

President's Column

NIDA Funded SMART Recovery[®] Correctional Program Available

InsideOut: A SMART Recovery[®] Correctional Program is now available for use in prisons and other correctional facilities. InsideOut was developed jointly by Inflexxion, a behavioral healthcare technology company based Newton, Massachusetts, and SMART Recovery[®] and funded by a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

The idea for the development of a SMART Recovery[®] correctional program began as a conversation during a snowy car ride in Maine in 1997. Joe Gerstein, M.D., Founding President of SMART Recovery[®], and Emil Chiauzzi, Ph.D., of Inflexxion (known as Innovative Training Systems at the time) were on their way to speak at the Togus Veterans Hospital. (The videotape of Dr. Gerstein's presentation there on SMART Recovery[®] has circulated widely throughout SMART Recovery[®] groups.) In the car, Drs. Gerstein and Chiauzzi began discussing ways to disseminate SMART Recovery[®] to US correctional settings. They are both probably surprised about how much has come from that initial conversation!

What was undoubtedly fresh in their minds at the time was a series of 1996 court decisions (New York Court of Appeals, the 2nd and 7th Federal Circuit Courts of Appeal) that stated that government-coerced 12-step participation violates the Establishment Clause of the US Constitution's First Amendment. That clause states that "Congress shall pass no law respecting an establishment of religion." The courts ruled that AA and other 12-step groups function as religions, and therefore it is unconstitutional for any government agency (such as a prison, court, or probation office) to require someone to attend AA.

The implication of these rulings, which over time appear likely to become established nationwide, is that the government may require attendance in addiction treatment or support groups as long as a secular alternative (and not just AA) is available. Of course, SMART Recovery[®] offers such an alternative, but its existence is not widely known in correctional settings.

Some months after the initial conversation, Inflexxion, in cooperation with SMART Recovery[®], sought and received a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) through their Small Business Innovation Research grant program. The grant has funded the development and testing of InsideOut: A SMART Recovery[®] Correctional Program.

One of the unique aspects of InsideOut is that it allows counselors to train themselves to run SMART Recovery[®] groups. Their eight-hour training experience includes an interactive training manual and videotape. (Continuing education credits are also available.) The facilitator is then ready to deliver the basic program to offenders with the

help of a videotape (filmed with actual participants in SMART Recovery[®] correctional groups) and a workbook of handouts and homework assignments. The ease with which correctional officers can achieve initial training and begin leading groups will make InsideOut an easy option for many correctional programs.

For offenders, InsideOut consists of a structured SMART Recovery[®] training program designed specifically for use in correctional settings with either males or females. InsideOut is suitable for use in all types of correctional facilities, including prisons, shorter-stay facilities, or alternative sentencing facilities such as community corrections or halfway houses.

The program has two major portions. For the first half (ideally lasting three months but compressed into a shorter period if necessary), inmates are involved in a 24-session (twice per week) program consisting of five modules: (1) Introduction to SMART Recovery[®]; (2) Enhancing Motivation; (3) Coping with Urges; (4) Problem Solving; and (5) Lifestyle Balance. Offenders attend 90-minute sessions and are encouraged to identify cognitive distortions and irrational thinking in a manner consistent with SMART Recovery[®] principles.

For the second three-month period, offenders attend weekly SMART Recovery[®] Maintenance groups, which are more open-ended discussions related to recovery, release, and relapse prevention outside of prison. These meetings can continue indefinitely within the facility or allow the participant to transition to an existing SMART Recovery[®] meeting in the community. Because InsideOut is modular, counselors have maximum flexibility in determining the number and sequence of program segments.

The videotapes are played at pre-determined points to illustrate key issues and to generate discussion. The content includes an explanation of SMART Recovery[®], the 4-Point ProgramSM, and footage of actual SMART Recovery[®] meetings.

The videotape also offers dramatic sequences, provides interesting real-world examples of situations with incarcerated substance abusers, and explores offender motivation, relapse issues, criminal thinking errors, ways to apply SMART Recovery[®] in and out of prison, and SMART Recovery[®] resources available to ex-offenders on the outside. InsideOut is currently being pilot tested in correctional facilities in Arizona, New Jersey, and Vermont, but because there is an immediate need to alternative treatment approaches, InsideOut is currently available for sale to corrections programs.

For more information, contact Dr. Emil Chiauuzzi, Principal Investigator and Director of Multimedia Development, or Al Villapiano, Ed.D., Director of Business Development, at (800) 848-3895. A free InsideOut demo CD-ROM is available.

SMART Recovery[®] is looking forward to an increased availability of our approach in the correctional world. I believe over time it will help make the larger world better for all of us.