

RESPONDING TO THE GROWING COMPLEXITY OF FORENSIC CLIENTS WITH AOD CONCERNS IN THE COMMUNITY

Presenting Authors:

Skye Mackay

Introduction / Issues:

Reforms to sentencing, in combination with changes in drug use patterns, have given rise to significant growth in community corrections offender numbers, including those who are assessed at the moderate to high end of the community corrections risk continuum. These individuals require specialist and relatively intensive treatment interventions that address the underlying causes of their offending and contribute to the effective management of potential risks to the community.

Method / Approach:

In response to this evident need, and in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Caraniche developed the KickStart program to target moderate to high risk community based offenders presenting with AOD concerns. KickStart is a 44-hour therapeutic group program that targets substance-related health concerns and criminogenic needs of moderate to high risk male offenders, with the overarching objective of reducing the prevalence of substance use and level of criminogenic risk in a community-based offender population.

Results:

Results from KickStart indicated that at program completion, participants demonstrated greater awareness and understanding of their feelings and how these related to their offending behaviour and were more prepared to discuss emotional regulation, mental health and goal setting. Participants also showed reductions in their order breach rate (from 25% at commencement to under 10%) and in urinalysis breaches (from 30% to 15%). Further, participants reported significant improvements in their physical health, psychological health, and social relationships over the course of their involvement in the KickStart program.

Discussion and Conclusions:

Overall, preliminary evaluation of Pilot results suggest outcomes that are comparable to prison based criminogenic AOD programs. These findings demonstrate that semi-intensive group based treatment approaches are effective at engaging and intervening with community based forensic clients with AOD issues and may offer an alternative diversionary option for courts when considering sentencing of these offenders.