related to program effectiveness, offender behavior, or some other phenomenon we observe in our community corrections program.
2. By the process of deduction, we develop a research question or hypothesis about our theory, the various aspects of a program, and the outcomes we observe.
3. We design a test of the hypothesis related to our community corrections program.
4. We use this test to gather and analyze data.
5. We then interpret these data.
6. Through an inductive process, we confirm, modify, or reject the original theory (Friel, 2008), related to our community corrections program.
7. We modify our policy and/or procedures, based on our research outcomes, which then become evidence-based practices that are implemented throughout our program or agency.

Viewing this process as a cycle is very important, especially within the social sciences. As mentioned above, human behavior is very complex. There are myriad reasons why someone might commit murder, theft, or assault. Therefore, the process of scientific investigation might best be thought of as a circular process that never ends.
From Theory to Hypothesis to Acceptance/Rejection of the Theory

A theory is a concept that describes the process of developing a set of interrelated constructs that purport to explain some phenomenon (Friel, 2008). Friel notes that theory serves as both a means and an end in the process of scientific inquiry. In the form of a means, a theory provides direction and organization in attempting to predict or explain some phenomenon. For example, a criminal justice official may theorize that a person who suffers from child abuse is more likely to be involved in criminal behavior. This is an example of a theory that is based on the observations of a particular individual. The two interrelated constructs contained within our hypothetical theory consist of child abuse and criminal behavior.

It is important to understand that a theory on its own cannot be tested. A theory contains broad, interrelated constructs that must be defined before they can be tested. A hypothesis is the bridge between the theory and its test. A hypothesis is an affirmative statement about the relationship between two variables. Therefore, in order for our theory to be transformed into a hypothesis, we must define child abuse and criminal behavior. Through the process of defining these terms, we will take two constructs and turn them into variables via operationalization. For example, we could operationalize child abuse through the use of officially identified definitions and a scale for the severity of the abuse experienced. Criminal behavior may be operationalized as any action that is forbidden through statutory law. As a result, through the process of defining our constructs, we can develop a hypothesis that could read as follows: Persons with higher child abuse scores are more likely to be involved in behaviors forbidden by statutory law. It is now possible to create a test of this hypothesis.

Reliability and Validity in Evaluative Studies

The specific design a researcher chooses to evaluate a research question depends on many different factors. For example, how much time, money, and assets are available? How important are the potential findings? Are these findings going to be used to determine policies and procedures, or are the results primarily intended for personal use? These initial questions are very important and drive many of the critical decisions involved with identifying the appropriate research design. For criminal justice purposes, the results of research projects are often critical and frequently determine if programs will continue to exist. For example, much research has been conducted in relation to the viability of juvenile boot camp programs. The results have generally shown that juvenile boot camps are not able to sustain lasting change in the behavior of juveniles (students may recall this from Chapter 13). In essence, the research showed that many of the juveniles returned to criminal behavior once back in their original environments.

The question, however, is, are the results accurate? How do we know if our findings accurately depict the phenomenon under scrutiny? For example, is it the structure of juvenile boot camps that is flawed, or is it that juvenile boot camps could be well designed and successful if there was a reentry component that helped offenders adjust to going back to their original neighborhoods? All of these questions are primarily hinged on two central constructs, first introduced in Chapter 3: (1) the reliability and (2) the validity of a study.

Reliability is a concept that describes the accuracy of a measure, which in turn describes the accuracy of a study. Students may recall that this same concept was presented earlier, in Chapter 3, when addressing risk prediction and assessment. In that case, reference was made
to the reliability of measurement scales, whereas in this case we refer to the reliability of measures in a study. In both cases, the general concept is the same. For example, let's assume we are attempting to measure whether a person is experiencing depression. Reliability describes how accurate our measure is in capturing the person's true level of depression. Is the person mildly depressed, moderately depressed, or experiencing major, debilitating depression? Our measure is said to be reliable if it is able to assess the person's true level of depression. Our measure would not be reliable if results show only minor depression when in fact the person is moderately or majorly depressed.

Some of the literature describes reliability as a measure's ability to yield consistent results. Certainly, this is an important component, but it should not be the sole indicator of whether a measure is reliable. For example, a measure may consistently show a moderately depressed person as only mildly depressed. In this case, our measure could be described as consistent but not reliable. Keep in mind that reliability describes accuracy. The best way to describe a measure that consistently shows a moderately depressed person to be only mildly depressed is consistently inaccurate and therefore not reliable.

Validity is a concept that describes whether the chosen instrument is measuring what it is intended to measure. This concept was also addressed in Chapter 3, where it was noted that instruments must be valid if one wishes to measure the actual phenomenon of interest (recidivism predictors, treatment success, and so forth). In order for a study to be valid, it must measure the intended variable. Continuing with the example of depression, our study would be said to be valid if we are in fact measuring depression as opposed to anxiety or some other disorder. Therefore, if we are truly able to answer a research question, our methods must yield results that are both reliable and valid. If our results cannot be characterized as reliable and valid, our best answer becomes "We don't know." That is, the only true response our study supports is "It appears as though there is a connection, but we are not really sure." Obviously, such determinations are nothing more than guesswork and do not aid administrators in making effective and future-oriented decisions for their agencies.

Therefore, reliability and validity are crucial components within the domain of evaluative research that generates data for administrative planning. Research concerning the discipline of criminal justice is among the most important because of the nature and implications of its findings, such as a person's freedom or whether a person is administered a treatment that has the ability to better his or her quality of life. How, then, do we ensure that our results are both reliable and valid? The answer is that it is impossible to ensure complete reliability and validity. Then how do we ensure that our results are as reliable and valid as possible? The answer to this question is directly related to whether the researcher strictly adhered to the principles of scientific inquiry. In the following subsections, several research designs available to researchers are described. Much of the information is borrowed from a document published by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ, 1992), as these designs have an emphasis on criminal justice applications.

**Experimental Designs**

One investigative technique that provides the analyst maximum control, so that the relationship between a particular element of a project and the desired outcome can be isolated from other causal forces and measured accurately, is the laboratory experiment. If all factors are
held constant, and an effect is observed after one factor changes, the researcher is in the strongest position to say that the manipulated factor caused the observed effect. Branches of science that have been able to impose laboratory conditions upon the matters they investigate have thus developed powerful explanations for complex phenomena.

Outside the laboratory, one can approximate lab conditions in field experiments (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). If one were in the laboratory studying the effects of a treatment regime, one might be able to control not only environment but also individual differences among subjects. (Laboratory mice, for example, are bred from a common genetic stock expressly for the purpose of experimentation.) In the field, however, such control over subjects and their environments cannot be gained. The strategy for approximating this control is to assign at random equally eligible subjects (cases, arrestees, addicts, and so forth) to two groups. The subjects in one group (the “experimental group”) are then exposed to or given the “treatment”—be it a drug treatment project, enhanced prosecution, or whatever else the project is designed to do—while the other group (the “control group”) is not. Random assignment provides optimal assurance that any differences in the outcomes observed in the two groups can be attributed to the experimental treatment, and not to preexisting differences or to chance.

While it may seem difficult to undertake experiments in criminal justice settings, several studies with experimental designs have been carried out with much success, yielding powerful findings (Lempert & Visher, 1987). Unfortunately, such studies are complicated, often vulnerable to a number of threats that may spoil the ability to draw strong conclusions, and generally very costly and time-consuming.

**Quasi-experimental Studies**

Where random assignment of participants to treatment or control groups is not feasible for practical, ethical, or legal reasons, the evaluator may choose quasi-experimental evaluation designs to approximate the advantages of random selection. One such design involves identifying a comparison group that is similar to the treatment group in those characteristics thought to be capable of influencing the outcome under examination (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The strength of this design rests on the extent to which all the influential characteristics are accounted for in selecting the control group. The analyst can then account statistically for differences between groups that might influence the observed outcomes. The only requirements are that no differentiating characteristic belong uniquely to one group, and that such competing factors be measured in both groups.

Because the use of a nonrandom comparison group does not eliminate all alternative explanations for the relationship between treatment and outcome, this type of design...
requires much more complicated analysis and yields less certain results than true experiments. Nonetheless, quasi-experimental designs can at times produce findings that are much stronger than other types of evaluation methods that impose fewer controls (e.g., case studies, before/after comparisons, descriptive models).

Some treatment programs are not well suited to either experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation designs because their operations fluctuate too much due to their newness. Both evaluation designs require that treatment be constant and uniform throughout the time that the data are collected. If programs have not reached a state of relative stability in operations, the expense and time required for an experiment are likely to be wasted. In such instances, a focus on program implementation is likely to be more fruitful.

**Before/After Studies**

When the evaluator is asked to assess the impact of a project (program), or to assess its effectiveness in accomplishing its goals, methods for testing cause-and-effect hypotheses are called for. One such method compares the target population or conditions before and after the project begins its operations. This “bargain basement” approach seeks to establish that participation in, or implementation of, the project is at least associated with the desired change. This design, termed a **before/after comparison study**, requires obtaining data about the conditions that prevailed before the project intervention was initiated. (The researcher may find it possible to rely on data that another agency collected before the project’s intervention occurred.) If the desired changes are shown to occur after the intervention, support is given to the assertion that the project **caused** the change to happen.

Confidence in the findings of such before/after comparisons depends, however, upon whether factors other than the project’s interventions changed as well. Was the observed change really due to another force that operated independently of the project? Many of the conditions targeted by criminal justice projects are influenced by demographic, social, legal, and economic forces that operate independently of a project’s intervention. Any increase or decrease in the observed outcomes may be affected by these outside factors and may therefore be unrelated to the project. To rule out these other possible explanations, the analyst/researcher must devise strategies for testing them. One such method is to collect data on these other possible causes and to impose statistical controls to isolate their effects from the project’s operations (NIJ, 1992).

**Evaluation Research**

In the past several years, a massive effort on behalf of the U.S. government has been aimed at enhancing evaluation practices and services. As a result, various documents have been published and placed in the public domain to help community corrections programs better understand the impact of various treatment services. Much of the following information comes from the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (2005), a government agency responsible for implementing and evaluating many treatment programs attempting to better serve offenders suffering from mental illness and co-occurring disorders.

Research and evaluation are critical dimensions of community corrections programs in the criminal justice system. Evaluations are needed for program monitoring and for decision making by program staff, criminal justice administrators, and policy makers. These
evaluations provide accountability, identify strengths and weaknesses, and create a basis for program revision. In addition, evaluation reports are useful learning tools for others who are interested in developing effective programs. Many treatment programs in the criminal justice system have operated without evaluations for many years, only to find out later that key outcome data are needed to justify program continuation.

Conducting an adequate evaluation requires the evaluator to clearly formulate the treatment model and reasonable program goals and to specify objectives related to client needs. General goals must be translated into measurable outcomes. The evaluator generally works closely with program administrators to translate their evaluation guidelines into operational components. For example, general goals of helping program participants become drug and crime free can be operationalized into intermediate goals of changing behavior (e.g., reductions in rule infractions and fewer positive drug test results) while in a program. In essence, scientific principles for conducting research should be carefully adhered to in order to enhance the viability of findings.

There are three basic components of evaluation:

1. Implementation
2. Process
3. Outcome

An important note before we discuss the three main parts of evaluation research is that while implementation and process evaluations can begin when the program is initiated, outcome evaluation should not begin until the program has been fully implemented. Outcome evaluations are generally more costly than other types of evaluation and are warranted for programs of longer duration that are aimed at modifying lifestyles (such as therapeutic communities), rather than for drug education interventions that are less intensive and less likely to produce long-term effects.

**Implementation Evaluation**

While programs often look promising in the proposal stage, many fail to materialize as planned in the security-oriented correctional environment. Other programs are rigidly implemented as planned, but lack adjustments for the realities of community corrections, often rendering them less effective. Implementation evaluations are aimed at identifying problems and accomplishments during the early phases of program development for feedback to clinical and administrative staff. Such evaluations involve informal and formal interviews with correctional administrators, staff, and offenders to ascertain their degree of satisfaction with the program and their perceptions of problems. In order to initiate an implementation evaluation, in addition to having a clear, detailed proposal that describes the planned program, evaluators should be familiar with the model or theory the program is based on:

- Criteria for participation
- Program components
- Planned treatment duration
• Staff qualifications
• Plans for staff orientation and training
• The schedule for implementation

These elements provide the basis for assessment. Periodic implementation feedback reports to program administrators can be very useful in identifying problems and planning corrective measures prior to services being disrupted.

**Process Evaluation**

Traditionally, *process evaluation* refers to assessment of the effects of the program on clients while they are in the program, making it possible to assess the institution's intermediary goals (see Figure 16.1 for an example of process measures used in evaluative research related to offender reentry). Process evaluation involves analyzing records related to the following:

• Type and amount of services provided
• Attendance and participation in group meetings
• Number of clients who are screened, admitted, reviewed, and discharged
• Percentage of clients who favorably complete treatment each month
• Percentage of clients who have infractions or rule violations
• Number of clients who test positive for substances (This can be compared with urinalysis results for the general prison population.)

Effective programs produce positive client changes. These changes initially occur during participation in the program and ideally continue upon release into the community. The areas of potential client change that should be assessed include the following:

• Cognitive understanding (e.g., mastery of program curriculum)
• Emotional functioning (e.g., anxiety and depression)
• Attitudes/values (e.g., honesty, responsibility, and concern for others)
• Education and vocational training progress (e.g., achievement tests)
• Behavior (e.g., rule infractions and urinalyses results)

Within community corrections, it is also important to evaluate program impact on the host institution. Well-run treatment programs often generate an array of positive developments affecting the morale and

**Photo 16.2** In many instances, evaluators may use a variety of standardized tests and assessments to monitor client or offender progress. The selection of these instruments and the maintenance of their data can be very important, especially for agencies that seek grant funding. In this photo, the evaluator works late at night making decisions regarding assessment tools and the type of data that is desired for a prospective research and evaluation project.
functioning of the entire institution. Likewise, poorly run programs will yield negative developments in these same areas. Some areas to examine for program impact include the following:

- **Offender behavior.** Review the number of rule infractions, the cost of hearings, court litigation expenses, and inmate cooperation in general prison operations.
- **Staff functioning.** Assess stress levels, which may manifest in the number of sick days taken and the rate of staff turnover. Generally, the better the program, the lower the stress, and the better the attendance, the involvement, and the commitment of staff.
- **Physical plant.** Examine the physical properties of the program. Assess general vandalism apparent in terms of damage to furniture or windows, as well as the presence of graffiti. Assess structural damage, for example, to walls and plumbing.

**Outcome Evaluation**

**Outcome evaluations** involve quantitative research aimed at assessing the impact of the program on long-term treatment outcomes (see Figure 16.1 for an example of outcome measures used in evaluative research related to offender reentry). Such evaluations are more ambitious and expensive than implementation or process evaluations. They are usually carefully designed studies that compare outcomes for a treatment group with outcomes for other less intensive treatments or a no-treatment control group (e.g., a sample of offenders who meet the program admission criteria but who do not receive treatment). Outcome evaluations may include complex statistical analyses and sophisticated report preparation.

**Figure 16.1** Commonly Used Measures in Reentry Program Performance

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<tr>
<th>Process Measures</th>
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<tr>
<td>Substance abuse treatment services received</td>
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<td>Employment services received</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing assistance received</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family intervention and parent training received</td>
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<td>Health and mental health services received</td>
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<tr>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rearrest rates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reincarceration rates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion employed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rates of drug relapse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequency and severity of offenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion that is self-sufficient</td>
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<td>Participation in self-improvement programs</td>
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Follow-up data (e.g., drug relapse, recidivism, employment status) are the heart of outcome evaluation. Follow-up data can be collected from criminal justice records and face-to-face interviews with individuals who participated in certain programs. Studies that use agency records are less expensive than locating participants and conducting follow-up interviews. Outcome evaluations can include cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit information that is important to policy makers. Because outcome research usually involves a relatively large investment of time and money, as well as the cooperation of a variety of people and agencies, it must be carefully planned. A research design may be very simple and easy to implement, or it may be more complex. In the case of more complex studies, it is usually advisable to enlist the assistance of an experienced researcher.

There is a hierarchy of evaluation approaches ranging from simple outcome monitoring to nonrandom or quasi-experimental designs to experimental research studies that use random assignment. As mentioned, the selection of a research design depends on available funding and assets, as well as whether comparison groups are available. Any claims to a program’s effectiveness rest on comparisons that demonstrate that outcomes for the treatment group are superior to those for nontreatment groups or groups that have received another type of treatment. The power of a research design is related to how defensible study results are against potential criticisms. Usually, criticisms will be in the form of challenges regarding reliability and validity issues. Although simple outcome monitoring studies are relatively economical to conduct, they lack the comparison groups needed to show the specific effects of a program. While specific program outcomes can be compared with national and state norms or with published outcomes of another program, such comparisons are limited because of the many uncontrolled potential differences between the program group being monitored and the comparison groups.

The defining characteristic of a pure research design is random assignment of offenders to treatment and control groups. Random assignment may be done by using a lottery-type procedure that ensures there are no systematic pretreatment differences between the groups (such as motivation or background characteristics). The concern is that any important pretreatment difference in program and control groups may bias the results and compromise any claims for program effectiveness. Random assignment is difficult to implement in community corrections programs because of ethical and legal implications of denying offenders treatment. If a program has a substantial waiting list, it may be feasible to implement a lottery procedure as a fair method to control program admission, thus creating a random assignment situation.

Nonrandom assignment is an attempt to approximate the power of the pure experimental design. A popular quasi-experimental design uses a comparison group that is matched to the program group on as many pretreatment factors as possible. Statistical methods are frequently employed to control pretreatment group differences that might influence outcomes. Large samples are needed in outcome studies to demonstrate significant results and to study the effects of multiple variables. For example, an analysis of the role of ethnicity (African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic/Latino) reduces group size by a third. When reporting results, it is generally best to use less complex statistics such as percentages and averages so that they are clear and understandable to nonstatisticians. Often, showing results in figures and charts is helpful. It is advisable to keep reports concise and clear for policy makers who
may have little time or patience to study complex material. Finally, the credibility of outcome studies is often enhanced when conducted by outside researchers who have fewer vested interests in the outcomes.

Evidence-Based Practices

Evidence-based practice is a significant trend throughout all human services that emphasize outcomes. Interventions within community corrections are considered effective when they reduce offender risk and subsequent recidivism and therefore make a positive long-term contribution to public safety. One may recall that we discussed evidence-based practices previously in Chapter 2, to demonstrate their use in formulating goals and objectives in community corrections agencies. In this section of the chapter, we expand our discussion by presenting a model for effective offender interventions within various correctional systems. Specifically, evidence-based practice (EBP) implies that (1) one outcome is desired over others; (2) it is measurable; and (3) it is defined according to practical realities (i.e., public safety) rather than immeasurable moral or value-oriented standards (Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, 2007). Thus, EBP is more appropriate for scientific exploration within any human service discipline, including the discipline of community corrections. We now follow with the presentation of eight different evidence-based principles. Taken from the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice (2007) and the National Institute of Justice (2005), these principles are detailed as follows (see also Figure 16.2).

EBP #1: Assess Offender Risk/Need Levels Using Actuarial Instruments

Risk factors are both static (never changing) and dynamic (changing over time, or having the potential to change). Focus is on criminogenic needs—that is, deficits in the offender that put him or her at risk for continued criminal behavior. For example, many studies show that specific offender deficits are associated with criminal activity, such as lack of employment, lack of education, lack of housing stability, or substance abuse addiction (Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, 2007). Actuarial instrument tools are available, which can assist in the identification of these areas of service needs. One of the most common of these is the Level of Service Inventory (LSI). It is used in jurisdictions across the United States and Canada, and has been the subject of a considerable amount of research. Systematically identifying and intervening in the areas of criminogenic need is effective at reducing recidivism (Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, 2007).

EBP #2: Enhance Offender Motivation

Humans respond better when motivated—rather than persuaded—to change their behavior. An essential principle of effective correctional intervention is the treatment team playing an important role in recognizing the need for motivation and using proven motivational techniques. Motivational interviewing, for example, is a specific approach to interacting with offenders in ways that tend to enhance and maintain interest in changing their behaviors (Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, 2007).
**EBP #3: Target Interventions**

This requires the application of what was learned in the assessment process described in #1 above. Research shows that targeting three or fewer criminogenic needs does not reduce recidivism. Targeting four to six needs (at a minimum) has been found to reduce recidivism by 31 percent. Correctional organizations have a long history of assessing inmates for institutional management purposes, if nothing else (Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, 2007). But when it comes to using this information in the systematic application of program services, most corrections agencies fall short. While inmate files may contain adequate information identifying offenders’ deficits and needs, correctional staff are often distracted by population movement, lockdowns, and day-to-day prison operations. Staff training and professionalism become essential components of developing a culture of personal change: Well-trained staff can—and must—model and promote prosocial attitudes and behaviors even while maintaining a safe and secure environment (Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, 2007).

**EBP #4: Provide Skill Training for Staff and Monitor Their Delivery of Services**

Evidence-based programming emphasizes cognitive-behavior strategies and is delivered by well-trained staff. Staff must coach offenders to learn new behavioral responses and thinking patterns. In addition, offenders must engage in role-playing, and staff must continually and consistently reinforce positive behavior change (Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, 2007).

**EBP #5: Increase Positive Reinforcement**

Researchers have found that optimal behavior change results when the ratio of reinforcements is four positive to every negative reinforcement. While this principle should not interfere with the need for administrative responses to disciplinary violations, the principle is best applied with clear expectations and descriptions of behavior compliance. Furthermore, consequences for failing to meet expectations should be known to the offender as part of the programming activity. Clear rules and consistent consequences that allow offenders to make rewarding choices can be integrated into the overall treatment approach (Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, 2007).

**EBP #6: Engage Ongoing Support in Natural Communities**

Research has confirmed the fact that placing offenders in poor environments and with antisocial peers increases recidivism. For example, parole supervision requires attending to the prosocial supports required by inmates to keep them both sober and crime free. Building communities in prison and outside of prison for offenders who struggle to maintain personal change is a key responsibility of correctional administrators today (Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, 2007).

**EBP #7: Measure Relevant Processes/Practices**

Accurate and detailed documentation of case information and staff performance, along with a formal and valid mechanism for measuring outcomes, is the foundation of evidence-based...
Quality control and program fidelity play a central and ongoing role to maximize service delivery. In a study at the Ohio Department of Corrections, programs that scored highest on program integrity measures reduced recidivism by 22 percent. *Programs with low integrity actually increased recidivism.*

**EBP #8: Provide Measurement Feedback**

Providing feedback builds accountability and maintains integrity, ultimately improving outcomes. Offenders need feedback on their behavioral changes, and program staff need feedback on program integrity. It is important to reward positive behavior—of offenders succeeding in programs, and of staff delivering effective programming. Measurements that identify effective practices need then to be linked to resources, and resource decisions should be based on objective measurement (Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, 2007). Years of research have gone into the development of these evidence-based principles. When applied appropriately, these practices have the best potential to reduce recidivism. These principles should guide criminal justice program development, implementation, and evaluation.

**Figure 16.2 The Eight Evidence-Based Practices as Framework to Reduce Recidivism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eight Guiding Principles for Risk/Recidivism Reduction</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Engage Ongoing Support in Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Increase Positive Reinforcement</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Skill Train with Directed Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Target Intervention</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Measurement Feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Measure Relevant Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enhance Intrinsic Motivation</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Risk/Need: Assess Actuarial Risk</td>
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The eight principles (see left) are organized in a developmental sequence and can be applied at three fundamentally different levels:

1) the individual case;  
2) the agency; and  
3) the system.

Given the logic of each different principle, an overarching logic can be inferred that suggests a sequence for operationalizing the full eight principles.

Individual Case-Level Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices

At this level of implementation, the logical implication is that one must assess (EBP #1) prior to triage or targeting intervention (EBP #3), and that it is beneficial to begin building offender motivation (EBP #2) prior to engaging these offenders in skill-building activities (#4). Similarly, positively reinforcing new skills (EBP #5) has more relevancy after the skills have been introduced and trained (EBP #4) and at least partially in advance of the offender’s realignment with prosocial groups and friends (EBP #6). The seventh (measure relevant practices) and eighth (provide feedback) principles need to follow the activities described throughout all the preceding principles. Assessing an offender’s readiness to change as well as ability to use newly acquired skills is possible anywhere along the case management continuum. These last two principles can and should be applicable after any of the earlier principles, but they also can be considered cumulative and provide feedback on the entire case management process.

Agency-Level Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices

The principles, when applied at the agency level, assist with more closely aligning staff behavior and agency operations with EBP. Initial assessment followed by motivational enhancement will help staff to prepare for the significant changes ahead. Agency priorities must be clarified and new protocols established and trained. Increasing positive rewards for staff who demonstrate new skills and proficiency is straightforward and an accepted standard in many organizations. The sixth principle regarding providing ongoing support in natural communities can be related to teamwork within the agency as well as with external agency stakeholders. The seventh and eighth principles are primarily about developing quality assurance systems, to provide outcome data within the agency, but also to provide data to assist with marketing the agency to external stakeholders (National Institute of Justice, 2005).

System-Level Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices

The application of the framework principles at the system level is not much different from that at the agency level in terms of sequence and recommended order, though the system level is both the most critical and the most challenging level. Funding for most systems comes from state and local agencies that have oversight responsibilities. Demonstrating the value of EBP and effective interventions is crucial at this level, as is adherence to a coherent strategy for EBP. Another distinction in applying the principles at the system level is the need for greater abstraction and policy integration. The principles for EBP must be understood and supported by policy makers so that appropriate policy development coincides effectively with implementation (National Institute of Justice, 2005).

Research Evaluation for Effectiveness of Evidence-Based Practices

In this chapter, eight separate principles have been identified that are related to reduced recidivism outcomes in the research literature. Though we know that these are
evidence-based practices, at this point we do not know how well supported each is by the evidence. Thus, students should understand that this research does not support each of these principles with equal volume and quality, and, even if it did, each principle would not necessarily have similar effects on outcomes. Too often programs or practices are promoted as having research support without any regard for either the quality or the research methods that were employed. Consequently, a research support pyramid (see Figure 16.3) has been included that shows how research support for each principle ranks.

The highest-quality research support depicted in this schema (gold level) reflects interventions and practices that have been evaluated with experimental/control design and with multiple site replications that concluded significant sustained reductions in recidivism were associated with the intervention. The criteria for the next levels of support progressively decrease in terms of research rigor requirements (silver and bronze), but all the top three levels require that a preponderance of all evidence supports effectiveness. The next rung lower in support (iron) is reserved for programs that have inconclusive support regarding their efficacy. Finally, the lowest-level designation (dirt) is reserved for those programs that have research (utilizing methods and criteria associated with gold and silver levels), but the findings were negative and the programs were determined not effective (National Institute of Justice, 2005).

**Figure 16.3** Research Support Pyramid for Evidence-Based Practice Implementation

- **GOLD**
  - Experimental/control research design with controls for attrition
  - Significant sustained reductions in recidivism obtained
  - Multiple site replications
  - Preponderance of all evidence supports effectiveness

- **SILVER**
  - Quasi-experimental control research with appropriate statistical controls for comparison group
  - Significant sustained reductions in recidivism obtained
  - Multiple site replications
  - Preponderance of all evidence supports effectiveness

- **BRONZE**
  - Matched comparison group without complete statistical controls
  - Significant sustained reductions in recidivism obtained
  - Multiple site replications
  - Preponderance of all evidence supports effectiveness

- **IRON**
  - Conflicting findings and/ or inadequate research designs

- **DIRT**
  - Silver and Gold research showing negative outcomes

Staffing Community Corrections Programs

Training and professional and workforce development issues are of paramount concern in implementation of treatment programs within the criminal justice system. Because the criminal justice system affects the environment in which treatment occurs and provides the structure to which the client must respond, community corrections staff need to become familiar with the criminal justice system, its unique terminology, and methods of balancing client treatment needs with safety issues. Treatment professionals working with criminal justice clients should be knowledgeable about criminogenic risk factors, the most effective strategies and approaches for use with offender populations, and the need for professional boundaries.

By the same token, criminal justice staff should understand the goals of substance abuse treatment, the effects of frequently abused drugs, and the various types of treatment that are available. In addition, staff should have a working knowledge of various emotional and psychological disorders that often accompany substance abuse. Treatment knowledge is particularly important for criminal justice staff, since treatment is increasingly affecting all aspects of diversion, community supervision, court monitoring, and incarceration. Cross-training activities can encourage employees to work together. Training is also needed to address the wide variety of “special needs” populations under criminal justice supervision and the impact of managed care systems and tiered placement criteria (e.g., American Society of Addiction Medicine criteria) on publicly funded treatment systems.

Given that the rapid growth of treatment programs within the criminal justice system has not been matched by equal growth in organizational and staff resources, the system has been strained. Staff turnover, burnout, and other occupational hazards can be addressed through efforts to increase professionalism, such as developing the following:

- A clear hierarchy of staff positions with increasing responsibilities at each level
- Clear requirements for advancement in the hierarchy
- Incentives for additional training, made readily available
- Incentives for working on units that are considered more difficult or are higher security
- Merit pay (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2005)

An Example: Evaluating a Jail Diversion Program

Jail diversion programs generally operate to divert offenders away from jail or prison and into community service programs able to address their needs (Mire, Forsyth, & Hanser, 2007). There are a variety of different diversion programs currently in existence, as described in Chapter 10. Drug court, for example, could be considered a derivative of diversion since the emphasis is on better addressing the needs of offenders suffering from substance abuse through the use of services provided in the community. The diversion program used here, as an example, is funded through the federal government and is aimed at identifying and diverting offenders suffering from mental illness and co-occurring disorders.

The essence of this diversion program is to identify those offenders suffering from mental illness and co-occurring disorders who have been arrested for nonviolent offenses and provide them with appropriate community services aimed at addressing their psychological and emotional problems. Therefore, a possible theory to guide an evaluation of this program could be something similar to the following:
Offenders suffering from mental illness and co-occurring disorders are less likely to engage in crime if their needs are identified and addressed in community settings as opposed to being placed in a jail or prison.

The next step would be to begin the process of turning theoretical constructs into variables that can be measured. For example, what do we mean by mental illness and co-occurring disorders? Also, how do we define crime? These questions must be answered as we progress from theory to hypotheses. As mentioned above, a hypothesis consists of an affirmative statement about the relationship between variables. In order to transform a theoretical construct—mental illness—into a variable, we must define the construct through the process of operationalization. An example of operationalization could consist of the following:

Mental illness is a concept that describes the process of a person suffering from a diagnosable disorder such as depression, anxiety, trauma, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia. A co-occurring disorder is a concept that describes the process of a person suffering from more than one disorder such as substance abuse and depression, or substance abuse and trauma. Crime is a concept that describes the process of a person engaging in activity that is prohibited by law (i.e., any action that is defined as a criminal offense).

Now we have risen from the theoretical domain into the operational domain of hypotheses. The difference between a theory and a hypothesis is that the hypothesis can be tested. Two possible hypotheses follow:

Hypothetical hypothesis 1:

Crime will be reduced if a nonviolent offender suffering from trauma and substance abuse receives counseling and education in the community, as opposed to being placed in jail.

Hypothetical hypothesis 2:

Counseling and education will improve the offender’s quality of life, reducing the offender’s participation in crime.

At this point, we have two potential hypotheses that consist of variables that can be measured. The next step is to design a test that is able to measure each variable in a manner that allows us to answer the research question: Are nonviolent offenders who suffer from mental illness and co-occurring disorders less likely to engage in crime if treated in the community as opposed to being placed in jail? There are a variety of research designs available to test the hypotheses. The question that researchers will have to answer is, how do we ensure maximum reliability and validity with the amount of money and assets available for the project? Currently, government-funded jail diversion programs are evaluated using a before/after design in which offenders are interviewed within 7 days of being accepted into the diversion program and again at 6 and 12 months. The purpose of this design is to obtain a baseline status of each offender and then determine if the program interventions are achieving the desired outcomes.
For many jail diversion programs, the process begins when an offender charged with an offense is arrested by police and brought in for booking (as students may recall from Chapter 10). In this example, the offender is assessed and found to be suffering from substance abuse and trauma. As a result, the offender is accepted into the jail diversion program. At this point, the first step is to obtain baseline information. This baseline information is likely to be related to a series of process and outcome variables that we might wish to measure. The idea is to generate sufficient information so that an effective measure can be obtained for specific areas of evaluative inquiry. When determining what our baseline data will consist of, it is useful to first have a clear idea of the types of process and outcome measures we wish to examine. The kinds of outcome information that might be collected can be found in Table 16.1, which demonstrates how general outcome measures as described in Focus Topic 16.1 can be expanded and tailored to a more specific area of evaluation—in this case, evaluation of a jail diversion program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 16.1</th>
<th>Potential Outcome Measures for Jail Diversion Programs</th>
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| **Drugs** | • Urinalysis results  
• Drug-related parole infractions  
• Drug-related arrests |
| **Crime** | • Parole rule infractions  
• Time until parole rule infraction  
• New misdemeanor arrests of any type  
• New felony arrests for non-drug-related crimes  
• New felony arrests for drug-related crimes  
• New felony arrests for violent crimes |
| **Social adjustment** | • Time until arrest  
• Reincarceration  
• Employment and education  
• Family (e.g., support, child rearing, marital)  
• Substance abuse treatment  
• Community involvement (e.g., community service) |
| **HIV risk behaviors** | • Intravenous drug injection  
• Sexual behavior  
• HIV test results |
| **Cost information** | • Cost estimates of substance use  
• Cost estimates of crimes  
• Cost estimates of social services to family (e.g., welfare)  
• Criminal justice processing and detention costs |
| **Tracking information** | • Tracking locator information (e.g., social security and license numbers, addresses of family and friends) |

The **baseline interview** consists of gathering data related to each variable we are attempting to measure at the time of entry into the program. As was made clear in Chapter 3, it is important that we use valid and reliable survey or assessment instruments. Typically, **those instruments that are standardized are preferred to those that are not since their validity and reliability have been established by prior researchers.** After the point of the initial assessment, classification, and data collection of the offender, program offenders begin consuming services. The primary services offered include counseling, education, assistance with housing, and help finding employment. Counseling is a concept that describes the process of a trained and licensed professional attending to the psychological and emotional needs of the offender in an effort to improve cognitive and behavioral processes. Education usually consists of a broad range of topics that include, but are not limited to, factors related to substance abuse, obtaining a GED, healthier methods of handling stress, and recognizing symptoms.

The 6- and 12-month interviews consist of surveys that are very similar to the baseline. The purpose of the interviews is to obtain data from each offender that accurately captures his or her perceptions of each variable and to begin the process of gauging the impact of the services being provided. Once we have conducted the 6- and 12-month interviews, the evaluation begins to focus on analyzing the data. Through the process of analyzing and interpreting our data, we can begin identifying whether the interventions have had an impact on the offender’s overall quality of life and whether this seems to be correlated with reduced criminal behavior. It is important to note that our methods of analyzing and interpreting the data should be driven by the construction of our hypotheses. Finally, based on our results, we are able to modify, confirm, or reject our original theory.

A final note regarding this example is that researchers must be careful with the language they use in describing their results. For example, our hypothetical research design using a jail diversion program implemented a before-and-after study. There are many limitations to such a design. For example, we do not have a control group, we are not able to employ random sampling, and we are not able to control all variables that may be impacting the consumers. Because of this, we must be sure to phrase all findings as correlations and not causal factors of any change in the offender’s behavior.

### CROSS-NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

**Australian Wilderness Programs and Boot Camps**

In Australia, wilderness programs and boot camps are similar to those in the United States. Australian wilderness programs include adventure-based activities, while youth boot camps include a military-like regimen. Each of these programs has been touted as effective at reducing recidivism, particularly among the juvenile offending population. However, upon closer examination, evaluative research has found that the results are quite mixed. This is precisely the case with similar programs in the United States, leading experts to conclude that these programs, while still having some use, are not the bargain panacea that they once were held to be by politicians and the media.

In one recent systematic review of boot camps in Australia, it was found that programs...
using a military-like regimen had no positive effects that were statistically significant, particularly in regard to the reduction of recidivism (Wilson & MacKenzie, 2006). The same was true regarding the physical fitness aspects, leading Wilson and MacKenzie (2006) to conclude that these programs may be more effective if they make their primary emphasis therapeutic in nature, dispensing with the paramilitary orientation and the emphasis on physical activity.

Throughout Australia, other evaluations have also found that it is the therapeutic elements of such programs that are associated with success rather than the physical regimen (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2006; Wilson & Lipsey, 2000). However, among wilderness programs that do implement more of the therapeutic interventions, Wilson and Lipsey (2000) found that recidivism rates were slightly lower for program participants (29 percent) than for control subjects (37 percent). More specifically, they found that established programs were the most effective, demonstrating the need for long-term implementation of these programs and continued funding so that they can optimize and solidify their approach. Whether an 8 percent reduction in recidivism is substantial enough to warrant such expenditures is a question that is open to debate.

According to the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) website, evaluative research throughout Australia has found that the following characteristics are likely to enhance program outcomes:

- Thorough assessment and ongoing monitoring of participants
- A risk management assessment of activities and screening of program staff
- Multimodal treatments with a cognitive-behavioral orientation (e.g., behavior modification techniques, drug and alcohol programs)
- Addressing specific criminogenic needs (e.g., attitudes supporting offending, peer groups, family problems, drug and alcohol use, anger and violence problems; Singh & White, 2000)
- Meaningful and substantial contact between participants and treatment personnel
- Inclusion of an aftercare component

Further, just as is the case in the United States, the need for cultural competence in interventions has been identified. The AIC notes that programs for indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse youth should be culturally competent, with staff who are knowledgeable of diverse clients and who have the ability to relate to those clients.


**Critical Thinking Question**

1. Why is it that evaluative research examining wilderness programs and boot camps has produced such similar results in Australia to those obtained in the United States?

**NOTE:** There may be many answers to this question. Students should be sure to explain their answer.

For more information about the Australian wilderness programs or boot camps, visit the website at http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/crm/41-60/crm044.html.
Program Quality, Staffing Quality, and Evaluation of Program Curricula

Aside from outcome and process measures, there are a number of other areas that agencies may wish to evaluate. These may or may not require the input of the offender, and they may or may not be dependent upon the offender population’s outcome results. Some examples would be when agencies wish to assess the quality of their program, their staff, or their curricula. Each of these three components is very important, but they may require something beyond simple outcome evaluation measures. In some cases, such as with program curricula, there may be a connection to the general process measures used to evaluate the program. However, it is important when agencies evaluate curricula that they keep this separate and distinct from the blurring effects of staff who may modify the general process with their own therapeutic slant or means of implementing aspects of a job requirement. In other words, the individual preferences of different persons employed in the agency are not what you hope to observe in a curricular assessment; rather, it is the uniform and written procedures that are of interest.

From the example with curricular assessment just noted, it is clear that evaluations can be quite complex and detailed, depending on the approach taken by the agency. The key to an effective and ethical evaluation is evaluative transparency. **Evaluative transparency** is when an agency’s evaluative process allows an outside person (whether an auditor, an evaluator, or the public-at-large) to have full view of the agency’s operations, budgeting, policies, procedures, and outcomes. In transparent agencies, there are no secrets, and confidential information is only kept when ethical or legal requirements mandate that the information not be transparent, such as with a client’s treatment files or a victim’s personal identity. In such cases, the intent is a benevolent safeguarding of the client’s welfare, not the agency’s own welfare.

If one is to evaluate the quality of a program, it stands to reason that the program must be transparent to the evaluator who is tasked with observing that program. Agencies that seek to meet high ethical standards must be transparent. This is a core requisite to ensuring the quality of the program that is implemented. Further, programs of quality are accountable to the public, and this is, in part, an element of transparency. Public accountability is a matter of good ethical bearing, and this is consistent with the reason that ethical safeguards are put into place—to protect the public consumer. In the case of community corrections agencies, the product that is “sold” to the public is community safety, and it is the obligation of the agency to be accountable and transparent to the public when providing services to its jurisdiction. Thus, in community corrections, the quality of the program should be appraised based on its ability to deliver ethical, open, and honest services that hold community safety paramount.

In regard to staffing quality, agencies should make a point to evaluate their standards as well as the support that they provide to their staff. Naturally, recruitment and hiring standards should be evaluated routinely, but it is also important that agencies examine their own support services for staff. Some examples might include the existence of an effective human resources division, sufficient budgeting for equipment to effectively do their job, and the nature of the job design, particularly in regard to caseload. As one might guess, this is related to the overall quality of the program as well.

Of course, agencies should also evaluate their hiring standards and should examine factors such as the number of complaints generated by the community regarding staff functioning. Grievances or complaints by offenders can also be examined if it should turn out that there is some legitimacy to such complaints. Likewise, employee standards of conduct are
important, as are incidents where employees do not meet the standards expected by the agency. Further, staff should be consulted, and evaluators should consider whether the line staff feel prepared and whether they consider their work environment to be on a par with other agencies. All of this staff-related information provides a richer analysis of agency operations and yields additional transparency in the day-to-day routines that occur.

Evaluation of the agency's curriculum is also needed. In treatment programs, this is an especially important consideration. Indeed, the curriculum of a treatment program forms the basis upon which the interventions will be implemented with offenders and also sets the tone for treatment services within the agency. As an example, a treatment program such as Family Foundations (an agency previously presented in Chapter 12) will have a curriculum that emphasizes family-based interventions that are common to most family therapists around the nation. The point to the previous example is that curriculum development is not a cosmetic issue or one that is of minor significance. Rather, the agency curriculum determines the entire approach used by case managers, correctional treatment specialists, and even administrators. The assessment of agency curriculum requires methodical processes that must be subject to replication. Often, when examining the curriculum, policies, or procedures of an agency, evaluators will utilize what is referred to as a content analysis of the written curriculum, policies, and procedures that exist within the agency. Content analysis is the “systematic analysis and selective classification of the contents of mass media. This technique is excellent for comparative and historical studies or for discerning trends in existing phenomena” (Hagan, 2000, p. 250). Content analyses occur at two levels, the manifest and the latent. Manifest analyses include the identification of key words and phrases, with a simple counting of their frequency. Latent analyses go beyond this to address the underlying intent behind written procedures and policies, rather than relying on mere word counts or the appearance of a given topic or subject matter. Obviously, the use of content analysis requires a great deal of expert judgment, and this requires that the evaluator be conversant on a given agency’s goals, objectives, and mode of operation.

Cost-Effectiveness and Cost-Benefit Analyses

Another critical area in program development is program costs, including cost savings and cost-benefit/cost-offset information (see Table 16.2 for additional details). Program administrators are routinely required to provide evidence that monies are being spent effectively. The literature indicates that treatment has cost benefits in certain settings. Positive cost-offset results (savings down the road) have been demonstrated to accrue from treatment through specific approaches such as drug courts (Belenko, 2001). Similar results have been shown for treatment in prison settings (McCollister & French, 2001). A cost analysis is important in determining how to allocate funds within a program and for understanding the relationship between costs and outcomes. Examining costs for the program as a whole (or for parts of it) is a basic form of cost analysis. Cost analyses can be provided as a monthly or quarterly report, as costs generally vary over time. Costs to evaluate at several levels include the following:

- Total cost of the program for the average treatment
- Cost of each part of the program each day
- Total monthly or annual cost per offender
According to the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (2005), the major types of cost analyses include “cost,” “cost-effectiveness,” and “cost benefit,” and these are described below:

Some treatment program evaluations measure direct monetary outcomes, such as a reduction in the use of health services. Other treatment program evaluations can measure indirect costs and benefits, such as reduction in crime-related costs, reduced recidivism, and the costs of incarcerating offenders. Other ways to report the relationship between costs and benefits include the following:

- The net benefit of a program can be shown by subtracting the costs of a program from its benefits.
- The ratio of benefits to costs is found by dividing total program benefits by total program costs.
- The time to return on investment is the time it takes for program benefits to equal program costs.
- The present value of benefits takes into account the decreasing value of benefits attained in the distant future.
- Because neither net benefits nor cost-benefit ratios indicate the size of the cost (initial investment) required for treatment to yield the observed benefits, it is important to report this as well (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2005).

### Feedback Loops and Continual Improvement

In evaluating community corrections agencies, the information obtained from the evaluation should serve some useful purpose. The Bureau of Justice Assistance’s Center for Program Evaluation (2007) elaborates on the need for evaluations to be constructed in a manner that is useful to the stakeholders of the evaluation. Stakeholders in community corrections evaluations include the agency personnel, the community in which the agency is located, and even the offender population that is being supervised. According to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), evaluators need to be clear on what agency administrators wish to evaluate, and evaluators must also ensure that administrators understand that evaluative efforts are to remain objective and unbiased in nature.

Beyond the initial understanding between administrators and evaluators, it is always important that evaluators provide recommendations for agencies, based on the outcome of the evaluation (BJA Center for Program Evaluation, 2007). It is through these recommendations that agencies can improve their overall services and enhance goal-setting strategies in

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 16.2</th>
<th>Examining Program Efficacy From the Perspective of Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cost analysis</strong></td>
<td>A thorough description of the type and amount of all resources used to produce substance abuse treatment services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost-effectiveness analysis</strong></td>
<td>The relationship between program costs and program effectiveness—that is, patient outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost-benefit analysis</strong></td>
<td>The measurement of both costs and outcomes in monetary terms</td>
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</table>
the future. Indeed, evaluation information can be a powerful tool for a variety of stakeholders. Program managers can use the information to make changes in their programs that will enhance their effectiveness. Decision makers can ensure that they are funding effective programs. Other authorities can ensure that programs are developed as intended and have sufficient resources to implement activities and meet their goals and objectives (BJA Center for Program Evaluation, 2007).

Agencies that are adept at assimilating evaluative information and recommendations are sometimes referred to as learning organizations. Learning organizations have the inherent ability to adapt and change, improving performance through continual revision of goals, objectives, policies, and procedures. Throughout this process, learning organizations respond to the various pushes and pulls that are placed upon them by utilizing a continual process of data-driven, cyclical, and responsive decision making that results in heightened adaptability of the organization. The ideal community corrections agency is a learning organization—one that can adjust to outside community needs and challenges as well as internal personnel and resource issues. Finally, in its ideal state, evaluation is an ongoing process that is embedded in the process of program planning, action setting, and later improvement. The BJA Center for Program Evaluation (2007) notes that evaluation findings can be used to revise policies, activities, goals, and objectives (see Focus Topic 16.1), and this is precisely the process that is involved in developing evidence-based practices within an agency.

This again reflects many of the points made in earlier chapters, particularly Chapter 2. In fact, students may notice that Focus Topic 16.1 is actually a reprinted version of Focus Topic 2.1. This is to demonstrate the importance of policy making as well as the setting of goals and objectives that guide a community supervision agency into the future. This cyclical pattern of going from assessment to implementation to evaluation demonstrates a continual circle of development that uses past data to better face future challenges. This is the most effective means of utilizing real-world research to tailor-fit programs to the challenges within a jurisdiction. With this in mind, we once again look to the work of Van Keulen (1988), who noted that

goals and objectives also play a critical role in evaluation by providing a standard against which to measure the program’s success. If the purpose of the program is to serve as an alternative to jail, the number of jail-bound offenders the program serves would be analyzed. If the program’s focus is to provide labor to community agencies, the number of hours worked by offenders would be examined. Last, having a statement of goals and objectives will enhance your program’s credibility by showing that careful thought has been given to what you are doing. (p. 1)

As pointed out in Chapter 2, Van Keulen (1988) demonstrates the reasons why clarity in definition, point, and purpose behind a community corrections program is important. Clearly articulated goals not only help to crystallize the agency’s philosophical orientation regarding the supervision process but also provide for more measurable constructs that lend themselves to effective evaluation. Clarity in the goals and objectives allows the agency to perform evaluative research to determine if its efforts are actually successful or if they are in need of improvement. This then facilitates the ability of the agency to come “full circle” as the planning, implementation, evaluation, and refinement phases of agency operations unfold.
As we near the close of this text, it is important to reflect on the potential consequences that might be incurred if agencies are allowed to operate ineffectively. As was noted back in Chapter 2, public safety is “job one,” so to speak. This is the main priority for community supervision staff, and agencies bear a responsibility to ensure that the public’s welfare is safeguarded. However, as has been made clear throughout this text, the best long-term approach to improving public safety is through the use of effective reintegration efforts for offenders. Thus, programs that fail to adequately supervise offenders on community supervision run the risk of allowing the community to be harmed. Likewise, programs that fail to implement effective treatment approaches put the community at risk.

Multiple means of maintaining supervision over offenders have been provided in this book. From the broad and progressive continuum of intermediate sanctions to the use of residential treatment facilities, community corrections interventions can be implemented in a manner that is a “best-fit” scenario for the offender and his or her likely level of risk. This comes back to one of the most critical aspects of community supervision: the assessment and classification process. As was noted in Chapter 2, the assessment and classification process sets the stage for everything else that follows. It is also at this point where correctional resources can be optimized by ensuring the best fit between supervision resources and

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FOCUS TOPIC 16.1 WHAT ARE POLICIES, ACTIVITIES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES?

**Policy:** A governing principle pertaining to goals, objectives, or activities. It is a decision on an issue not resolved on the basis of facts and logic only. For example, the policy of expediting drug cases in the courts might be adopted as a basis for reducing the average number of days from arraignment to disposition.

**Activities:** Services or functions carried out by a program (i.e., what the program does). For example, treatment programs may screen clients at intake, complete placement assessments, provide counseling to clients, and so on.

**Goal:** A desired state of affairs that outlines the ultimate purpose of a program. This is the end toward which program efforts are directed. For example, the goal of many criminal justice programs is a reduction in criminal activity.

**Objectives:** Specific results or effects of a program’s activities that must be achieved in pursuing the program’s ultimate goals. For example, a treatment program may expect to change offender attitudes (objective) in order to ultimately reduce recidivism (goal).

offender risk as well as between treatment resources and offender needs. The importance of effective intake assessment cannot be overemphasized here.

The evaluation of community supervision agencies is directly tied to the assessment component that occurs as the offender is first processed. Indeed, the assessment of the offender typically serves as the baseline measure when examining evaluation processes. Both process and outcome evaluations tend to examine data during the initial assessment against the data that are received when the offender exits a particular program or sentencing scheme. It is in this manner that the evaluation of correctional supervision programs serves to reinforce the initial assessment process. The initial assessment and classification process will be considered effective if, at the end of the offender’s involvement in a given supervision program, the evaluation of the program demonstrates that the offender is indeed less likely to recidivate, particularly if this likelihood falls below that experienced at other agencies in the area and throughout the country. Thus, the evaluation process is a feedback loop into the initial assessment process, demonstrating to agencies that their programs are (or are not) working. If they are found to be in need of improvement, evaluators can then determine if this is due to the initial intake assessment or if the deficiency is due to some process issue further along in the program’s service delivery. Checking the initial assessment and ensuring that this process is adequate follows a “garbage in–garbage out” philosophy; that is, the outcome will only be as good as the process leading up to it.

Such a process creates a systemic loop whereby the agency is constantly assessing and evaluating itself. This is the sign of a high-functioning agency, the type of agency that is less likely to commit false positives (thereby losing resources on an offender who is less likely to recidivate than others) or false negatives (placing the community at risk with an offender who is more likely to recidivate). The process of interrelated evaluation (at the back end of offender processing) and assessment (at the front end of offender processing) helps to link or loop the two concepts in a manner that results in continual self-improvement. This is known as the assessment-evaluation cycle, which is the process whereby assessment data and evaluation data are compared to determine the effectiveness of programs and to find areas where improvement of agency services is required. Agencies that successfully implement the assessment-evaluation cycle tend to use public resources more effectively and also are not prone to placing the community at risk for future criminal activity. In other words, agencies using the assessment-evaluation cycle will operate at an optimal level, avoiding harm to the community and the mismanagement of resources. On the other hand, those agencies that do not successfully implement the assessment-evaluation cycle will operate at a suboptimal level, placing the community at risk.

Photo 16.3 This open space is called Cabrini-Green, an area of Chicago’s gangland once known for extreme gang-related violence. Today, due to grassroots community organizations, this area has become tame, and gang violence has subsided. Evaluations of programs in the area demonstrate that their efforts have been a strong contributing influence to this decrease in violent activity.
assessment-evaluation cycle will be more likely both to waste agency resources and to place the community at a level of risk that otherwise would be preventable.

Last, the assessment and evaluation process should be neutral and objective. This is why the evaluator should ideally be a person who is outside of the agency. In many cases, agencies have a great deal to gain by having a positive evaluation. Indeed, future funding and salaries may be dependent upon meeting grant-funding objectives; a failure to obtain these funds could impair an agency in future years. Thus, there are occasionally some agencies that may attempt to exert influence over the evaluator. This must not be allowed to happen. Otherwise, it is the community that is likely to suffer from the tainted evaluation that will then be used as the basis for further supervision of offenders.

In addition, some advocacy groups and other persons with special agendas have been known to exert influence in the community. The evaluator should be careful not to allow his or her information to be misconstrued or presented in a false manner. This may be done by local politicians who wish to use the criminal justice system as a springboard for their own specific and ulterior reasons. Other criminal justice persons, such as judges or local district attorneys, might be seeking reelection, and some of these individuals might attempt to “cozy up” to the evaluator. They might even attempt to hire the evaluator as a means of influencing outcome data. Though these are all unethical circumstances, such situations can and do happen. The wise evaluator will keep his or her integrity closely guarded, remembering that scientific stewardship is invaluable and that the public’s safety should always be within the evaluator’s purview of concern and consideration.

**APPLIED THEORY**

The Connection Between Theory and Policy

Lilly, Cullen, and Ball (2007) note that differing theories simply present different methods of reducing crime. This is precisely true, and it is one key reason that evaluative research is so important to criminal justice in general, and community corrections in particular. As has been pointed out throughout this text, there are a variety of theoretical bases for punishment or intervention that exist. These theories provide criminal justice agencies with a direction or framework from which policies are formulated, depending on the particular goals of the jurisdiction and the effectiveness of a given approach in reducing crime. Thus, the evaluation of different treatment perspectives, supervision approaches, case management systems, and other aspects of community corrections is critical to the development and improvement of the community corrections process.

It is through the constant generation of theories that hypotheses are generated, tested, refined, and retested to provide for continual improvement in the community corrections process. Naturally, as discoveries are made, policies are then formulated to reflect these discoveries. Through this process of theory generation, testing, and policy application, standards in community supervision are formulated and disseminated throughout the United States. Thus, theory lies at the basis of everything that occurs in the community corrections arena in particular, as well as in the criminal justice system as a whole.
Lilly et al. (2007) provide an excellent synopsis of this concept by stating the following:

The very changes in theory that undergird changes in policy are themselves a product of transformations in society. Explanations of crime are linked intimately to social context—to the experiences people have that make a given theory seem silly or sensible. Thus, it is only when shifts in societal opinion occur that theoretical models gain or lose credence and, in turn, gain or lose the ability to justify a range of criminal justice policies. (p. 6)

The above quote holds true for policies on community corrections as well. Indeed, it is true that attitudes toward offender reintegration have been going through a state of change as the pendulum seems to be shifting back to a more reintegrative approach to offender reentry.


The Future of Community Corrections

It is perhaps fitting that this chapter concludes with a section on future trends in community corrections for two reasons. First and quite obviously, this is the last chapter of the text, and it is the typical location where such a section is placed. Second, this chapter addresses evaluation, research, and the connection between assessment and evaluation. This last point is most important because it is through the use of our evaluative research that we predict future trends in agencies and in the community as a whole. Thus, research methodology allows us to formulate additional theories that generate hypotheses, which in turn are tested for accuracy. It is on this note, and with much trepidation, that some speculations regarding future trends in community corrections will be provided. Before doing so, it should be noted that many psychologists, particularly behavioral psychologists, claim that the best predictor of future human behavior is past human behavior. In fact, empirical research has shown this to be generally true. It is with this in mind and with the inclusion of prior research from the field of community corrections that some general observations and predictions will be made.

In providing some insight into future outcomes that we are likely to observe, note that this text has been addressing two key themes that are likely to continue for the foreseeable future: the use of collaborative efforts between agencies and the community and the emphasis...
on reintegration as a key to effective offender processing. These two trends are likely to continue for a variety of practical rather than theoretical reasons. Evidence of this already exists throughout the correctional literature, and, as this text clearly demonstrates, many agencies around the nation have already set a course for these two themes to be part of their long-term mission. 

First, agencies are strapped for resources in these tough economic times, with budget cuts affecting agencies throughout the nation. This creates serious limits to what they can do to enhance public safety. Simply put, there are just too many offenders for the current system to effectively supervise them all. Without public support and assistance, police and community supervision officers find themselves caught in a revolving-door system of justice that never seems to slow down. Without the addition of other external resources, it would seem that the justice system is essentially doomed to continue repeating “more of the same.” 

Second, prisons are full, and community supervision officers already experience significant stress due to high caseloads. Continuing along with a “stuff ’em and cuff ’em” mentality will simply not work for a system that is already quite overstuffed. If something different cannot be introduced to alleviate the continued overcrowding of prisons and the already over-loaded case management approaches that exist, then either correctional systems will need much larger budgets, or offenders will have to simply be set free without any form of supervision. Obviously, the latter possibility is simply too dangerous to consider, and the former will just result in more of the same problems that already face the criminal justice system. With this in mind, a discussion of the likely trends in community supervision programs follows. 

Community Involvement, Community Corrections, and Community Justice

From a variety of developments around the nation, it is becoming increasingly clear that the community will need to be involved in the community corrections process. This means that the average citizen must know of both the offender and any programs in which the offender may be involved. This is important, and it requires that the agency provide aggressive advertisement and community awareness campaigns. Community supervision agents should visit not just the offender’s home, but also other homes in the neighborhood to increase the informal social controls and human supervision that are in place.

As has been made clear throughout this text, community supervision has seen partnerships emerge among police agencies, faith-based organizations, civic associations, social service agencies, and a wide range of other specialized organizations. In this emerging collaborative schema, community supervision agencies are looked at as the leader in addressing crime as a community-based social problem. Thus, community supervision agencies will need to continue spearheading conjoint community action in the supervision of offenders. As was discussed in Chapter 2 of this text, the best approach for this is through the implementation of a community justice orientation. According to Clear and Cole (2003), community justice should be thought of as simultaneously being a philosophy of justice, a strategy of justice, and a combination of justice programs. When creating a community justice orientation within a given community, Clear and Cole note that there are three essential components: community policing, environmental crime prevention, and restorative justice. This discussion will focus on two of those elements—community policing and environmental crime prevention. Students should consider their readings in Chapter 12 regarding restorative justice to understand its interlocking role in the community justice concept.
Community policing employs methods of creating partnerships between the police and the community. This means that programs such as Neighborhood Watch and Citizens on Patrol are utilized to create a working relationship between citizens and the police. Further, community policing is intended to make the police the friends of the community and will often be decentralized in nature so that individual officers can mill about the community to build more personal and individualized relationships with citizens.

Shusta, Levine, Wong, and Harris (2005) further note how police will not only need to coordinate with the community citizen on a more effective level; it will also be in their mutual best interests for police and community supervision officers to routinely collaborate. For community supervision officers, rising caseloads place an ever-growing burden on individual officers, and any supervisory assistance they can get makes their job, and the stress of that job, much easier to handle. Further, this makes the supervision process much more effective in detecting offender noncompliance. For police, the advantage is in the intensive background tracking that probation departments are able to provide, as well as the ability to keep an eye on the homes, significant others, and lives of those who are most likely to be repeat problems while they patrol their neighborhood beats. This eliminates much of the headache associated with policing, particularly in communities that have a disproportionate offender population. Thus, community police officers and community supervision officers work hand in hand quite naturally and with little extra effort needed to substantially improve the quality of oversight of the special needs offender.

The environmental crime prevention component of a community justice orientation will determine why certain areas of a jurisdiction are more crime prone than others (Clear & Cole, 2003), an approach that combines elements of routine activities theory (discussed extensively in Chapter 2). This is important in the prevention of crime, and it is specifically important when attempting to supervise offenders who are likely to visit prior cohorts and criminal associates. Areas rampant with drugs are vital to locate so as to deter drug offenders from recidivism. In addition, areas of town where prostitution is known to occur should be monitored and supervised by community supervision officers and police officers to deter female offenders from engaging in the business of illicit sex services. Finally, areas known to have gang problems should be saturated by an agency presence and citizen groups as a means of deterring gang influence in that community and to improve the odds for prior gang members who are trying leave their previous lifestyle.

Mental Health Issues Will Remain Important

The Martinson Report (recall Chapter 9) is now dead. It no longer holds true with today’s correctional system or with the offenders who are currently processed. The recognition of co-occurring disorders among offenders has led to a wide variety of new and innovative treatments that have been shown to work based on numerous studies. The research showing that psychotherapy (especially when accompanied by appropriate medication) is both useful and effective is overwhelming. Orientations such as family interventions have also added social factors and influences, demonstrating that treatments can effectively focus on both internal characteristics of the offender and external relationships that they have with others, to enhance likely outcomes. Simply put, offenders need mental health assistance, and mental health treatment programs work. A better fit between needs and services could not exist; the only thing missing is a vigorous and wholehearted devotion to these efforts.
It will become important for agencies to focus on both paraprofessional and professional forms of mental health intervention training. Indeed, this has already come into vogue, and, as will be seen in future years, it will be impossible to provide too much of such training. Staff will need to be conversant on various issues related to mental disorders, cognitive deficits, and access to social services. Case management aspects of the community supervision officer’s job will continue to be important, as offenders continue to require multivariate services. Addictions recovery will continue to be central to offender reformation, and reintegration will be dependent on addictions and corollary mental health issues being addressed in a suitable manner.

An Emphasis on Cultural Competence Will Continue to Be Important

Chapter 15 of this text addressed cultural competence and the increasing representation of minority offenders in the criminal justice system. It is clear that the United States is becoming more racially and culturally diverse. Indeed, the need for multilingual skills and understanding of differing religious beliefs, lifestyle orientations, and other matters of diversity will become mandatory for future employees in the area of community corrections. The continued diversity among the offender population, along with other challenges (such as mental health needs), means that caseloads for officers are likely to become much more complicated in the future. Naturally, this can add to the already stressful conditions under which supervision officers work and will mean that agencies will need to find the means to mitigate these challenges and their associated stress.

Assessment Methods Will Need to Be Continually Refined

In 1999, Maghan noted that inmates who were incarcerated were becoming more dangerous because of their unpredictability both before and during their incarceration. This points toward the need for refined methods of assessment and classification. This also denotes the importance of effective evaluation to gauge whether assessment processes are working effectively. According to Maghan, the new generation of inmates is committing detected crimes at ever-younger ages of initial arrest. Further, these offenders tend to be learning disabled and suffer cognitive challenges. It would appear that these impairments affect their ability to learn academically as well as behaviorally. This is so much the case that they are seemingly impervious to punitive sanctions and unmotivated by reinforcements or rewards for prosocial behavior. Maghan describes the following characteristics as those likely to exist with future offenders:

- Members of racial minority groups
- Not healthy (appearing to be an average of 10 years older than physical age)
- Have sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, or tuberculosis
- Overly emotional and lack impulse control
• Children who are having children
• Gang affiliated
• Unmarried
• Children of single-parent households

Thus, offenders are likely to have a number of problems that impact and intensify one another. Further, the climate of today’s society is one that is becoming more and more tolerant of diverse lifestyles, further increasing the likelihood that alternative lifestyles and mores will impact the types of offenders that are seen. This also will undermine the effectiveness of traditional treatment approaches based on a traditional middle-class American worldview. Assessment and treatment planning will simply require a more varied approach that allows for multiple challenges that stem from various negative life course choices and the consequences of those choices.

**An Emphasis on Employment Programs Will Be Necessary**

Research is showing that offenders simply need jobs if they are to be able to make ends meet while paying restitution, fines, and other obligations to society. Programs geared toward offender reentry are finding that vocational programs that aid in job placement are quite effective in reducing recidivism. The results around the nation are very clear, and it would seem that since employers are able to secure tax incentives for hiring offenders, these programs also benefit society as a whole. Such programs ensure that society is compensated for property crimes, and, when used within a restorative justice or victim compensation framework, they can heal damage that is done from nonviolent crimes. This is important because the victim, society, and the offender all benefit from such programs. Thus, vocational training will be critical, and the use of work release and restitution programs will continue to be necessary.

**Geriatric Populations Should Be Shifted to Community Supervision Schemes in the Future**

The entire population is graying in the United States and in other industrialized countries. In addition, the prison population in the United States is graying at a faster rate than is the general society beyond prison walls. This issue has been given considerable attention in recent years, with Texas, California, Florida, New York, and Louisiana all experiencing a rise in per capita elderly inmates who are incarcerated. The states just mentioned either have the largest prison populations or have the highest rates of incarceration in the United States. In all cases, the costs that are associated with elderly inmates are exponentially higher than those associated with younger inmates. This leads to other issues for administrators, such as the possibility of early release of inmates who are expected to die soon and the implementation of human caregiver programs such as hospice, as well as accountability to the public. It is this accountability that places prison administrators in a dilemma, since public safety is the primary concern for all custodial programs. The sobering reality is that, like it or not, society will, one way or another, pay the expenses of keeping elderly inmates.

It is with this point in mind that state-level correctional systems will need to increase their use of community supervision programs for elderly offenders, including those who are
chronically ill. This may seem to be an oversimplified recommendation, but it is one that has not truly been implemented by many states. Most states do have programs designed for the early release of elderly inmates, but these programs are not used extensively. The recommendation here is that community supervision be automatically implemented when an inmate reaches the age of 60, unless the offender is a bona fide pedophile or child molester. In the case of pedophiles, the typical risk assessment methods should remain intact, since these offenders have such poor prognoses for reform. However, all other elderly inmates should be automatically placed on community supervision, since this would reduce costs of upkeep significantly.

**Sentencing May Become More Indeterminate in Nature**

It has historically been the case that the criminal justice system operates on a spectrum, with punitive philosophies at one end and reformational philosophies on the other. Chapter 1 clearly illustrated that there has been an ebb and flow related to the acceptance of reintegration approaches. Nevertheless, an argument was presented that initial correctional thought revolved more around reintegration than the alleviation of overcrowded prison facilities or overworked jailers. In many respects, we are likely to see correctional thought go “back to the future,” so to speak, with a return to more acceptance of reintegration efforts. Historically speaking, the pendulum may begin to swing toward less restrictive prison sentencing, thereby increasing the use of community corrections sanctions.

However, the public perception of community supervision still remains negative due to misunderstanding as well as the failure of many agencies to provide clear evaluative data on their programs, or to publicize this data, especially in the media. Paparozzi (2003) states that “the absence of clear and convincing program evaluation data establishes the foundation for ideologically driven, as opposed to the more preferred evidence-based policies, programs, and practices” (p. 47).

**The Media and Community Corrections**

The media can prove pivotal in the success or failure of any program's ability to effectively deal with offenders under their supervision. Because community supervision agencies will need to establish community-based partnerships when establishing effective supervision over offenders, the media stand as a potential tool toward facilitating that process. Further, the media can make the agency more visible so that community members will be apprised of programs that are being implemented. Indeed, the media can aid the agency in finding volunteers and agencies that are willing to lend a helping hand, thereby establishing a truly effective sense of community justice.

However, certain groups of offenders, such as sex offenders, have drawn public attention and concern. This is of course understandable; if it is not presented in the appropriate light, however, the public will tend to make erroneous conclusions regarding the offender population, and this can completely undermine an agency’s ability to implement an effective supervision scheme that is integrated with the community. Media effects are an important consideration in community supervision and refer to the impact that the media have upon the public perception of offender supervision programs in the community. How the
media report specific incidents can affect this. Further, when programs are successful or innovative, the media can provide effective coverage of these as well, to ensure that the public is getting the most accurate information possible regarding both special needs offenders and community supervision.

Garrett (1999) notes certain points to consider when deciding upon the involvement of the media in corrections. These questions have been adapted for community supervision agencies and demonstrate the potential concerns when the media are involved:

- To what extent will the media representatives disrupt the day-to-day operations of supervision personnel in the community? Will schedules and routine activities be hindered?
- How are offenders likely to react to the media coverage, and how is this likely to impact their ability to reintegrate within the community at large?
- How are people in the community likely to react to the coverage? Will this impair the ability of the offender to reintegrate within the community at large?
- To what extent can coverage impair public safety, particularly for prior victims?
- Will the coverage be likely to cause further trauma for previous victims or families of victims or the offender? (Garrett, 1999, p. 441)

Thus, agency administrators who are attempting to build collaborative partnerships must foster good relations with the media and must always be aware that the media can be a double-edged sword when presenting coverage on special needs offenders. This is particularly true with those offenders who may be bizarre or unusual in appearance or mannerisms.

**CONCLUSION**

Research and assessment of community corrections programs are vital. It is through this process that we are able to identify program strengths and weaknesses that serve to inform the literature. The ultimate question that should guide research and assessment projects is “So what?” In other words, if we choose to conduct a research project, will the results provide a meaningful contribution to what is known about some phenomenon? From another standpoint, if we did not conduct the research project, would there continue to be a significant gap in the literature hindering our ability to make optimal decisions regarding community corrections programs? In essence, a quality research program is able to answer the question “So what?”

Further, the best way to construct research programs that are capable of producing meaningful information is to strictly adhere to the principles of scientific investigation. Research designs should be guided by a theory and informed by the literature, from which hypotheses are constructed and capable of being measured. In addition, the methods of analyzing and interpreting the data should comport with the basic research question in order to maximize reliability and validity of the findings. Good scientific research is not easy to conduct. At every decision point, there are obstacles and limitations. This reality, however, must not be cause for significant deviation from scientific principles of research; one’s mental and emotional health, as well as individual freedoms, are at stake.

It is important to keep in mind that the assessment process is an integral component of the evaluation of any agency. This means that what agencies put into their program will be reflected in their final output. Thus, assessment can be seen as a measure of what goes into a program, and evaluation can be seen as a measure of what comes out. The two work hand in hand. Because of
this, students should be familiar with the assessment-evaluation cycle, since this is the primary means by which community supervision agencies measure their performance, and since this is what ultimately determines if an agency is meeting its goals and objectives. For agencies with unfavorable evaluations, an examination of their policies and activities or, in some cases, a reassessment of their goals and objectives may be in order.

Finally, this chapter reflects on some of the themes that have emerged throughout this text. These themes are important to contemporary community corrections and have been presented as the direction that community corrections agencies will need to take in the future. A number of likely trends were noted, and recommendations were given for agencies that will face challenges that loom on the horizon. Community corrections is a field that is both dynamic and demanding; practitioners who work in this field will have their work cut out for them. However, the work of community corrections personnel is critical, and it warrants support from the various funding sources as well as the public at large. Without this support, the entire public is likely to pay dearly for such negligence.

**KEY TERMS**

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**END-OF-CHAPTER REVIEW: SHARING YOUR OPINION**

1. What are evidence-based practices (EBPs), and why are they important?
2. In your opinion, is the recent emphasis on EBPs just a fad or trend in the discipline or something that will remain important in the future?
3. What is the difference between process and outcome measures? Which is more important, if any, and under what circumstances?
4. What is the assessment-evaluative cycle? Why is it important?
5. In your opinion, which future trend discussed is likely to impact the criminal justice system the most in the next 10 years?

**“WHAT WOULD YOU DO?”**

This is an extension of the “What Would You Do?” exercise in Chapter 8. In that prior exercise, you were a probation officer in a small rural agency. Your supervisor had established a steering committee made up of you, a member of the social services office, a person from city hall, a deputy from the sheriff’s office, and another person from the regional hospital. You were to come up with some sort of action plan that would allow you to aid persons on community supervision in finding employment, making therapeutic and medical meetings, and
meeting the conditions of their restitution requirements. This task was difficult, but you successfully implemented the needed program in a jurisdiction that spans a large tri-county area with a total population of only 25,000 people. The largest town in your region, named Maybury, had a population of roughly 8,000 people. Though resources were scant, you took this task seriously and did well with its implementation. In fact, you did so well that you were given a pay raise and a small promotion.

Since that time, the state capitol has noticed your efforts and has offered to provide some additional state monies to supplement your program. This would be a very good benefit for you since resources are so scarce in your jurisdiction. You are asked to meet several policy makers at the state capitol and showcase your new program. However, you are told that they will want to see how you would evaluate your program, once given state funding. Essentially, they want to see that their money is going to good use. Your supervisor asks you to put together an evaluation plan for your fairly new program. Specifically, she asks that you identify process and outcome measures that you would utilize and be ready to explain why you have selected those measures.

What would you do?

APPLIED EXERCISE

For this exercise, you will need to consider your readings in this chapter as they apply to prior readings in Chapter 14 on sex offenders. Your assignment is as follows:

You are a researcher who has recently been hired by the community supervision system of your state. You have been asked to design and evaluate a new sex offender treatment program for adult pedophiles that has been implemented in one of the larger cities in your state. Specifically, you are asked to examine how various aspects of social learning theory may lead to pedophilia, and then you must explain how various treatment options might best address those issues with this population. The program that you will evaluate uses all of the interventions listed in Chapter 14 of this text, including those techniques/approaches that are listed under cognitive-behavioral interventions, empathy-training, and interrogation-oriented techniques. Last, you will need to provide a clear methodology for testing and evaluating your proposed program, including such factors as validity and reliability of your study and the validity and reliability of your instruments (if any), the use of control and experimental groups, and distinctions between process and outcome measures, as well as ethical issues that might be involved with conducting such research.

Students should complete this application exercise as a mini paper that explains the scenario and then addresses each question throughout the content of the discussion. Total word count: 900 to 2,100 words.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

For this study, Lowenkamp, Hubbard, Markarios, and Latessa (2009) evaluated the effectiveness of an often-used cognitive behavioral program known as Thinking for a Change (TFAC). With this program, participants are asked to confront their thinking errors during a series of 22 group sessions facilitated by trained community corrections personnel. This “real world” application makes it different from others because offenders are referred to the program directly by the judge or their probation officer. A total of 217 felony probationers were included in the study (n = 121 treatment; n = 96 comparison). Success in the program is defined as a reduction in recidivism. Participants were followed up six months after completion of the program while the comparison was followed six months post-identification. Overall, the results indicated that the TFAC participants (23%) were significantly less likely to recidivate than the comparison group (36%). Using multivariate logistic regression, the researchers identified three characteristics most likely to predict recidivism: (1) age (younger), (2) risk category (higher risk), and (3) group membership (comparison group versus treatment group). These findings lend support for the argument that offenders should be placed in
a cognitive behavioral program. As illustrated in the discussion, these programs can be administered at a relatively low cost to the courts by staff with minimal training. The authors further discuss the limitations of their study and make recommendations for future assessments.

A Quasi-Experimental Evaluation of Thinking for a Change

A “Real-World” Application

Christopher T. Lowenkamp, Dana Hubbard, Matthew D. Markarios, and Edward J. Latessa


Questions for Thought

1. How do cognitive-based programs differ from other community-based treatments?

2. Given what we know about cognitive programs, should agencies continue to support their development and use? Why or why not?

3. What are some of the potential benefits and shortfalls of any community-based program such as TFAC?